Reko Rennie’s ‘Murri Totems’ at La Trobe University – video transcript 31/10/13

Narrator:

A wintry backdrop only enhanced the striking appeal of indigenous artist Reko Rennie’s ‘Murri Totems’ sculpture at it’s official opening at the front of La Trobe’s Institute for Molecular Science. The four stunningly coloured columns took the artist a year to create and are a modern take on traditional Indigenous ceremonial poles.

Each sculpture was designed using the five platonic solids. There geometric shapes a perfect compliment to the modern design of La Trobe’s world-renowned Molecular Science Institute.

Reko Rennie:

Within aboriginal culture and society there is complex knowledge systems and science revolved around iconography and identity, and so I started having a look at Plato’s theory and platonic solids and looking at the shapes and formations. And thought if you could re-unfold some of those platonic solids, change the shapes of them and the formation and create a kind of totem pole.

Narrator:

‘Murri Totems’ is the first major sculptural commission at the Melbourne campus since the 1980’s. Vice-Chancellor Professor John Dewar says the work blends science with Indigenous heritage.

Professor John Dewar:

It is really important that we make a statement about the University’s commitment to Indigenous culture and to Indigenous art. This is as far as we know the only commissioned piece of sculpture by an Indigenous artist to be found in the north of Melbourne, so La Trobe is absolutely delighted to be yet again a first in this area as well.

Narrator:

The sculpture is prompting much discussion about Indigenous culture, science and art amongst students and staff – and that’s exactly Reko Rennie and the University’s intent.

Professor Nick Hoogenraad:

I don’t think enough Australians are aware of the fact that Aboriginal art is no different from western art in having a contemporary movement as well as a more traditional movement.

Reko Rennie:

It’s about breaking down romanticised notions of aboriginality and stereotypes and hopefully this shows that there is a lot more than just dots. Look I’m really excited and it’s a real privilege and honour to be here and have my work standing in this forecourt. It’s an amazing project.

Narrator:

‘Murri Totems’ is a testament to that.

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