

New Monument to Tasman's Meeting with the Maori – In Delfts Blauw

Arjan van der Boon and Anneke Borren

Almost 370 years ago, a hundred or so courageous Dutch men sailed the unknown waters around what we now call Tasmania and New Zealand. An image was drawn, in December 1642, of the dramatic events that unfolded as they engaged in battle with local Maori in 'Moordenaers Baij' – also called *Mohau* or Golden Bay today.

Not many people know the pen and brown ink drawing that was produced by Isaac Gilsemans at the time, who was sailing with Abel Tasman on the *Zeehaen* and the *Heemskerck* along the coast of the South Island. But that's about to change.

Moordenaers Baij: Pen and brown ink drawing, attributed to Isaac Gilsemans, 1642. More information: www.gahetna.nl/webexpo/item/abel-tasman-down-under



Anneke Borren, a ceramic artist from Paremata just north of Wellington, is producing a 3 by 5 metre 'Tasman Tableau' that will undoubtedly become an iconic tourist attraction, once it has been set up as part of the Dutch Connection Museum Centre (see September issue, 2011). She is in the process of firing 660 *Delfts Blauwe Tegels*, to create the Tableau in the way it has been done for 100s of years in *Nederland*. Anneke was trained at *De Porceleynse Fles* in Delft.



As Anneke puts it: "Through May and June this year, I have been living on the water in the middle of Golden Bay, in the year 1642, on board the Dutch sailing ship *De Zeehaen* - looking through the eyes of Delft blue ceramic tiles."

Anneke at work – painting the landscape (Photo courtesy of Anneke Borren)

Sponsor Ons Museum – Onze Plek

The Dutch Connection Museum Trust commissioned Anneke to produce the huge tile mural as a fundraiser. She has almost finished the job, but you can still have your name featured on a tile, as part of the border of the Tableau.

Sponsor a Delft Blue tile for NZ\$250, and as a 'thanks' for your donation, Anneke will paint a tile with your family's name which will sit in 'de lijst' forever after. The Tableau will be set up as part of 'Ons Museum' next to De Molen, in Foxton.

Name tiles for the border (Photo courtesy of Anneke Borren)

Want a Delfts Blauwe Tegel with your name in the Tasman Tableau?

Send Yolande van de Wetering an email: upsidown@xtra.co.nz

She will post or email you an Order Form.

There are less than 80 border tiles left. **So be quick!**



There was a lot of work and research involved for Anneke, to produce the Tableau in an artistically responsible way and reproduce a small drawing as Delft Blue Tiles depicting life-size Maori warriors.

“To start the process, I made maquettes of the drawing in 2011 – each comprising 24 tiles – for myself, the Dutch Connection and the Dutch Ambassador. I had to give the tableau ‘my own artistic interpretation’ which is necessary when ‘translating’ history into an artwork.

From Experiment to Perfect Art

Once her experiment was successful, Anneke started on the real Tableau. “I divided a copy of the original drawing into segments, four down and seven across, and had photocopy enlargements made. I managed to fit four tables into my small studio, each with sections of 16 tiles.”

After that, she could start painting the tiles. “I brush decorated with a mixture of oxides on top of the unfired glaze (overglaze decoration) - no room for mistakes as every bit of each brush stroke shows up! Copper oxide for green; cobalt oxide with bits of iron and chrome for a good blue; watered down versions of both for shading and a red stain for the Dutch flag.

“My first attempt of 16 tiles for the background mountains was unsuccessful. I had used Japanese brushes and the fired result was ‘painterly’ with lovely colours, but too ‘watercolourly’ to be indicative of the original pen lines in the drawing. Mentally and emotionally I had to translate those lines into brush strokes that evoked a 1642 image. It had to be bold and confident in its much larger size. It was only after I changed to short-haired square brushes of several sizes, that things started to work out.”

Another issue was that Gilsemans had never seen a Maori before and was probably better trained in drawing topography than human bodies and faces. “The heads of the Maori depicted in the drawing seemed out of proportion, perhaps because when looking down on a waka from a tall ship, the perspective is skewed. So I asked an artist friend to ‘normalise’ the men's heads so I could brushwork them into the style of the tableau,” says Anneke.

Section with Maori warriors (Photo courtesy of Anneke Borren)



Anneke started with the mountain range in the back and made her way through the blocks of tiles: “I got totally immersed in the job, square-eyed and focused. I had to demarcate the brush-lines and also did a lot of line scratching; wavy ones for beards, lines forming pulled back hair, lines distinguishing knees from legs, arms from paddles. Also, whilst I could not change the positions of the waka warriors, I still had to take into consideration the eventual grouting lines between the tiles, trying not to cut through important details like necks, eyes and noses.”

Anneke went through a special firing process. “My white glaze requires fairly high-firing, between 1200 and 1250 degrees C. I fired the tiles at more than 100C above their intended firing range, to be able to get a lovely blue on sparkling white. This meant their horizontal stacking in my electric kiln became of paramount importance. The last thing I wanted was for the now fragile tiles to break.”

A Truly Big Job!

Following each firing, Anneke laid the tiles all over the carpet in her house. “I had no room big enough to see the complete whole, so had to carefully pack away each section after examination, in order to lay out the next one. Only when the museum building in Foxton is completed, and I'm helping the tiler to put it all together, will I be able to see the whole image together – in reality – instead of in my head.”

It will be a great day, when the Dutch Connection and Anneke can unveil the Tasman Tableau, and it will once and for all correct the views of most Kiwis that it was Captain Cook who ‘discovered’ New Zealand.

Do you want to be part of correcting history? Ask us for a Tasman Tableau Tile Order Form. You can email her at upsidown@xtra.co.nz. Your name will feature in the Border of the Tableau. The kids and grandkids one day will say with pride: “Hey, that’s my Pappa en Mamma, my Opa en Oma...”

On behalf of the Dutch Connection, thanks for your generous contribution!