

Jim Vivieaere

Video transcript

I suppose I can talk about how I got involved. I was one of the invited artists to go to put forward a proposal of some artwork. What made it easier for me was that I was allotted an area and the two of us, Tomui and I were given the entrance.

I saw the entrance as starting from the street going towards the Fale, across the malae, so I didn't see it in the sense of a threshold that you cross over, or under. Another aspect that made it easier for me was that Tania Short was doing the malae. And she had this idea of creating ocean currents in the pavement. So I thought I would reference it by having these birds. I had a choice of birds: seagulls, albatrosses. What came to mind was the iconic motif of the frigatebird. I remember Fatu Feu'u used the frigatebird a lot in his paintings, and one particular painting which he called "Conserve for the future"[SIC]. There was one choice of using that symbol of the frigatebird. Then I remember Don Binny's 1969 painting of the Pacific frigatebird. So I was inspired by that in fact.

I lifted the whole shape of it. I had the idea of making beacons, I call them beacons rather than lampposts, and I had this idea of having fibre optic lighting. I really had very little input except from going to meetings with Jasmax and talking about the scale of the birds, how high, what colour. So it was quite a surprise when I actually saw them getting installed, because in principal I had designed a work but because I didn't actually make it I felt – not uninvolved – but I hadn't gone through a process the process; was purely paperwork.

I do know they do mean things – they are a bird of, not a bird of bad omen but, they sort of – foreboding – they send signals that something's happening. But on the other hand birds from Polynesian myth also carriers of the human soul. A single bird symbolises independence. Also the configuration of the birds had some reason around the placement of these beacons. With Tania's sea currents I positioned the birds in the same configuration of the seven main islands whose people live in New Zealand: Tuvalu, Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Nuie and Tokelau, how they actually lie on the Pacific Ocean.