

writer **PETER WHITE** // photographer **LOGAN WEST**

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE DESIGNING BETTER SPACES

BELA HINEMOA GRIMSDALE finds landscape architecture a creative way to combine her passion for art and design – in the natural and built environments – with her connection to Te Ao Māori.

Bela – who is of Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Raukawa and Ngāti Toa Rangatira descent – has worked for Tāmaki Makaurau-based LandLAB for the past six years after graduating from Unitec|Te Pūkenga with a four-year Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree.

She also has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Auckland, with a double major in Cultural Heritage and Museums and Art History.

“I discovered a passion for practical and traditional Māori methods, materials, techniques and researching native plant species for their uses. Landscape architecture is relatively new to me but I pulled in all my knowledge I have learnt through life – my Māori genealogy and all the study I did – into what I do now,” says Bela.

“What I love most about my role at LandLAB is working with Māori artists and how we integrate their stories and values into our projects. I really enjoy research so that’s everything to do with the

land, its history and people, and that is what drives our designs.

“We work closely with our artists to integrate their stories and values into our projects in a meaningful

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way. This is through different landscape design elements such as paving, lighting, furniture, standalone artworks and materiality.

“I get to meet all these amazing artists from all over the country and it is great to learn all the stories of Aotearoa.”

One of the projects Bela worked on in the Tāmaki Makaurau CBD was the Quay Street upgrade. This was one of five projects with several landscape architectural firms involved, working alongside each other. Bela was doing an internship with LandLAB in her fourth year at Unitec|Te Pūkenga, which she says is a good way for students to start their careers in the industry.

“It is all built now and I am really proud of the work that we did. We worked closely with an amazing artist, Reuben Kirkwood (Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki); it is just beautiful what was done there.”

Bela loved her time studying, particularly at Unitec|Te Pūkenga. She worked extensively on the landscape architecture magazine XSection which she says opened up opportunities through networking.

Bela attended Western Springs College but left early to start working. She spent 20 years in the

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hospitality industry before finding her true calling in the field of landscape architecture.

She encourages school leavers to consider the four-year Unitec Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree.

"A key thing is to have a passion for the land, a passion for culture, a passion for people and places and the environment. With all these pressures we are coming into now, as landscape architects we are probably going to be leading the fight against climate change.

"Landscape architecture is really broad. There is a whole lot of different facets of it including art, design, creativity, landscape, plants and people.

"We design better places for people."



KEY FACTS



- **BELA HINEMOA GRIMSDALE** HAS WORKED FOR TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU-BASED **LANDLAB** FOR THE PAST SIX YEARS AFTER GRADUATING FROM **UNITEC | TE PŪKENGĀ** WITH A FOUR-YEAR BACHELOR OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE DEGREE.
- **ONE OF THE PROJECTS BELA** WORKED ON IN THE TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU CBD WAS THE **QUAY STREET UPGRADE**.
- **BELA** IS OF **TE ĀTIAWA, NGĀTI RAUKAWA** AND **NGĀTI TOA RANGATIRA** DESCENT.



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