

# Gill Gatfield

Carved in unique stone extracted from the remote mountains of New Zealand, *Zealandia* combines natural materials, technical innovation and minimalist form. Twin slabs defy gravity, stretching up from an Italian granite plinth. Like shifting tectonic plates, the stone panels slice through each other, linking the sculpture to its subterranean source. Exposed striations capture striking snapshots of primordial time. From the earth and of the earth, *Zealandia* conveys qualities of fragility, strength and resilience. It registers the discovery of Zealandia, the 8th continent, a submerged landmass with small islands rising up from the Pacific Ocean.

This elegant X-figure is formally complex, even contradictory. *Zealandia* proposes a baroque abstraction. The organic markings in the deeply veined stone evoke human tissue, musculature and skin. These undulating patterns also hint at the graceful flow of drapery reminiscent of classical sculpture. A steel skeleton reveals a backbone, a scaffold for the skin of stone. Spatial dynamism and structural tensions combine to intrigue and provoke, while silky planes entice hands to reach out and touch.

*Zealandia* blurs distinctions between art, text, mathematics and architecture as it rethinks Da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man*, immortalised on the one Euro coin. Front view presents an anthropomorphic figure with arms stretched up, legs apart, feet firmly on the substrate below. Interlocking limbs create an A-frame, a physical cave, a shelter between splayed 'legs'. Presented first in Venice (the home of Da Vinci's drawing), *Zealandia* begins a new conversation about the shape of humanity and our bond with nature.

Streaked with threads of silver and gold, the mineral crystals and mica trigger illusive and ephemeral effects. *Zealandia* is both regal and dramatic; majestic and delicate. Shimmering in the glare of sun-

light, luminous in twilight, and brooding under clouds and moonlight, the sculpture becomes a metaphor of human psychology. In daylight, the X-figure is replicated on the ground, casting an encircling shadow that tracks the passage of time. Creating the female genetic code XX on horizontal and vertical planes, this blueprint speaks of the origins of human life – deep within women.

Also a Roman numeral: dieci/ten, the hourglass figure with high waist, slim features and open limbs evokes 10/10, a male-defined measure of absolute feminine beauty. Amid global movements demanding gender equality, respect and inclusion for all, *Zealandia* invites a shift in perception. Encircling the work, it changes from a sensual feminine form into a robust vertical shaft. It becomes a freestanding column, the Roman numeral one, an 'I-figure', a universal gender-free symbol of existence.

Simultaneously ancient, current and futuristic, *Zealandia* blends artistic canons, continents and eons. In the footsteps of the ancient *Winged Victory of Samothrace*, Rodin's *Walking Man* and Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, this contemporary monument traverses time, gender and place. Representative of humanity's interconnectivity with the planet and universal human rights, *Zealandia* asserts an aura of renewed power, action and triumph.

