

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU WALKED PAST ME?
A Service Artwork for Te Komititanga Square
By Blake Aitken

OVERVIEW

This is a public installation of 100 busts of people experiencing homelessness, temporarily sited in Te Komititanga Square. Each bust is 3D-scanned, cast in plaster, and decorated by the person it represents. The busts are mounted on cruciform coin-drop bases, integrated into the pavers of the square.

Passersby are invited to interact—leave coins, take coins, stop, look, think. Each bust is fragile and sculptural, but functional. It serves as a donation vessel and as a public monument.

Each bust is also tied to an NFT. The NFT documents the entire life cycle: the original scan, the raw cast, the decorated sculpture, the installation, any destruction, and the final remains. After each bust is removed, a permanent metal plaque is installed in the ground—flush with the paving—to mark its place.

This is not just a sculptural installation. It is a system. It creates a temporary disruption, a record of presence, and a permanent scar—a worthy scar—in the heart of the city.

LOCATION: TE KOMITITANGA SQUARE

The work will be installed in the white-stepped paving pattern of Te Komititanga Square. This paving represents a whāriki: a woven welcome mat. The square is a site of convergence for ferry passengers, workers, tourists, and the homeless. It sits on reclaimed land.

The busts occupy the whāriki, interrupting the flow of foot traffic. They sit within a diagrid across the square. Each bust forces a decision—step around, stop, or engage. Temporary raised tactile bumps surround each bust, marking them as physical intrusions and accessibility markers.

Each bust leaves behind a plaque. These plaques are cut into the paving and feature a coin slot motif and (with consent) five facts about the person it commemorates. These are not decorations. They are permanent public markers—embedded memory.

HOW IT WORKS

Each bust:

- Measures 650 mm in height
- Is scanned, moulded, and cast in plaster
- Is painted or decorated by the subject
- Is mounted on a cruciform steel column installed in the ground
- Has a top plate etched with four inscriptions:
 - "HMTHYWPM" + the full phrase in braille
 - "LEAVE A COIN" (with icon and directional line)
 - "DROP A COIN" (with engraved cross and dotted line)
 - "TAKE A COIN" (with open hands and dotted line)

Coins can be placed in or removed from each bust. These are not sealed donation boxes—they are open, accessible, and vulnerable, like the people they represent. If a bust is broken, it is scanned again. This new scan is added to its NFT record.

NFT STRUCTURE

Each bust is tied to a unique NFT containing:

- The original face scan
- The cast bust
- The decorated version
- The installed version in the square
- The remains (if destroyed)
- The installed plaque

Each NFT is listed with a QR code on the bust itself and on the plaque. All NFTs are displayed on a public screen in the square, scrollable in real time.

VOTING TOKENS

Each bust is sold (physical + NFT) for NZD 40,000 (crypto equivalent). It comes with two voting tokens:

- One is reserved for the homeless subject (held in trust)
- One is sold with the bust

Token holders can:

- Vote on whether future cities may replicate the project
- Participate in governance of the overarching artwork.

ECONOMICS & DISTRIBUTION

Per Bust Sale:

- \$28,000 — goes to house, feed, and support the homeless subject (via an NGO)
- \$10,000 — paid to Auckland Council for site use and paver modification
- \$2,000 — used for scanning, casting, painting, and logistics

Royalties (resale of bust NFTs):

- 7% — to the NGO
- 2% — to the artist
- 1% — to the Council (for maintenance of plaques)

Additional Token Sale:

- 300 voting tokens released after initial installation
- Reserve price: NZD 40,000 each
- 90% of sale — to artist
- 10% of sale — to NGO
- 9% resale royalty — to artist
- 1% resale royalty — to NGO

PUBLIC ELEMENTS

- 24/7 livestream of the installation site, with public access
- Scheduled public coin collection events
- Permanent plaques installed after removal, etched with QR codes and consented biographical data
- NFTs and scans displayed on a screen in the square, publicly scrollable

THE RED TENT

During the installation, a temporary structure called The Red Tent will be installed in the square. It serves as:

- A studio for scanning and decorating busts
- A food and clothing hub for participants
- A reference to The Warehouse (inspired by Stephen Tindall)

The Red Tent is symbolic and functional: a node of care in a space of disruption.

TIMELINE

- June–August 2025 — Bootstrap phase; 5 busts completed
 - October 2025 — Overnight Sunday installation
 - October–November 2025 — Public exhibition and care phase
 - December 2025 — Removal and plaque installation
 - 2026 — Archive and DAO token rollout
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FINAL NOTES

This project is designed as an open system:

- The public contributes coins
- The homeless contribute presence and stories
- The wealthy contribute funding and stewardship
- The artist contributes structure and risk

Every part of the system is visible. Every part is vulnerable. Every part matters.

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