



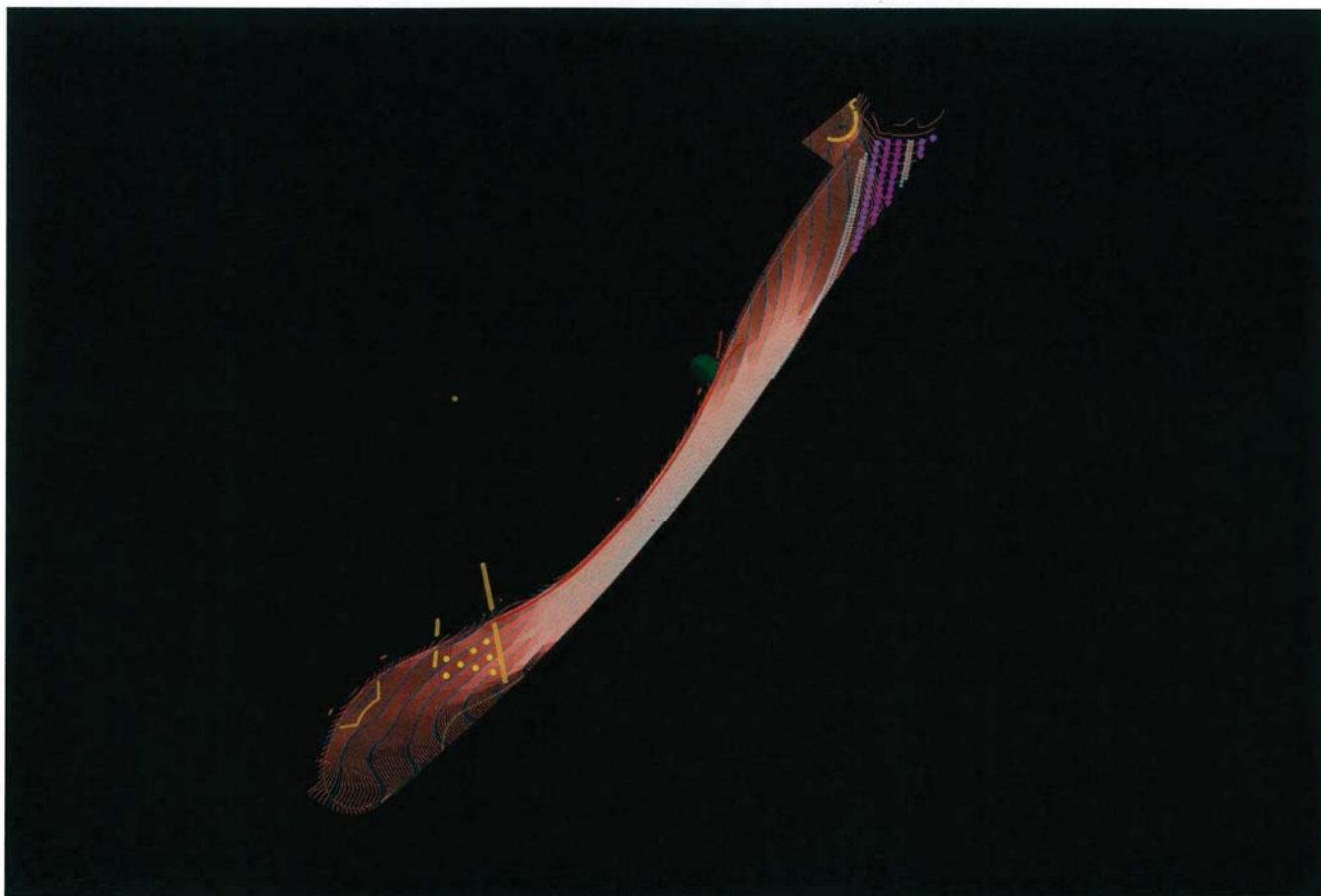
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THE BROADSHEET OF THE AUCKLAND BRANCH OF THE NEW ZEALAND INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

BLOCK

Nga Tohu O Puketapapa

Richard Reid Takes Care of a Mountain



The drawing 'Nga tohu o puketapapa': the last in a series of 150

Many years ago now the novelist Kazuo Ishigaro summarised his understanding of the writing process: "What you do as a novelist is very slowly try to discover what it is you really think about things."

Drawing seems to share a similar performative role within our practice. We see drawing first and foremost as an imaginative and reflective enterprise, encompassing the search for ideas, sensibilities and relationships at the same time as filtering and distilling our thoughts on a project. Like Ishigaro's writing, we try to work towards a conceptual clarity, where the intention of a drawing is brought together with the ideas underpinning the project. Interwoven amongst this thinking and drawing is the unknown factor of time, the dimensions of which can spread across days and weeks towards the fruition and presentation of complex ideas.

The drawing 'Nga tohu o puketapapa' is rather unique in this respect, as five years' thinking passed before we commenced work on it. The drawing is the last of a suite of 150 drawings we prepared for the modification of Puketapapa Mt Roskill Volcano, a landscape of local, national and international importance, especially so for Ngati Whatua o Orakei, the local iwi most strongly associated with the Maunga.

I had been waiting and wanting to create a drawing that might somehow express the intangible qualities of this project. The drawing is quite unusual from our point of view, in that its aesthetics and spatiality have absorbed the worldviews of other disciplines and cultures we collaborated with on the project. The drawing became a reflection of our shared time, as well as their different positions.

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Nga Tohu O Puketapapa *Continued from front cover...*

The initial impulse for this new approach was sown whilst working with the civil engineer Peter Hadwin from URS Ltd. Our respective practices had been engaged by Auckland City Council to re-design a cycleway with minimal impact across the northern face of the volcano (after I had re-shaped the face for NZTA's SH20 motorway). In order to achieve such a close and sympathetic fit we worked together at his office, analysing, plotting and modulating the path's line and width in relation to the volcano's changing gradient and curvature.

What was striking about this experience was the technical and aesthetic means by which Peter ascribed values to three-dimensional lines and surfaces. For an engineer the computer screen is a black void from which coloured lines emerge or submerge in rich tonal balance with the deep space (I am told for visual comfort). It is only when information is printed or emailed to an outside station that the image on the screen appears as most architects see and represent the world - black lines against a white background - one where the focus is on a structure's internal logic and cohesion rather than any environmental connection. My privileged view allowed a fascinating reading of this other world of invention. I asked Peter to screen-save our coloured contour lines floating in deep space and filed it away for use at a later date...

Thankfully the council agreed to integrate the cycleway within a landscape plan and aspirational vision for the volcano. In so doing, it gave us the opportunity to re-dress the huge imbalance that typically exists between transport infrastructure and its surroundings, as well as enhance the volcano instead of exploiting it as a physical resource. NZTA's re-shaping forced the resetting of boundaries to the volcanic reserve, and it was through re-aligning these that Maori associations with the Maunga could be drawn for the first time since European settlement of the isthmus.

We collaborated with Ngati Whatua on the landscape plan. Combined with the removal of invasive exotic planting, the northern face was re-organised to tell this other story. Excavated basalt was used to build new stone walls, terraces, mounds and garden beds on the eastern and western slopes of the Maunga (shown in yellow). The alignment of the walls radiates outwards from a central point on the summit, forming one segment of a volcanic slope garden. Waharoa and light palisade fencing (in red) provide safe passage across the Maunga, especially necessary where the volcano's turning pushes the path closest to the motorway. New harvestable planting (harekeke, toetoe and ti kouka) (grey, mauve and pink circles) dress and accentuate its curvature and funnel the path through the western gateway.

Other elements were added to the reserve, however for the drawing my assistant Sajeev Ruthramoorthy and I included only those features which Ngati Whatua believe honour their ancestors and the past uses of the Maunga. Line weight, colour, brightness and warmth were carefully attributed in order to register the features' movement across the new surface. Hence, Ngati Whatua's naming of the drawing translates as "Markings/signals of Puketapapa".

The black background is a conscious erasure of the Europeanised landscape surrounding the project, including other areas of the volcano, the Mt. Roskill suburb, motorway, roads and trees. The new surface's taut skin - a transplanted face - floats in a black void, its only relations in this deep space being the distant pull of the summit stone.

Through this process the drawing joined the technical with the conceptual, the mythical with the measurable, with allusions to both European and Maori forms of cultural production. Sajeev and I slowly developed the image over several weeks, without any preconceived idea of what it would or should look like. The drawing was always in front of us, yet entering deeper into our minds and imagination. *RR*