

# Te Atū Clamp

A carver with a skill to offer but a reluctance to be bought and sold in the market place is Te Atū Clamp. Currently working on a pouwhenua for Manawatu Museum, Te Atū spoke to Tu Tangata whilst chipping away on the 27 foot totara log destined to stand outside the Palmerston North museum.

## TT What is the intention of this work?

Te Atū I plan to put this pouwhenua on public display showing how the Manawatu was formed and the people who live here. I've talked to the people about the old stories about this area and there's this tale about a spirit called Okatia who formed the Manawatu Gorge by lifting up a totara log and carving through the hills right to the sea. That's why I've chosen a totara log which came from Ohakune.

As far as the public display of the work goes, I think Maori art should be in the public eye not just in Maori places, that's why I'm happy that this carving will be outside the museum, not inside it.



**The unveiling of the work of Te Atū Clamp at Manutuke marae. The carver stands to the left of the stone sculpture, his grandmother Mere Tamihana Katipa and niece Tracy Isenhut are in the foreground, with Tuhoe ministers present for the blessing. Photo Ans Westra**

## TT: Does it worry you that some people may look at the work and not understand what it represents?

Te Atū: I think people who want to know more about something will make an effort to do so. I'm not about to put up a sign explaining the significance because people who don't want to know wouldn't read it anyway. My carving the pouwhenua and having it in the public eye is political by it just being there and requires a reaction.

## TT: How innovative can a carver be, and still retain the tradition?

Te Atū: A carver has 'te matekite' a sight of what is locked inside the wood, bone or stone and releases it in the best way he knows how. The total person is the carver and depending on the atmosphere in which he or she lives,

**About the carver...** Te Atū Clamp is the son of Fred and Rachel Clamp of Bulls. He was a pupil at Rangitikei in the early 1970's. On leaving school he took up engineering and after five years left to study carving under Greg Whakataka and then under Te Watahi Heteraka. He then spent six months at the Tu Tangata carving school in Palmerston North, and has adopted a blend of traditional and modern styles.

shapes the interpretation. Carving is the total expression of spiritual identity in physical form.

## TT: Is there enough work for a full-time carver?

Te Atū: I've chosen not to work for the souvenir trade because it's important to me that people understand my carvings (amongst others Te Atū has completed a large carving at Rangitikei College and the stone sculpture of his great grandmother at Manautuke marae, Gisborne) I'd like to expand this understanding between races so that people see what they have in common. For example I'm hoping to go on a cultural exchange visit to the United States to learn the carving techniques of the American Indian. I'd like to carve a totem pole using different styles and adapting Indian ones to Maori."

## Tauranga carvers at Sheraton Hotel

Tauranga based carver, Tuti Tukaokao and fellow carver John Speir carved the works on display in the newly opened Sheraton Auckland International Hotel.

One giant mural standing nine feet high and 18 feet in length dominates the foyer and depicts a pre-European scene of Auckland.

Thirty two door panels have also been carved for the doors leading into the 1000 seat ballroom.

Tuti Tukaokao studied under several master carvers from the Rotorua Arts

and Crafts Institute and has supervised the carving of 14 meeting houses and three canoes, as well as a mural for a restaurant in Rotorua.

John Speir has been associated with Tuti Tukaokao for seven years and has worked alongside the master on a number of murals.

The Sheraton Hotel has incorporated the Maori theme in its four conference rooms called Kauri, Matai, Kowhai and Tawa, each room featuring timber which bears its name.