



'The Esplanade', Auckland Airport

In the development of 'The Esplanade' project, Bespoke were engaged by Auckland International Airport to work in conjunction with Surface Design Inc (a San Francisco based landscape architectural firm). The key objective was to form a design in tandem with the concurrent development of The Landing and Gateway projects at Auckland Airport.

The Esplanade is a feature open space for Auckland Airport incorporating a pedestrian promenade and sculpture walk within a framework of wider public open and recreational spaces identified as 'The Common'. The Esplanade forms a prominent landscape link between the Quad and the Common precincts including connections to Abbeville estate, the Outdoor Gallery, the Golf Course and the Marae. It allows visitors tourists and workers alike access to greater amenity and the opportunity to enjoy the environment created.

The key design feature of 'The Esplanade' is a celebration of an axial alignment between John Goulter Drive and the chapel at Abbeville estate. The chapel along with other heritage buildings, the homestead and barn, are a perspective into the historical colonial past of the land that Auckland Airport now inhabits.

The framework of 'The Esplanade' is arranged in definition by a formal alley, utilising straight axial lines with a repetition of trees to either side. Paths of both gravel and mown grass are lined with two tree species, *Pyrus calleryana* and *Liquidambar* trees that offer seasonally colour changing leaves and ornamental flowering. The ground plane is made up of a barcoded

sequence of shell bands that intersect both paths and provides the rhythm and structure. Within these daffodils and wildflowers are planted that will bloom at differing parts of the year further enhancing this rhythm.

To the eastern end of 'The Esplanade' where ground levels increase, a series of bold grass terraces traverse the change in height. These not only form platforms of open space but visually stack up to provide a pedestal for the chapel at Abbeville estate.

This temporal and seasonal landscape is forever showing different forms, colours and states with plants blooming and trees flowering at different times all throughout the year.

A palette of carefully selected and subtly applied vibrant colours on display in the landscape was essential to provide variety and intrigue along what is an otherwise predominantly green linear strip. **Resene Pink Panther** was one such selection employed to make an ordinary and necessary landscape element in the tree stakes into a feature that would not only complement other selections but also stand alone in their own right.

These stakes are constant throughout the seasons and fuse at various times with the yellow and white of the daffodils, the red and orange of the autumn trees, the white of the spring flowering trees and the multi coloured flowering wildflowers. With the sheer numbers of tree stakes and length of the overall intervention, a significant effect is created along the length of the axial alignment. The scale of the tree stakes

could even be considered to be part of the sculpture walk as another piece of art.

The application of colour to the stakes has been made in a two tone manner, with the Resene Pink Panther colour applied to two adjacent sides. The other two sides remain as natural timber. This creates a wider effect for the viewer and a changing aesthetic as they move through the space and view from either end.

The project is substantial:

- The Esplanade is 350 metres in length.
- 180 trees were planted along the length of the Esplanade.
- 360 painted stakes have been installed.
- 17,000 daffodil bulbs have been planted.
- 1665 square metres of wildflowers have been sown.

Challenges faced in the creation of the project included:

- The carrying out of the works, including significant earthworks, through the winter season.
- Maintaining and setting out the detailed and symmetrical layout of the design along the full length of the space.
- Procuring the required number of trees, which all needed even and consistent form.
- Communicating and achieving the final set-out and form of the terraces to the contractor.
- Enabling access and craning the precast concrete stairs into place.

The project team worked closely through the challenges and scale, creating a truly unique landscape experience.



Civil contractor: HEB www.heb.co.nz
Client: Auckland International Airport www.aucklandairport.co.nz/en/Property
Colour selection: Bespoke Landscape Architects www.bespokelandscape.co.nz
Landscape architectural specifier: Bespoke Landscape Architects www.bespokelandscape.co.nz
Landscape contractor: The Plant People www.theplantpeople.co.nz
Photographer: George Woolford
Masterplanning: Surface Design Inc
Project management: RDT Pacific www.rdtpacific.co.nz