

Mural by Cliff Whiting



Maori art at Forum North

by Te Paki Hone Te Aho
CHERRINGTON

Forum North, Whangarei, was the venue for a Maori Art and Craft Exhibition. The exhibition was open from August 27th — September 11th, 1983 and presented work from members of the New Zealand Maori Artist and Writers Society and from members of the Tai Tokerau Maori Arts and Crafts Society.

The exhibition was formally opened by Dr Bruce Gregory, M.P. for Northern

Maori. Dr Gregory felt that the "arts were the wairua and soul of our nation reflecting the dynamism, hopes, aspirations, dreams and state of our society. Art gives substance to the imagination and realities of tomorrow. The imagination — that powerful and little understood faculty is seldom encouraged in our society and it is in the sphere of the arts that it finds its greatest expression and flowering". Speaking to those who had exhibited he said "many marae buildings in Aotearoa need to be revitalised with your artistic temperament and this is particularly the case in Tai Tokerau which has a paucity of carved meeting houses which are calling out for your art forms".

He concluded his remarks saying "Maori Artists and Writers have made a significant contribution to the art of this country and have paved new paths for our people".

Dr Gregory then performed an item on one of his flutes as his waiata. Other speakers included the Minister of Maori Affairs — Mr Ben Couch, Sir Graham Latimer, Chairman of the New Zealand Maori Council and Para Matchitt, President of the New Zealand Maori Artists and Writers Society, Rev. Robert Tucker, Toka Totoro and Doug Gerard.

The exhibition included works by the following members of the New Zealand Maori Artists and Writers Society from throughout New Zealand: Haare Williams, Robyn Kahukiwa, Mathew Pine, John Hovell, Toi Mahi, Ross Hemera, Buck Nin, Cliff Whiting, Arnold Wilson, Robyn Stewart, Mere Lodge, Darcy Nicholas.

Works by members of the Tai Tokerau Maori Arts and Crafts Society included: Wallace Hetaraka, Colleen Walters, Alan Douglas, Hector Busby, Colleen Miller, Kath Munn.

There was a wide variety of work including taniko, pingao, bone and wood carving, paintings, murals, pottery and there were live demonstrations of carving and weaving throughout the opening hours of the exhibition.

Works by Robyn Stewart, Ross Hemera and Cliff Whiting showed interesting new developments in their art forms but it was the work of Arnold Wilson and Wallace Hetaraka which held my interest.

Arnold Wilson presented his "Ode, to Tane", a construction of totara telephone poles with lines (wire) connecting several points of the hall. This striking work seemed to be commenting on a perhaps by-gone age in that telephone poles are items from the past in urban areas and are increasingly going underground in cables. Regardless of the merits of work, "Ode to Tane" is not easily forgotten.

Wallace Hetaraka's carving was the other artist whose works interested me.

Wallace Hetaraka is from Whangaruru. When he was 15 years old Wallace was chosen by the Tai Tokerau people to attend the New Zealand Maori Arts and Crafts Institute in Rotorua. He spent 5 years there under the tutelage of the late John Taiapa. Wallace then returned to Whangaruru and continued his carving.

Currently he is supervising three carvers under a Labour Department P.E.P. Scheme. His works include: the



Sculpture by Arnold Wilson