



MIKE THOMAS

Citation to accompany Mike's election as Fellow of the New Zealand Landscape Architects

Mike Thomas has a very clear philosophy: "Landscape is more than the green stuff between buildings. It's the places cities occupy."

For those that know him, it's hard to argue that Mike isn't genuinely passionate about Landscape Architecture. His vision and motivation unfaltering – he wants to see the profession elevated; to see its people succeed; for its outputs to be considered and sculpted; to raise respect and profile for the industry; and to encourage a greater investment in the public realm of our built environment.

Mike, a Mount Maunganui native, travelled extensively in his younger days working offshore in places like Sydney as a 'kiwifruit specialist', in London as a labourer, and even working as a chef in a Kibbutz in Israel. It was however his time on worksites in London that made Mike realise his passion for the power of landscape architecture. "I realised that the people who were going to occupy this place would love the landscape, I remember thinking "it will change their mood from now on". Influencing someone's emotional response is a powerful thing. And I wondered how I could do that on a really grand scale."

As such Mike qualified as a Landscape Architect from Lincoln University in 1996. His first professional experience was working at Lucas Associates on what is one of NZ's largest lakeside ecological restoration projects: Lake Horowhenua. Between 1997-2001, Mike was the co-Director of his own firm Studio 33 Ltd, while concurrently holding another Directorial position with Group Arts Project; established to generate land art and design build projects.

In 2001, Mike relocated to Hong Kong seeking big city design experience to establish skills that would be of value in New Zealand. Working first for Urbis HK (2001-2003) and then with EDAW (2003-2005). Working in China, Mike learnt that landscape architecture can come first. His first-hand experience of designing cities here, working with urban designers saw his teams win four international design competitions in cities including Nanning, Xi'an, West Kowloon and Shenzhen.

Returning to New Zealand in 2005, Mike established an EDAW Jasmex JV, a precursor to Mike joining Jasmex in 2007. Fast forward to just over 10 years later, Mike is a shareholding Principal at Jasmex and leads a studio of 16 landscape architects. He also set up and managed the firm's Christchurch studio from 2008-2012.

Over his 20+ year's career, Mike's work has centred around the public realm and large transport infrastructure. Three recent successful projects include the multi award-winning Harewood Underpass, Christchurch, NZ Post's Gilbert Island Coast Watcher's Memorial in Wellington, and Auckland central's VXV Plaza; currently the largest use of FSC timber landscaping which extends into the atrium of Fonterra's global headquarters. Other major works include the CTV Memorial Site, South Frame Public Realm and An Accessible City projects delivered in consortiums as part of the Christchurch rebuild. In addition, Mike has amassed a significant tertiary education portfolio for institutions across the country, including the Universities of Canterbury, Waikato, Otago and Auckland, and Ara Institute in Christchurch (formerly CPIT).

A tireless supporter of the industry, Mike has been heavily involved with the Institute since 2006, when he assumed the position of Chair for the Auckland branch. He was also Vice Chair of the Registration Panel from 2015-2017. A member of the Awards Working Group, he is a champion of the Institute's awards programme and established the now highly successful Post-Awards function.

Within the broader industry, Mike has also held positions with the Auckland Urban Design Panel, Tamaki Makarau Design Alliance, International Federation of Landscape Architects, the Unitec Advisory Panel, and with tutelage roles with Lincoln University, Victoria University and Unitec.