

VESSELS

DANIEL K. BROWN

Original music by Mark K. Johnson

VESSELS is a world premier interactive multimedia installation commissioned by Museum of Wellington City & Sea – Wellington Museums Trust for the 2010 New Zealand Festival of the Arts.

It consists of 33 transparent vessels of water suspended upon the central atrium wall of the Museum, illuminated by spotlights from above. The vessels are arranged in seven lines of five, with two missing... The wall forms a backdrop upon which a myriad of water reflections emanate from the vessels.

VESSELS is inspired by Dante's early-14th century epic poem, the *Divine Comedy*, which predicted that directly opposite Jerusalem in the great oceans of the southern hemisphere lies an island, above which shines a constellation of four stars in the shape of a cross. Atop this island sits the original Garden of Paradise. An angel in the form of a divine white bird eternally pilots vessels of souls from the underworld to the island shores. Ripples of light emanate from the vessels, so radiant that the eye can barely endure them. (*Purgatorio*, Canto II of XXXIII)

Original music by Mark K. Johnson establishes the sounds of a ghost vessel silently approaching the shore, and then eternally receding once again. The music contains the whispers of the tide; the sounds of the sea repeating in endless cycles; the haunting echoes of a ship's bell in the distance, warning of obstacles.

Overtones of the music create vibrations within the vessels and result in changing patterns of water ripples above. Visitors are invited to touch the water, making the ripples magnify.

This interactive work represents the threshold separating land and sea, light and darkness, time and eternity – the intermittent zone between life and afterlife. The piece is activated by the touch of music and the touch of visitors, witnesses to the world of souls.

About the Artists

Daniel K. Brown, visual artist

Daniel is associate professor of architecture and design at Victoria University of Wellington. His multimedia installations have appeared annually in Rome and New York since 2005, in association with the City of Rome “Birthday of the Eternal City” celebrations, New York River to River Festival, Rome Summer Solstice Festival (Solstizio d’Estate), and the Festa Europa della Musica (European Festival of Music). His international installations and music/performance pieces challenge presumptive definitions, prescriptions and limitations of architectural and urban space. In his work, he explores and evidences how architecture and our urban environments can be redefined through use of projection, sound, and reflection inhabited by history and mythology. Brown holds a Master of Architecture degree from Yale University and is the recipient of eleven teaching awards and numerous design awards. He is the recipient of three design research fellowships including the Fulbright in relation to his interest in architecture relating to symbolism and narrative. Over the past 25 years he has collaborated in projects around the world from Japan to Mexico, from Saudi Arabia to Spain, and within the United States.

Mark K. Johnson, composer

Mark studied music at the University of Nevada and the Manhattan School of Music, and he went on to complete an MA in Music and Social Theory at New York University: “Music Aesthetics as a Response to Social Change”. His primary interest is narrative music, and he is currently working collaboratively on international productions for Italy and New York entitled “Siren’s Song”, “Overtones”, and “Rivers of the Underworld”. Before initiating his career as a composer, Mark was a tenor soloist for the University of Nevada opera, debuting at Lincoln Center in New York in 1989. Mark taught Sight Reading / Dictation and Music History / Appreciation at the University of Nevada from 1988-1990 and is the recipient of numerous music awards and scholarships.