



WHĀNAU ĀTEA

AN AWARD-WINNING FAMILY RECREATION SPACE

Whānau Ātea is a vibrant community hub based in Māngere in South Auckland. Boffa Miskell and Tūpuna Maunga Authority won the Recreation Aotearoa Te Tohu – Whānau Māori (Māori Outcomes) Award for Whānau Ātea.

Whānau Ātea rethinks and recreates what a papa-tākaro (playspace) looks like in 21st Century Aotearoa (New Zealand). Based at the foot of Te Pane-a-Mataoho | Te Ara Rūru | Māngere Maunga in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland), Whānau Ātea celebrates and reintroduces the cultural practices and traditions that were prevalent on Ngā Tūpuna Maunga (ancestral mountains).

The papa-tākaro is comprised of four main spaces that retell the pūkāru (ancient stories) connected to the landscape. Within each space, further stories have been interpreted through mahi toi (artworks), tohu (symbolism) and natural settings including rākau (trees) and kōhātu (stone), with a deep understanding of the history of the people and place. These spaces are linked by Te

Ara Hikoi, which weave traditional (hupara) and contemporary play, tākaro-taiao (nature-play), active recreation (skatepark, basketball, Ki-o-Rahi) and public amenities such as hāngi (earth ovens), a kapehu whetū (star compass) and wānanga spaces.

Designed by Boffa Miskell in collaboration with the Tūpuna Maunga Authority, Whānau Ātea offers a holistic approach of papa-tākaro for health and wellbeing through spaces that are inclusive and intergenerational.

Whānau Ātea Māra Hupara began with community engagement to honour mana whenua (indigenous peoples) of the region by instilling their aspirations, stories and values. This was achieved through the following design themes:

- **Hononga Atua, Hononga Wairua**
Connection to the spirit of land and people: representing the creation story of Tāmaki Makaurau as a volcanic landscape.
- **Nō te Maunga, ki te Moana**
Connection from the mountain to the sea, signifying the interconnected relationship

between people, nature and place, with an emphasis on reciprocity (right and responsibility) as an integral component of wellbeing.

- **Mātauranga** The continuance of indigenous knowledge: promoting the importance of the transference of traditional knowledge and recognition of the past.

Entering Whānau Ātea, a paved whāriki (woven mat) welcomes you with tānaki patterns, which symbolise stories of the local people and their connection to ancestors, nature and the spiritual realm. Te Ara Hikoi loops around the papa-tākaro connecting four main spaces.

TĀKARO A TĀNE / TĀNE PLAY
Tākaro a Tāne (Tāne Play), at the base of the māunga, reflects the ngāhere (forest) and the creatures that live within. Mature Karaka, Pohutukawa and Pūriri provide protection where various tākaro-taiao and contemporary elements accommodate play, inclusivity, community and celebration. Tūwatawa (laliside fencing) is staggered along the full base of the

“WHĀNAU ĀTEA RETHINKS AND RECREATES WHAT A PAPA-TĀKARO (PLAYSPACE) LOOKS LIKE IN 21ST CENTURY AOTEAROA (NEW ZEALAND)”

maunga and is supported with rich rongoā (medicinal plantings), which is also incorporated within all the spaces.

TĀKARO A MATAOHO / MATAOHO PLAY

Tākaro a Mataoho (Mataoho Play) tells the story of the creation of the volcanic landscape. The redesigned skatepark reflects the craters with tākaro kōhātu (rock play) in various forms. A new basketball court provides active recreation and is complemented by mahi toi, which expresses the energies of the whenua (land) and moana (sea).

TĀKARO PĀ TŪWATAWA / FORTIFIED PĀ PLAY

Tākaro Pā Tūwatawa (Fortified Pā Play) allows for playing pā (interpreted by breaching the pā) up the embankment slope. A mix of tākaro taiao and contemporary play provides challenging abilities up and down the slope.

Whānau Ātea, at the heart of the papa-tākaro, is a multifaceted space for Ki-o-Rahi, kapehu whetū and gathering. Supporting this, a unique hāngi space brings the traditional ways of kai (food) back to the maunga. These spaces are all supported with bespoke furniture and elements that

reflect the many pūkāru.

This is the only open space in Aotearoa to provide hāngi, which reconnect mana whenua with their ancestral maunga and enable traditional cultural practices on the maunga. Making hāngi has not been practised on the mountain since the 1860s. Hāngi Master Rewi Straggan worked closely with the Whānau Ātea design team to build two, fit-for-purpose pits.

It is also the first permanent and public Ki-o-Rahi field. Kapehu Whetū is one of few spaces in Auckland that embodies the star constellation of Matariki.

To provide all visitors with a deeper understanding of the history and meaning behind these unique elements, QR code panels are attached to many of the hūgarā and other structures. These can be scanned by phone, allowing the user to access a made-for-purpose video in which mātanga (knowledge holders and sharers) introduce the traditional name of the element and explain how to use it and the values and skills it is designed to enhance. ■

Images courtesy of Boffa Miskell / Tūpuna Maunga Authority

