

Airport mural to be displayed 'pride of place' at new terminal

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ARCHIVE

Artist Don Driver with his work featuring the aircraft Southern Cross in 1992.

A significant piece of Taranaki art which has hung in the New Plymouth airport terminal for 50 years will remain "pride of place" in the building when the site is redeveloped.

New Plymouth Art in Public Places Trust chairman Terry Parkes said the aluminum relief sculpture by Don Driver would be placed in a more prominent position in the building.

"It is one of the most important artworks in the city and there was never any doubt it would be removed from the terminal," he said.



SIMON O'CONNOR/STUFF

Don Driver's artwork above the check in at the airport.

"It was a mis-communication that occurred which said the sculpture would be removed to elsewhere in the city."

Parkes wanted it better placed where it could be seen by visitors arriving at the airport terminal.



SIMON O'CONNOR/STUFF

Don Driver's artwork at the airport.

"Where it is positioned will be one of the considerations to be discussed when the new terminal is built," he said.

"I've always thought it was in the wrong place above the check-in where it was too high and reflected the light and couldn't be seen properly."

"Many people have said to me they don't notice it as well.

"It will take pride of place and will be very visible to the public."

Parkes said the trust had worked with New Plymouth District Council and the Govett Brewster Art Gallery director to have important artwork, such as the Driver mural, incorporated into building designs around the city.

More artwork by well known Taranaki artists, such as Driver, Len Lye, and Michael Smither, and others from outside the region, could be installed at the proposed \$28m terminal, he said.

"New Plymouth is an art destination and the airport is the first point of call for many travellers to the region and an opportunity to promote the best of art."

Don Driver, who died in 2011, completed the originally flat silver toned mural depicting famous Australian aviator Sir Charles Kingsford Smith landing at Bell Block after the first trans-Tasman crossing of a passenger flight in 1933.

Parkes said the mural was more relevant now after Driver's death than when he was alive.

"Artwork always increases in value when the artists died."

Airport manager Wayne Wootten was non-committal on the artwork's future.

"We can't confirm yet if the mural will remain in the terminal but whether it is or not, it will be retained by the council."

Wootten said a detailed design of the new terminal building was currently being developed.

The plan included a significant cultural art strategy, he said.

"The mural is being considered as part of that strategy."

The 7m by 2m mural was commissioned by New Plymouth City Council in 1966 and installed in the new terminal in January 1967.

Driver's wife, Joyce Driver, has said she hoped the mural would stay at the airport as she believed it had a special cultural significance.

The mural was part of the original terminal and a 'little bit of heritage would be lost' if it was removed, she said.

- Taranaki Daily News