



A Chat with the Artist

Timon Maxey - Bay Road murals, Kilbirnie

A bit about you...where are you from?

I've lived in Wellington for the last 20 years. I went to university here. Before that my family lived in different places when I was growing up – Whanganui, Taupo, Southbridge and Dovedale.

You do a lot of commission work. This mural was commissioned by Wellington City Council, but your clients were really the residents of Kilbirnie. How did that work?

The project was set up and managed by the Council. We had meetings with the locals to hear what they wanted. The idea was to show the character of Kilbirnie as much as possible. We had a long list of potential images to work on. The end result is just five simple images - to start with they were much more complex.

How did you work on murals? Does it all happen onsite?

I did the illustrations for the work offsite. I made a linework grid which I scanned and then coloured on computer. I projected the linework grids onto the mural panels at night, then it was a bit like painting by numbers. I used Resene paints for these murals.

Did you work from photos?

I often work from photos – but this time I just drew the illustrations. Only the two old men under a tree started as a photo.

What was it like working onsite in a public pedestrian area?

I enjoyed mixing with the locals – they were interested in the work. There were some local characters who would come and chat. In general people took an interest in the work and liked to see the progress I was making.

For a while the weather was a bit of a challenge. It was impossible to work when it was very windy. There is a large verandah over the pavement so rain was no problem.

Any surprises?

There are three or four street performers or buskers in Kilbirnie – they were really entertaining. They talk to everyone.

Did you know Kilbirnie before this project?

I knew it reasonably well as I used to live near Kilbirnie – in Miramar, Island Bay and Hataitai.

Now that you've spent quite a lot of time here what are your impressions?

I like it here. It seems to be a good shopping area. It's busy and vibrant – there are always people milling about. The changed street layout is better – the wider footpath is good.

There are five images in the mural. Do you have a favourite – or perhaps you shouldn't?

My favourite is the one with the wind sculpture.

I've just noticed there are two birds in each painting – have you named them?

Not really – perhaps Cedric and Henry?

What are you working on now?

I'm heading to Sydney where I have a commission for a client and am trying to find a gallery there for my work. I also plan to kayak the Olympic kayak course.

I'm also working on a model for an art installation/artificial kayak slalom course. It's like a donut shaped swimming pool painted in similar style to the Bay Road Murals.