

## *Caryatid*

**Category :** Sculpture

**Title :** Caryatid

**Primary artist(s) :** Mark Whyte

**Execution date :** 1989

**Media :** Marble

**Approximate dimensions :** h 4m w 1m

**Location :** Christchurch Law Courts, Durham Street

**Setting :** Grass frontage on the Avon bank

**Owner / administrator :** Justice Department



Mark Whyte's sculpture *Caryatid* was one of four sculptures commissioned in 1988 for the new Justice Department buildings. A select committee chose three of the art works for the site, while another was commissioned in consultation with the Ngai Tahu Trust Board.

Mark Whyte gave his work the title *Caryatid*. The word caryatid generally refers to a female figure used as a pillar to support entablature<sup>1</sup> In his sculpture Whyte has incorporated a column like figure supporting a weight. Here is his description; "The sculpture is designed to show a moment in time, captured between the burden of supporting a weight and the force required for release. A figure about to tip a block held in a precarious position above the head, with arms bent back under the strain."<sup>2</sup>

The site Whyte had proposed for placing his sculpture was also the selected position for another artist's work. The selection committee agreed that the vertical nature of Whyte's work suited the river site that Whyte had suggested. Situated beside the Avon, the trees create an enclosed space around the sculpture with an opening to the sky.

<sup>1</sup> Sykes, J.B; *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, ed VI, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1976). p152.

<sup>2</sup> Taken from Mark Whyte's proposal for the Christchurch Law Courts, 1987