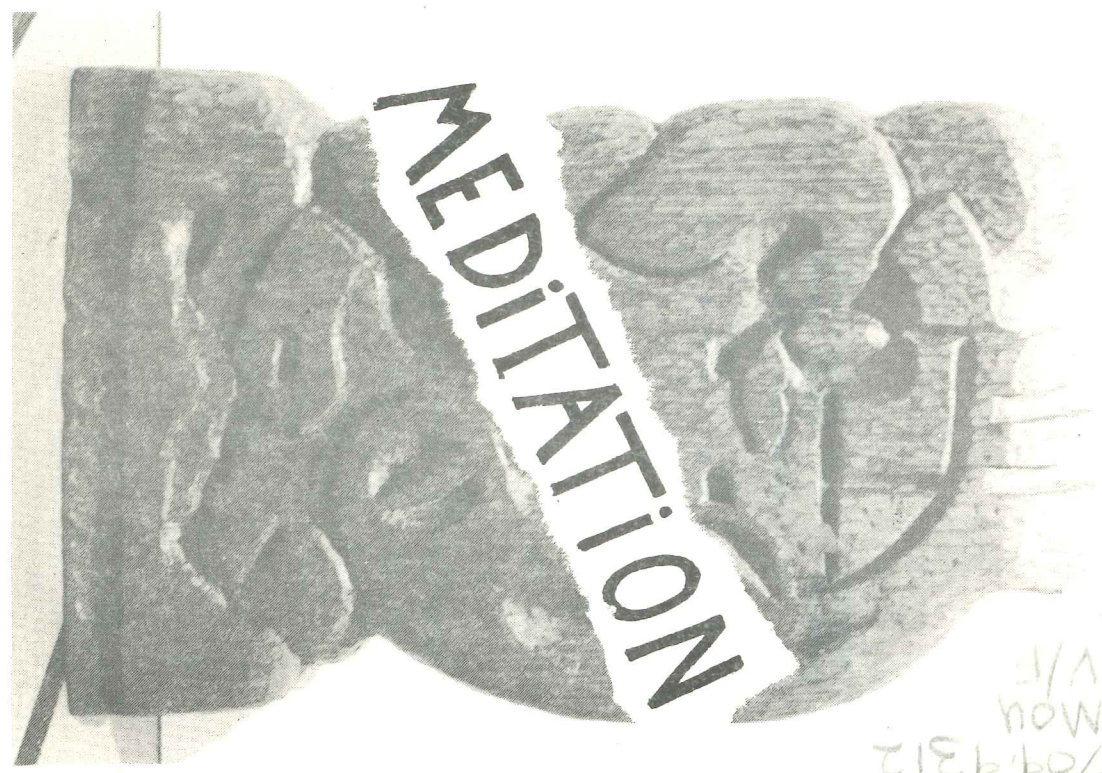


MT. MESSENGER



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MT. MESSENGER

Tunnel part of giant art sculpture

A Taranaki artist, inspired by the Mt Messenger tunnel, hopes to turn it into a giant art form for two days in March.

Tom Mutch of New Plymouth is seeking Ministry of Works and Development approval for the project, which he plans to begin on Friday, March 16, and carry through for 48 hours.

Mutch will begin fixing coloured shapes of canvas on to the north face of the tunnel at 9am on the Friday.

At the same time Taranaki wood carvers will begin carving a large image of Meditation — a man sitting in a lotus position — in the Taranaki Museum.

The canvas shape hung near the tunnel will be disconnected pieces of the sculpture, similar to pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

The two parts of the artwork will be connected via radio, so sounds of vehicles honking as they pass through the tunnel can be broadcast to the carvers in New Plymouth.

Two of the carvers, including Wayne Morris (Okato) and Mark McLachlin (New Plymouth), will work from a model sculpture already carved by Mutch.

The whole project will be called Meditation and Mt Messenger, and the art form is described as a

performance piece. It will be taken down after 48 hours.

Mutch is applying for a \$500 grant from the North Taranaki Arts Council. It will be discussed at the council's next meeting in two weeks.

Chairman Mr Richard Hellyer, New Plymouth, said it was an interesting idea and he was glad Mutch was pursuing it.

"It would celebrate the fact that one is entering Taranaki. I've always thought of the tunnel as the gateway to Taranaki," said Mutch.

New Plymouth public relations officer Mr Dave Wicks describes it as a unique concept.

"Taranaki people will enjoy the idea because they have watched the Mt Messenger highway change from a difficult one to a relatively easy road to negotiate."

Mutch hopes the project will snowball into a community effort.

An average of 2000 people drive through the tunnel each 24 hours, he said.

This meant up to 5000 people would see the project in 48 hours, which was many more than would normally see a work of art

in a similar period elsewhere.

Information sheets would be handed out to interested motorists at the rest area on Mt Messenger, and an attendant would direct them to the museum, where they can see the carving taking place.

"It is designed to create a weekend activity for tourists, visitors and local people," said Mutch.

About 20 people would be involved in the project. Helpers on Mt Messenger would camp in tents and probably work and sleep for alternating 12-hour periods.

When Mutch finishes hanging the coloured canvas pieces on the King Country face of the tunnel he will travel to New Plymouth to set up a third part of the work on the walls of the carvers' room in the museum.

This will make up a debating board of Mutch's personal comments on capitalist industry in Taranaki and how it can destroy the ecology.

The whole performance piece will be recorded on film with aerial shots of the Taranaki landscape. Mutch expects to donate the work to the Taranaki Museum.



This unusual mural planned for the north face above the Mt Messenger tunnel is actually the disconnected pieces of a sculpture by Taranaki artist Tom Mutch (below). The mural and sculpture are part of a performance piece called Meditation and Mt Messenger which Mutch hopes to create in March.

