

## WELLINGTON SCULPTURE SERIES: Ferns - Neil Dawson

Visitors to Wellington's Civic Square are often captivated by the sculpture, 'Ferns', by Neil Dawson. It is an iconic sculpture not only for Wellington but the whole of New Zealand.

Ferns is one of the most visited and photographed of the city's public works. It was presented to the city in 1998 as a joint commission by the Wellington Sculpture Trust, the New Zealand Festival and the City Gallery. Dawson says he aimed for a "delicate intricacy" to float over the top of the Ian Athfield Nikau Palms that mark the Civic Square.

The sculpture is a sphere of the silver leaves that bring to mind New Zealand, and is suspended between the surrounding buildings 14 metres above the ground. On a clear day it appears to be floating in the sky.

Neil Dawson was born in 1948 and is best known for works that are large-scale pieces designed from aluminium and stainless steel, using a lattice of natural forms, which between them form a geometric whole.

Dawson was born in Christchurch and is the son of a Methodist minister; he grew up in Masterton, Petone and Hastings and received his secondary education at Hastings Boys' High School.



While in fourth form, Dawson climbed onto the assembly hall and painted April Fool in large white letters on the roof. This gave him front page exposure in the Hawke's Bay Herald-Tribune and he regards this as the "beginning of (his) career in public art."

Dawson's sculpture is individual and unique. His sculptures transcend convention in their lightness of feel, their transparency and their escape from the traditional pedestal-based display.