

A place to stand

Warren Viscoe grew up on the outskirts of Whangarei, surrounded by the bush that is home to New Zealand's largest and most spectacular moth.

More than half a century later, a giant sized sculpture of a Puriri moth created by the renowned Auckland based artist has been installed on an exterior wall of the Whangarei Art Museum facing Cafler Park. The work is one of several public sculptures commissioned by the museum with assistance from Creative New Zealand.

"The persistence of nature as a subject matter has always been a strong feature of my art," says Warren, "and those notions of the early days and what I experienced surfaced in the image of the moths."



The sculpture, in sheet aluminium and wood, also "takes a visual cue" from the art museum's hipped tile roof. "A portion of the roof appears as a triangle, which is repeated in the shape of the moth's wings. The classical tenets of rhythm, balance and symmetry are suspended in a playful feint between biology and architecture. It looks almost serendipitous," says Warren, "but it was intended."

Warren worked as an apprentice carpenter on building sites in and around Whangarei in the early 1950's, including "what in those days were known as native schools". His passion for art eventually saw him travel overseas, where he attended art schools in London, Canada and the University of Auckland, where he obtained a degree in fine arts. His works feature in major public and private collections such as the Auckland Art Gallery and Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand.

"All my childhood was spent in Whangarei, and I still go back there. I find great solace in those areas around town. Cafler Park is an appropriate setting for sculpture."

Warren's puriri moth and other sculptures by artists such as Charlotte Fisher and Manos Nathan, followed major exhibitions of their works at the Whangarei Art Museum.

"Our role is to profile and give acknowledgement to artists who have had to move out of the area to get recognition. It's about bringing people home, and giving them a place to stand."