BIG FLOWERS FOR A WILD CITY

Colin Post Four Plinths, 2026-28 edition
Martin Basher

WHAT

Four radiant, low-relief sculptures of flowers in vases. High gloss, pearlescent and ultra-matte sections, in day-glo pigments, popping against the thrumming city backdrop. Constructed in Steel and wood, the work will feature a full-spectrum colour palette, in flawless, high-hue, optically brightened automotive paints. A thrilling pop of colour against the muted hues of Te Papa and its surrounding buildings. Standing five-plus meters above sleeved, painted plinths, the sculptures will stretch above seven-meters to vie with the scale of the surrounding architecture. Shapes that punch out against the skyline, bounding the entrance to Te Papa with a scale and ambition befitting the setting.


TE TAIAO
NATURE

WHY

In mid-winter 2020, as COVID-19 locked down my then-home New York, I hit a creative inflection point. In the face of all the sirens and madness, I needed to make something pure and beautiful, something that could just *be* in its moment. I started a new body of work taking floral still-life as a departure; a celebration of beauty, an escape into aesthetic pleasure. The genre is inherently contradictory of course; flowers are gifts of love, but also gifts of loss. For every valentine, there's a hospital bouquet and bedside palliation. Still life is beauty in the form of a cut; blooms that start dying the moment they are amputated from the plant. In those contradictions, I felt I'd found something right for the moment, a negotiation of beauty and nature predicated on both fecundity and mortality, a tension between giving and taking, an exquisite braid of grace and death.

Made on canvas and cardboard, these paintings rework many motifs threading the natural and the ersatz that are longstanding themes in my work; screen-saver beach images, fake wood grain, high-key sunset gradients, plastic flowers. Nature that's flattened both metaphorically and literally. The paintings treat these motifs and the still-life form like a dance-step; a starting point that is open to improvisation. The images are freeform, additive, intuitive, they aren't planned before they are begun, and the work is finished more by deadline than by clear compositional conclusion. I think of these paintings as both avowedly abstract and carefully representational. They dance with the natural, while holding nature at remove, images built up from a reduced set of lines and circles, a celebration of nature, though perhaps its elegy as well.

Initial small scale
'sketches' in plywood

Full-scaled work in progess,
in aluminium

From the outset, the work has also found sculptural form. These involve a layering of planar shapes, implying stacked shallow-relief surfaces pushing out from two to three dimensions. Simple forms are assembled to become complex images that negotiate the line between surface and form, between positive and negative spaces. Following the same logic as the painting, the sculptures begin as improvisational maquettes, quickly finding shape, and slowing as they build to a finish. Primarily formed from circles and rods, these are finally painted in glowing automotive enamel, the still-life flowers still present but in their most reduced, abstracted forms.

Now, several years into this body of work, I want to push things much further with scale and with colour. On the plinths, I envision work that takes the form, finish and surfaces of these sculptures to a whole new level, both technically and conceptually.

As to why this project for the four plinths specifically, I grew up here, and have recently returned after 20 yeas in New York. Wellington is a city of sculpture - many of my earliest memories involve the city's public work; indeed they were instrumental in setting me on a life-long creative path. So in addition to seeing the plinths as an incredible opportunity to push my work to new scale and form, I also see the plinths as an opportunity to return something to the city. To my mind, the monochromatic site is crying our for big and generous work, for colour and optimism, for work that will speak both to an art-consuming audience, and to the broader public. With a little luck, I might also speak to some kid out there, the way Wellington's sculptures spoke to me 40 years ago, and suggest a life spent in colour, and form, and images.


TE TAIAO
NATURE

TECHNICAL

- Engineering in consultation with Dunning Thornton.
- Steel structural column, supporting marine ply sculptural forms
- 5-6m tall; 7-8m from ground to upper tips.
- Automotive urethane paint: exceptionally durable, easy to clean.
- Brightness and neons for colour and ‘pop’ in all weather.
- Relatively simple installation: boom truck delivery, crane-on, bolt-down bases
- Lit upward with floods from bases at night.
- Painted sleeves cover existing plinths. Sleeves painted with retouchable enamel in case of vandalism.
- All colours mixed off colour chart to allow matching if retouch is necessary.

In consultation with Ryan Clarke of Dunning Thornton, each sculpture will be supported on a 125x125x6mm steel structural column. The column will be similar to the various poles located on the waterfront supporting lights, signs etc. The design of this column will be repeated for all four sculptures, with minor variation to the upper lateral sections in order to support different arrangements of the ‘flower’ discs. Half-scale mockups in the studio look great with the column incorporated.

The forms of the flowers, leaves and vases will be cut from marine ply with a router. Once prepped and painted, these will be mounted to the column. The column will be designed with generic weight and wind-load allowances; within these allowances, each sculpture will be able to be quite different.

This strategy will increase strength, while reducing weight, fabrication time, and fabrication cost. It will free resources to focus on finish and paint.

My next step will be to produce models of the sculptures in the 3D-modelling program Sketchup. These models will allow for me to precisely assess all tolerances with Dunning Thornton and plan a nose-to-tail assembly workflow. These models will also provide me with a set of vector files with which to cut the flower shapes. Following this method, I can mill most of the flowers from marine ply in a single piece, rather than as multiple overlapping and stacked discs. As one integral unit, this will make the flower components very stiff and strong.

The flower stems extending from vase to the flower discs will also be made from steel tube. They will bolt to the vases and flowers and will add considerable stiffness to the structures, but the stems will not be structurally integral to the work, allowing greater flexibility of placement.

Structural elements of the work will be produced from steel extrusions sourced from Steel and Tube, fabricated at Fabricon Engineering. Non-structural elements, including Architectural Grade Plywood and possibly Aluminium composite panel (ACM), will be cut and finished by me with close attention that the forms will have material stability for duration of exhibition.

TECHNICAL

Paint and colour are all-important to this work. I'll research and prepare the surfaces extensively, looking specifically at specialty automotive finishes. Total Bodyshop Supply in Petone is a terrific resource, and is able to mix custom colors in aerosol cans for product tests.

Paint will be applied to all components *prior* to assembly, at Intercoat Systems. Colours will be commercially mixed ensuring close and replicable colour tolerances. Finish will be in 2k automotive grade urethane - giving the work a a very high level of UV resistance and wear. Prior iterations of these sculptures painted in 2K paint have been sited outdoors for >2 years and still look new.

Intercoat Systems is located in a high-bay warehouse in Petone. Ive talked with them in the past about temporarily renting workspace. In this instance, I would aim to do the same, so I can assemble directly at the painting location. If Intercoat can't accomodate me, I'll look for similar space in Seaview or Petone, close to my fabricators and painters. Once assembled, the work will be boom-trucked to the site and bolted in position.

Sculptures will be affixed by M16 bolts to the new SS mounting plates currently being planned. See diagram engineering diagram.

The following procedure will be assembling the coloured sleeves around the plinths. I plan to use Aluminium Composite Sheet (ACM) for the bases; it is exceptionally flat, stiff and comes in large dimensions. The ACM will be bonded to an aluminium and wood substructure which will preclude the need to fix into the sides of the plinth. The sleeves will extend above the plinth to 2.2m, leaving a 200mm reveal that will hide the mounting hardware for the sculptures from view.

Outdoor LED flood lights will be arranged around perimeter of each plinth, mounted to the new connection plate. The lights will also be hidden from view by the lip of the sleeves. The sleeved bases will not be lit. Total wattage per plinth when lit will be around 200w.

Ongoing maintenance will be minimal. Wind rain and time will largely keep the work clean, but it would be possible to use a house-washing pole brush on the sculptures if required.

SITE

I work on Wakefield Street, and I interact with the 4 Plinths and Te Papa almost daily. Ive spent several years thinking about the site and its audience and how a proposal might address its location:

1. Te Papa is an incredible institution, but its forecourt can be bleak and windswept. I think its crying our for colour and energy.

2. The work on the plinths needs to engage an audience broadly, both having a dialogue with contemporary sculptural practice, while not talking down to casual viewers.

3. The plinths are in contention with monumental architecture, and have a visually dynamic backdrop in all directions. They also have a challenging aspect when the primary viewing space looking north-west is in shadow, while the work gets experienced in hard silhouette. Scale and colour are critical for the work to be seen and noticed. In second picture, shot in overcast conditions, sculpture colour samples are taken directly from the hi-viz cones and worker's jacket. Compare visibility and scale of proposed work with the existing sculptures on right two plinths.

4. All previous work on the plinths has been between 2 and 2.5m tall. My proposed project more than doubles this height.

IMAGES

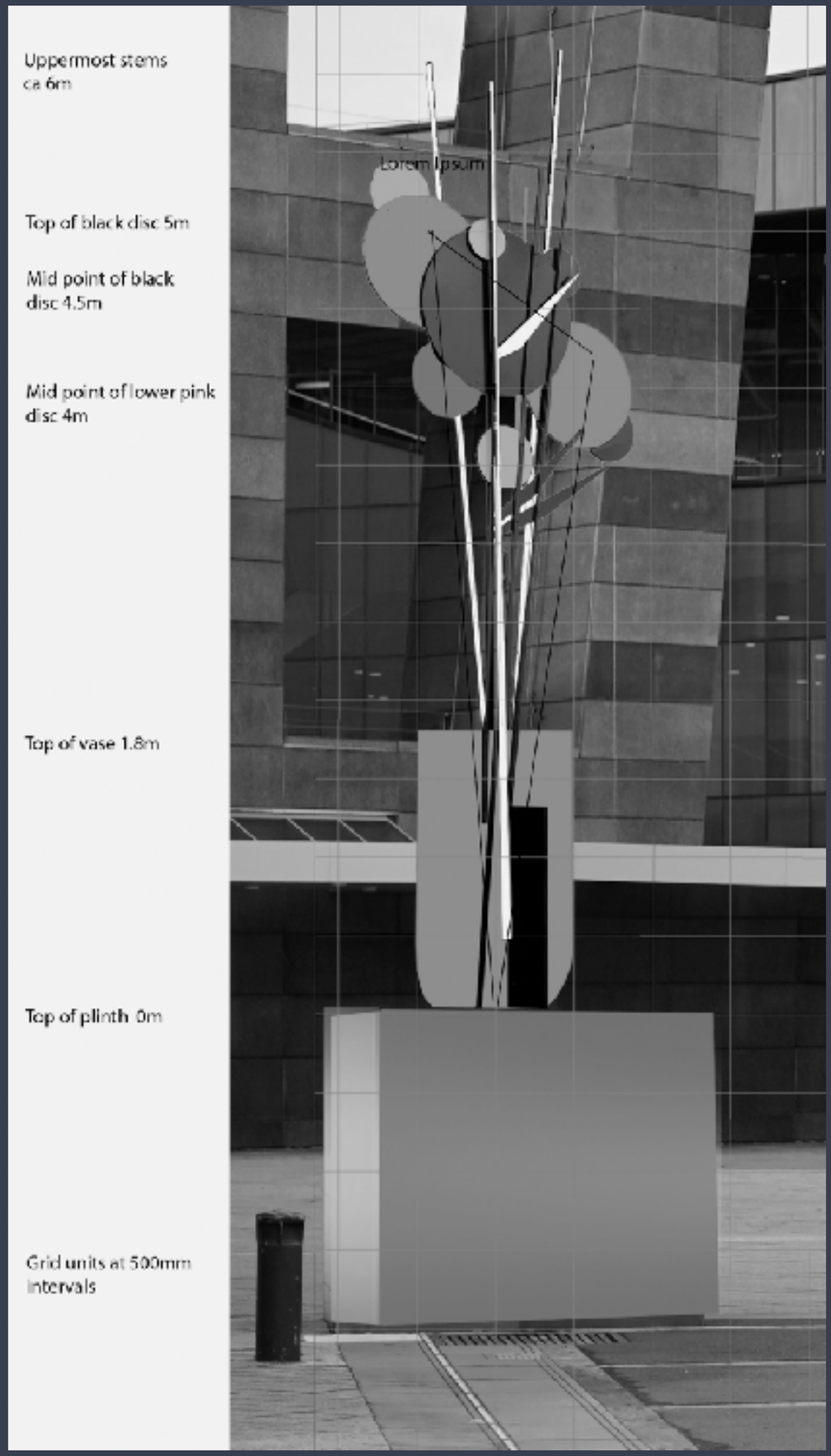
All four sculptures will be constructed on a uniform structural column with set wind and weight loading tolerances.

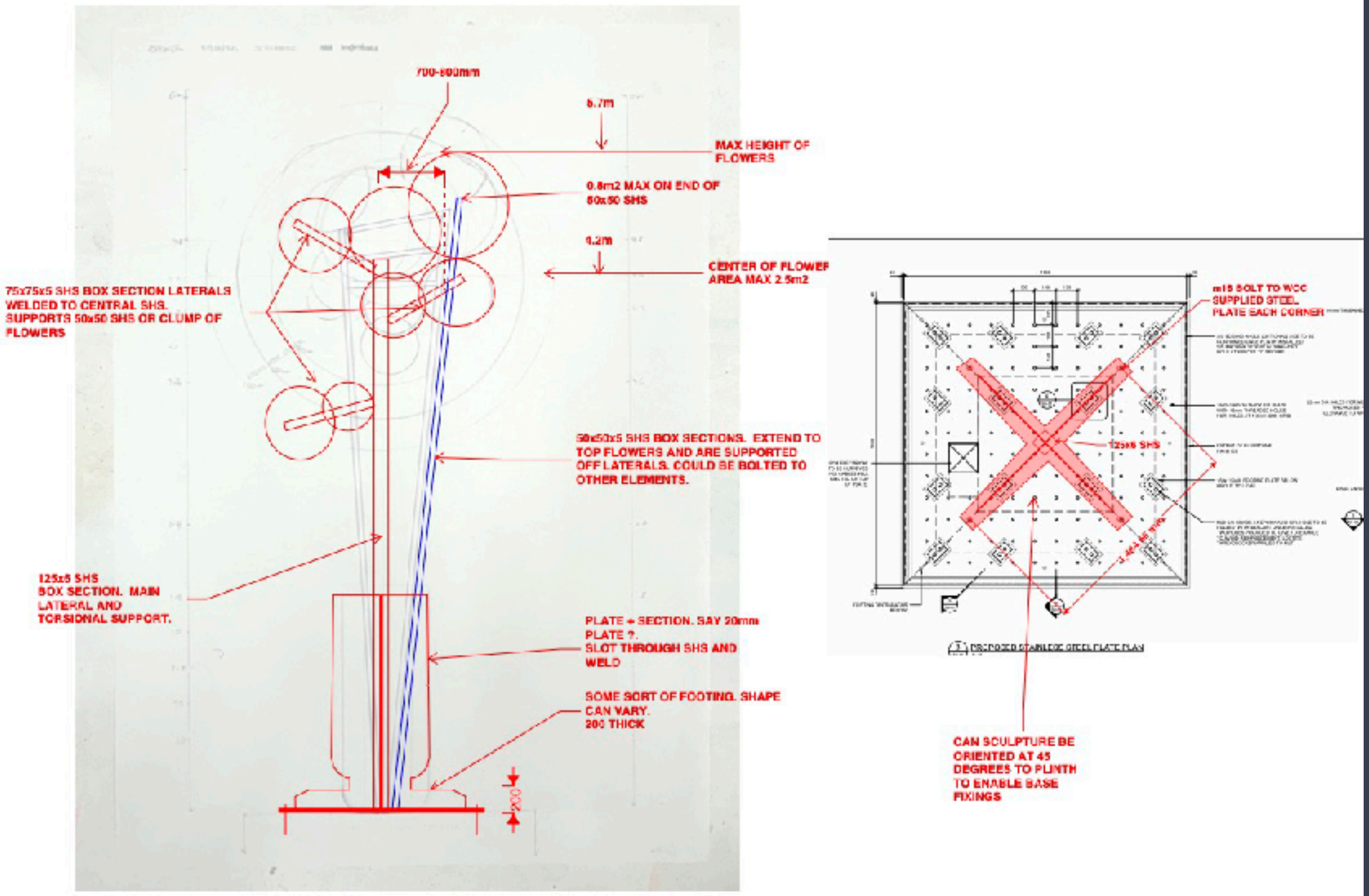
Each work varies compositionally, within the following parameters:

- Flowers located within a circle centred at 4.2m up the central column.
- Circle has 1.2m radius from midpoint.
- Max surface area of flowers and leaves is 2.5sqm
- Max weight on column is 200kg.

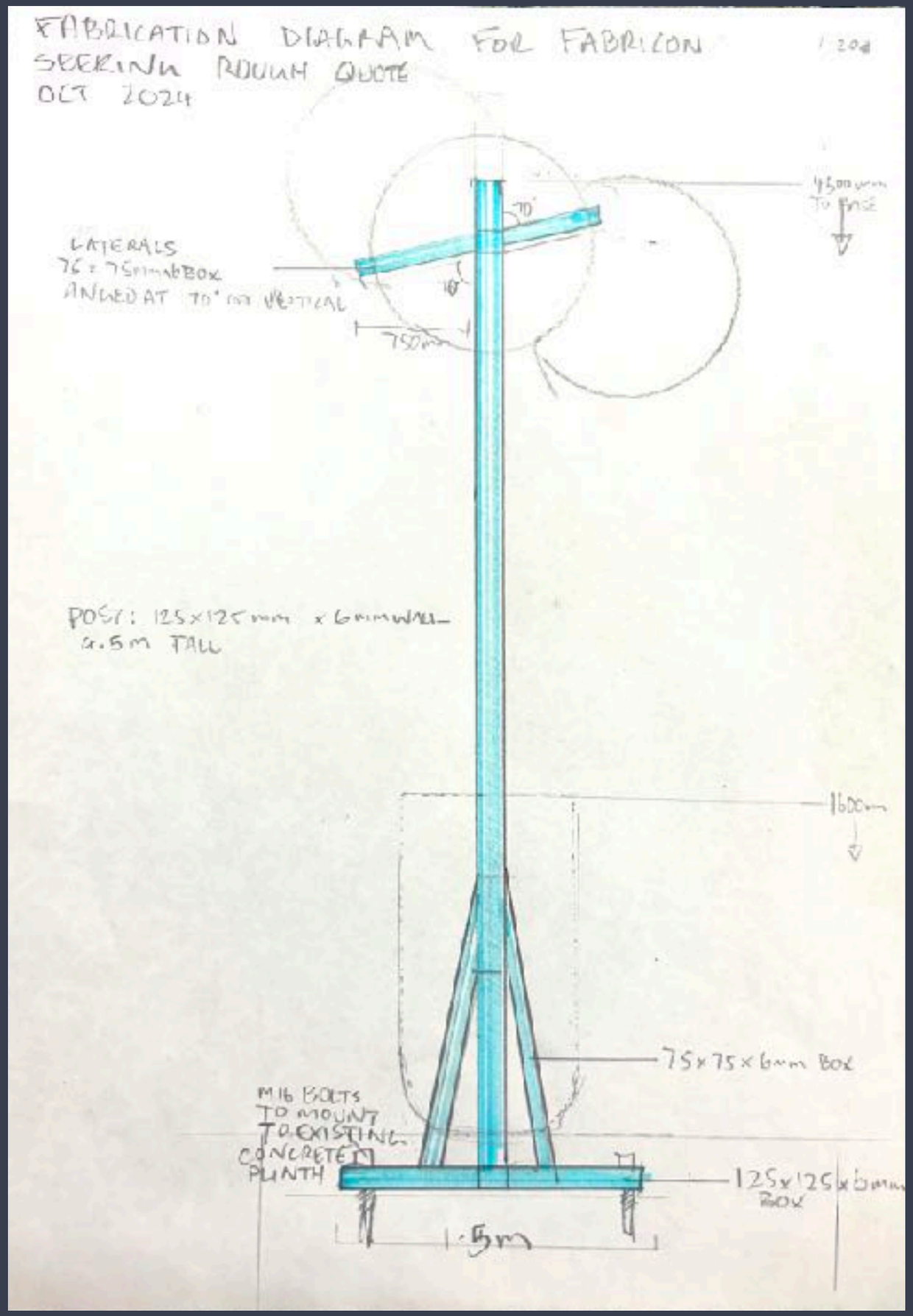
Additionally:

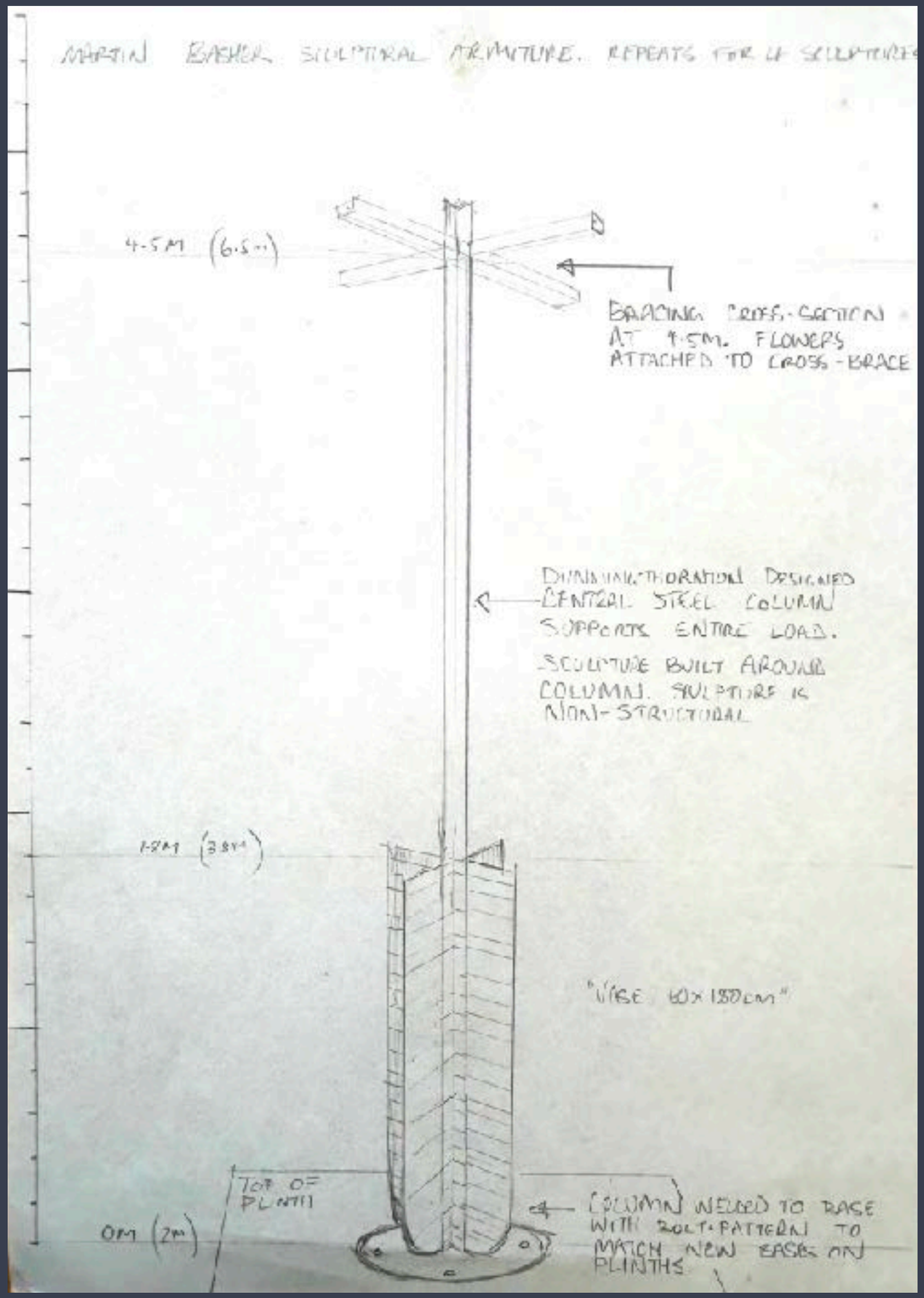
- Max height for stems, 6m. 40x40mm and 30x30mm square tube. No more than 1200mm of unsupported stem above flowers.
- Stems will be bolted to vase and flower mass.
- Vases measure 700x1800mm.
- A limited number of flowers and leaves may be fixed from the stems rather than the column. Max area 0.8sqm, pending engineer approval.





- Engineering drawing by Dunning Thornton showing side profile of the structural column to be used in all four sculptures, and a plan view showing how the sculptures will be fixed to the plinth. Flood lights and coloured plinth sleeves will also be fixed to the perimeter of the stainless plate.





- Working drawings, structural element, October 2024

Left image: Plywood ‘working sketches’ Note far left and right sculptures have large central columns.
Right image: Paint colour possibilities and gloss/matte options.

CONSULTANTS, SUBCONTRACTORS & VENDORS

Engineering:	Ryan Clarke, Dunning Thornton
Steel Fabrication:	Fabricon Fabrication, Seaview
ACM:	Atomic Laser, Seaview
Plywood:	Plymasters, Whanganui
Paint sourcing:	Total Bodyshop Supplies, Petone
Painting:	Intercoat Systems, Petone
Hardware:	Anzor fixatives.
Trucking:	Hutt Mover

PREVIOUS PUBLIC SCULPTURE

Left to right, From top left:

- **Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens New York, 2008.**
- **Rockefeller Apartments, New York 2012**
- **University of Connecticut, 2013**
- **A Commission by the New York Public Art Fund, Metrotech Plaza, 2010-12, day and night.**
- **Sculpture On The Gulf, 2022: These sculptures form the take-off point for the 4 Plinths. The specific takeaway from this project was the need for scale. At 3m, the work is exciting, but at 7m +, including the plinths, similar work will be enormously impactful.**

TIMELINE

2024	Finalise 4 works as 3D models, such that all components are resolved, welds and connections are located, and models exceed required wind and loading tolerances according to engineering specs.
2025.	January. Paint tests, finalise painting plan. Paint is the critical component to make this work sing; I'll invest serious time on this.
	February. Establish work-plan for production and installation.
	March-April. Execute 1/3 scale sculptures in wood/aluminium to work through assembly workflow
	July. Schedule vendors on timeline, confirm pricing.
	October. Begin production of components. All non-structural parts to be ready for painting by end of year.
	November. Locate workspace for assembly
2026	January. Fabricon Engineering to fabricate columns.
	Confirm fabrication meets spec with Dunning Thornton
	All components to painters
	Assemble work and prep for transport.
	February. Install work. Two days to mount sculptures, affix coloured sleeves to bases and affix lighting array.
	Receive final engineering and electrical certification.

DOCUMENTATION

Documentation will be all-important.

I have a Zeiss-lensed professional digital camera at my studio. I will document extensively throughout the process.

Additionally, my wife is a documentary director. With her help, I will provide the trust with sufficient material for a 5-min piece with interview voiceover and pans of the work in process.

THANK YOU!

Martin Basher
martinbasher@yahoo.co.uk
021.024.81160

Dunning Thornton consultants

Ref: 8935 M01

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: **Martin Basher**

FROM: Ryan Clarke **TOTAL PAGES : 4**

DATE: 30.10.2024

RE: **Big Flowers for a Wild City - Engineering Concepts Report**

This report describes the structural design requirements for the “Big Flowers for a Wild City” sculptures at the 4 Plinths and outlines the method of showing compliance with building code clause B1. It is our understanding that these sculptures fall under schedule 1 of the building code and do not require a building consent.

The sculptures are specifically designed for installation onto the 4 Plinths outside of Te Papa in Wellington. Each of the sculptures forms a similar but varying arrangement of flowers in a vase. Each consists of a steel framed skeleton making up the vase and stems and plywood circles for the flowers. The arrangement of flowers is in two orthogonal planes.

Construction:
At the bottom the vase shape forms a stable base for the structure. This is made from steel plate welded together to form a cruciform section with feet extending outward at the base for stability. The vase will be fixed to a proposed stainless steel plate mounting platform supplied the WCC (and also designed by Dunning Thornton Consultants).

A central square hollow steel section extends upward from the base (vase). This forms the main structural stem that braces the flower arrangement for lateral loads and torsion. Smaller lateral steel sections are welded to the main stem these will support flowers and secondary stems. Steel fabrication will be a qualified and experienced steel fabricator.

Secondary stems are made from smaller steel box sections. These span from the top of the vase to the laterals then cantilever up to support more flowers. The arrangement of these secondary stems and flowers can be more random and variable within certain structural constraints as shown on the sketch below. The variation in stem and flower arrangement gives each sculpture a unique look and feel.

Flowers will be fabricated from laminating layers of plywood. These intersect to span between laterals and stems. These may be screw fixed or bolted to the supporting steels.

The final arrangement of flowers and stems will be reviewed by the engineer for compliance to the structural constraints prior to, and during fabrication.

Consulting Structural Engineers
94 Dixon Street, PO Box 27-153, Wellington 6141
Telephone (644) 385-0019, E-Mail: dtcwgtn@dunningthornton.co.nz

Stability:
The sculptures are design as IL2 structures for a design life of less than 5 years. The actual display period at the plinths is 2 years. They are most sensitive to wind action, and as such, are designed for a ULS wind pressures corresponding to a 1/250-year return period as per table 3.3 of NZS1170.0.

3d analysis has been carried out using Spacegass software to derive the structural constraints in the sketch below.

The base fixing forces have been checked to be within the limits of the proposed WCC stainless steel mounting plate attachment on top of the plinths.

Durability:
The steel frames and fixings are made from mild steel and will be zinc rich primed and top coated and as such have a serviceable life span well beyond the 2-year installation time frame. Non conducting separation will be provided between the stainless-steel plate and mild steel sculpture plate to avoid bimetallic corrosion effects.

Flowers will be constructed from H3 treated ply and coated with a robust paint system.

Construction Monitoring/QA:
The sculptures will be monitored to a CM3 level. This includes steel shop drawing review, inspection during the flower and stem arrangement, fixings installation, and final securing on site.

Upon the successful completion of the site installation DTC will issue a site inspection reports and a fabrication/installation monitoring completion statement signed by a CPEng engineer.

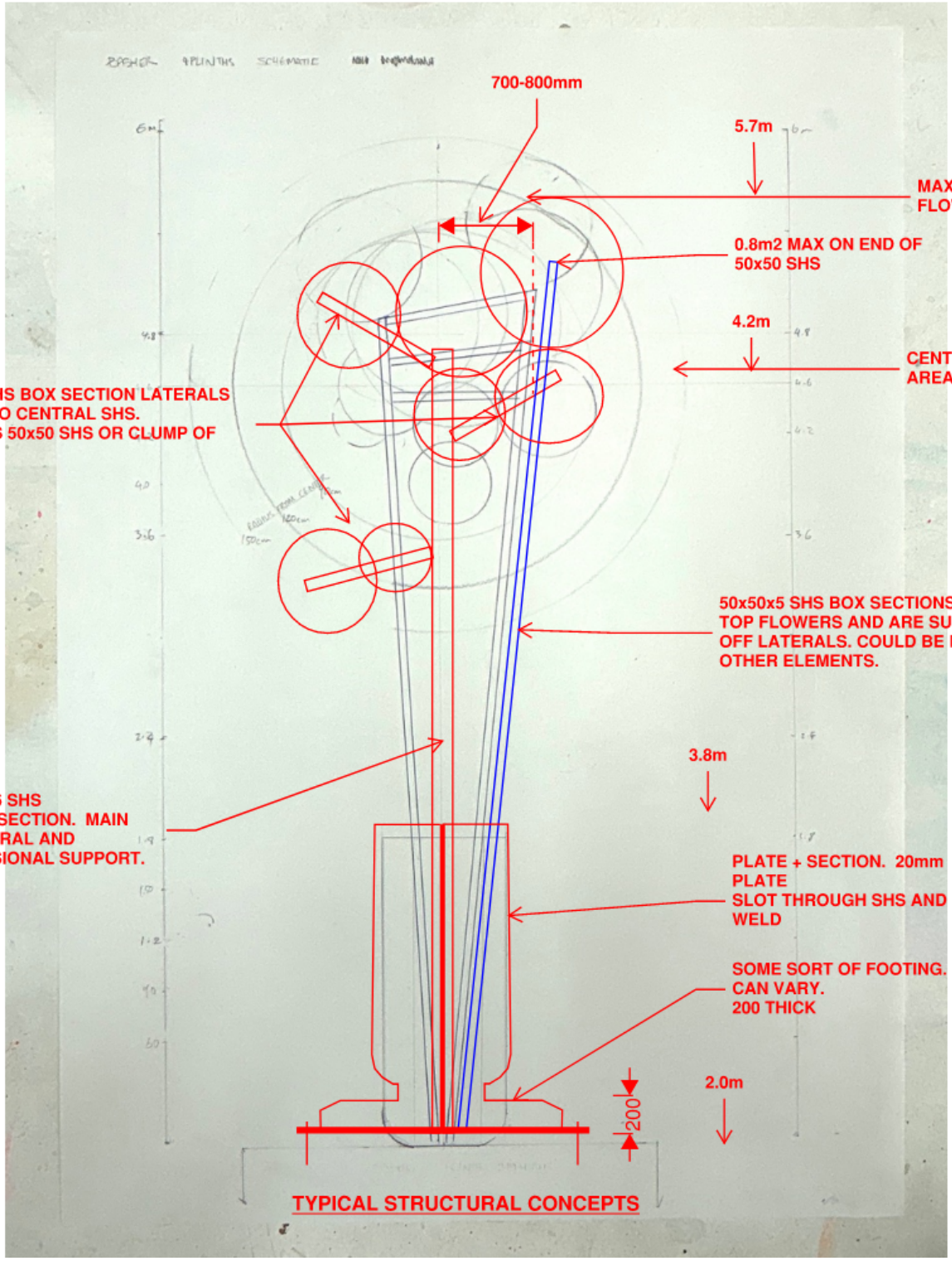


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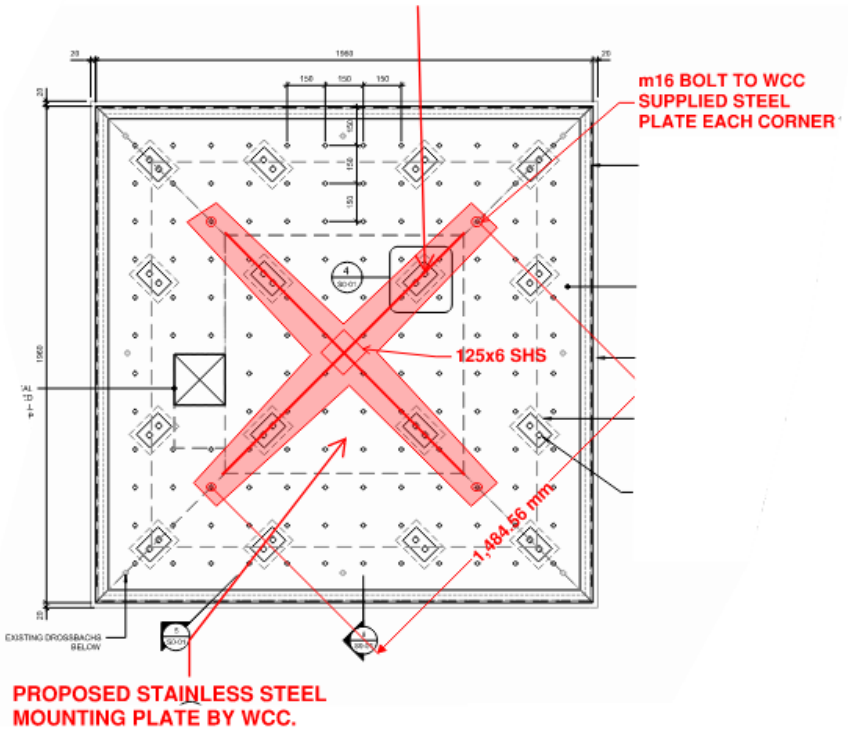
PLATE CRUSIFORM SECTION. 20mm PLATE
SLOT THROUGH SHS AND WELD



PLAN ON BASE FIXING

Regards

Ryan Clarke
DIRECTOR
CpEng 221962
241030RGC

Consulting Structural Engineers
94 Dixon Street, PO Box 27-153, Wellington 6141
Telephone (644) 385-0019, E-Mail: dtcwgtn@dunningthornton.co.nz

From: **Connor Hamill** Connor.Hamill@wcc.govt.nz
Subject: RE: TA Exemption for sculptures Te Papa - Martin Basher
Date: 21 October 2024 at 10:21 AM
To: martinbasher@yahoo.co.uk

CH

Hi Martin,

WCC would be happy to issue a TA Discretionary Exemption for the proposed sculptures

You will need to lodge an application in the Simpli portal for a building consent however, note in the description of work that you are applying for a TA Exemption

Kind Regards

Connor Hamill *BDes (Hons)*
Lead Consenting Officer | Building Approvals | Wellington City Council
E Connor.Hamill@wcc.govt.nz | **W** Wellington.govt.nz |

From: Wellington City Council Website Team <noreply@alchemer.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 16, 2024 12:02 PM
To: BUS: BCLS Inspectors <busbclsinspectors@wcc.govt.nz>
Subject: New Code Compliance Certificates query - Martin Basher

You have received a new query. The details are below:

Contact details

First name:	Martin
Last name:	Basher
Email address:	martinbasher@yahoo.co.uk

Phone number 02102481160

Query details	
Address for query:	29 JERVOIS QUAY LOT 2 DP 436892
Reference number:	
Older than 5 years:	No
Query type:	Code Compliance Certificates
Query details:	Kia ora, I'm writing regarding four proposed sculptures I am developing to be placed on the four plinths outside Te Papa. The sculptures would be in place for two years from 2026-2028. I believe previous sculptures on these plinths have been exempted from consent on the basis of Building Act 2004, Schedule 1 part 1.25. I want to confirm that mine would be similarly exempted under Schedule 1.39, with the structural engineers Dunning Thornton providing construction review. Further, to confirm these sculptures would be assessed under the Building Act as signs, my proposal is for four, 5m-tall works constructed from 10-20mm aluminium plate and alumium composite panel (ACL), as shown in the renderings attached. The work will be enlargements of smaller sculptures I have already constructed - also included, to better demonstrate the structure of the work. Components will be primarly be mechanically affixed using bolts and adhesive, Additionally, welds will be placed at critical connections. Thank you for your consideration, I am available py phone if you have any queries. Regards, Martin Basher

Attached files:

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