



2007

## Once Were Warriors

**Pip Cheshire talks to Urban Issues Group chairperson Graeme Scott about the threatened future of the architecture profession's involvement in urban design in this city.**

Standing on the top of Titirangi's Mount Atkinson, with the isthmus and thirty eager first pro architecture students laid out before him, Doc Toy declared that "architecture is nothing to do with buildings and everything to do with the spaces between them". Some thirty or so years later landscape architect and teacher Charles Waldheim warns that this meta ground of our profession is under threat, the rug being stolen from under our feet while we are distracted by our obsession with objects.

In a recent lecture Waldheim ran the argument that urban design is increasingly the realm of the landscape crew, as town planners are transfixed by regulation and architects by discrete objects, leaving the ground open to those whose education is concerned with the organisation of open space. For proof one need only reflect on the City Council's seeking commentary on the impact of the proposed bylaw banning billboards from a landscape consultant rather than an architect.

This unhappy analysis has been recognised by Graeme Scott, chair of the Auckland Branch's Urban Issues Group, as sounding a timely warning; he observes that we architects are increasingly voiceless in a time of greater public attention to the quality of the city. The Branch has a proud recent history of going into battle for issues - Amanda Reynolds leading the charge for the preservation of the Britomart heritage buildings being a most notable example. Scott, however, feels that where once the issues were clear and positions easily taken we are now rendered mute by a combination of professional courtesy, fear of commercial backlash and confusion over the battle lines.

As issues have become more complex, the Urban Issues Group finds itself increasingly impaled on the cleft stick of being part of an organisation whose members stand on opposing sides of the encounter. The ensuing confusion is further compounded by the near impenetrability of the rhetoric deployed in the urban design debate. While the issues have been co-opted by politicians in support of one or another position, one senses that it's a bit like global warming, with duelling doctorates speaking in tongues before a bewildered public.

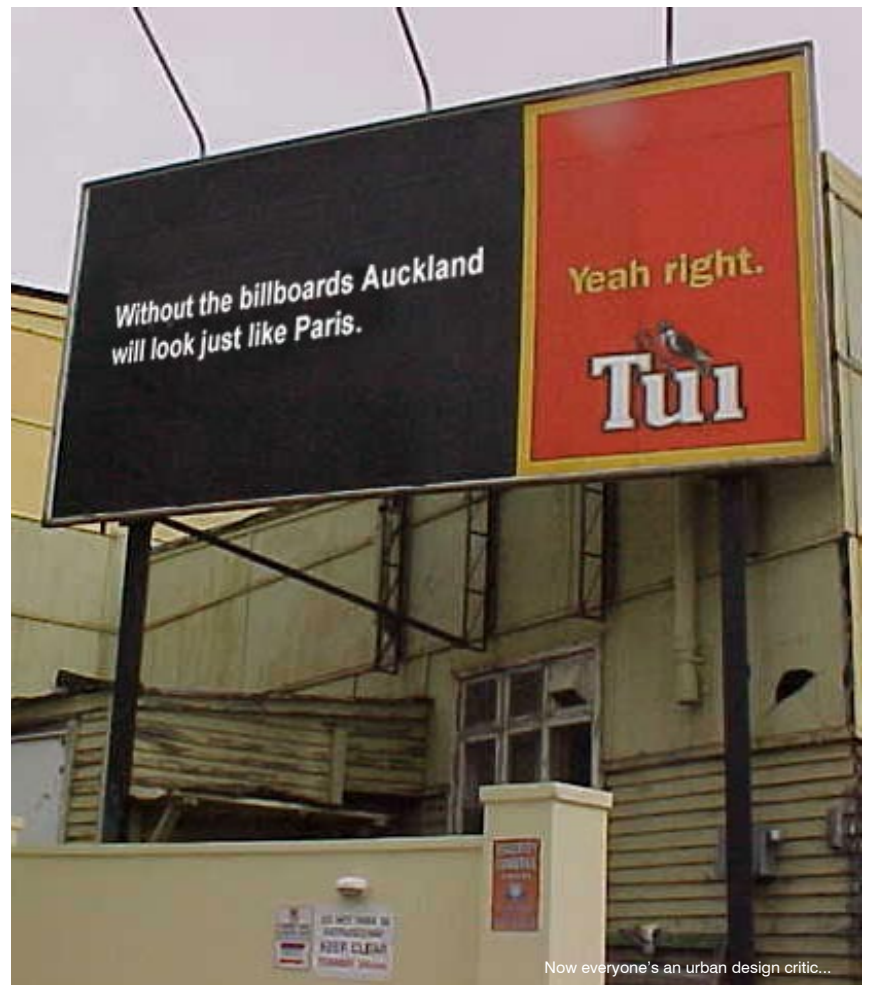
Scott is keen that the UIG leave behind its history of reactive commentary and opposition to projects, avoid the quagmire of single issues, and concentrate on widening its focus to include a more comprehensive discussion on the city's evolution. In part this shift in emphasis is possible due to the role of the Urban Design Panels, themselves the result of an initiative of the local Branch a few years ago.

As most of us will have experienced, the panels are comprised of architects, urban designers, property

owners, developers and landscapers who offer commentary on projects heading for Resource Consent in Auckland City. Recent experience has shown that the Urban Issues Group is second in line in the examination of projects and as such is often in a position of girding its collective loins for action, only to find that the developer's enthusiasm for critique and change already exhausted by an UDP mauling.

Given that individual projects are receiving a robust hearing in the UDP, the Urban Issues Group should rightly focus on the bigger issues of public space. Making the debate intelligible to the wider public is critical to its success; it is to this end that the group is attempting to gather around it those who would like to take the issues to the public. There are a number of events in place that will facilitate this: the Winter Series lectures came from D72 to the city with the intention of engaging the body politic in urban design; the annual Urban Gaze competition explores similar territory; even the Herald seems marginally more enthusiastic about publishing photoshopped visions for the city.

More than anything, the Branch's Urban Issues Group needs the enthusiasms of those who can lift their eyes from the focus of a singular building and who understand that buildings are located in a wider urban context. We have an expectant public, many of whom are familiar with the world's great places and are increasingly frustrated with the seeming inability of the local industry to deliver the goods; let those of you with vision and energy build on the group's record and enter the public fray. The Urban Issues Group meets third Tuesday every month at D72, 5.45 pm- please come along.



Now everyone's an urban design critic...

# Plastic POPs

**Our eco-columnist, Geoffrey Richards, reports on the ways in which plastic can be used and reused in the construction industry.**

Green architects of some notable life span will be familiar with the aphorism that there are only two types of architects - those who will use expanded polystyrene and those who will not. Polystyrene is an extraordinarily useful material, especially in relation to insulating concrete floors and generally for its abilities to cram lots of R value into cramped and potentially damp places. In a fire it's perhaps a different story. The "will not" group of architects often speak of the fiery droplets from hell raining down as the styrene melts and disgorges its toxic constituents. However, a more serious study of the pros and cons of expanded polystyrene - and of plastic usage generally - in building construction is a worthwhile endeavour.

The biggest culprit in the persistent organic pollutants (POP) plastics cabal is Poly Vinyl Chloride (PVC). The Greenpeace web site notes in its discussion of the Stockholm Convention (signed by New Zealand in 2001) that: "The world has also agreed that, in order to work towards dioxin elimination, there is a need to replace materials, products and production processes which release dioxins with non-dioxin polluting substitutes. Dioxins are primarily released during the incineration of wastes and by industries that use chlorine during their manufacturing processes, such as when making PVC plastic."

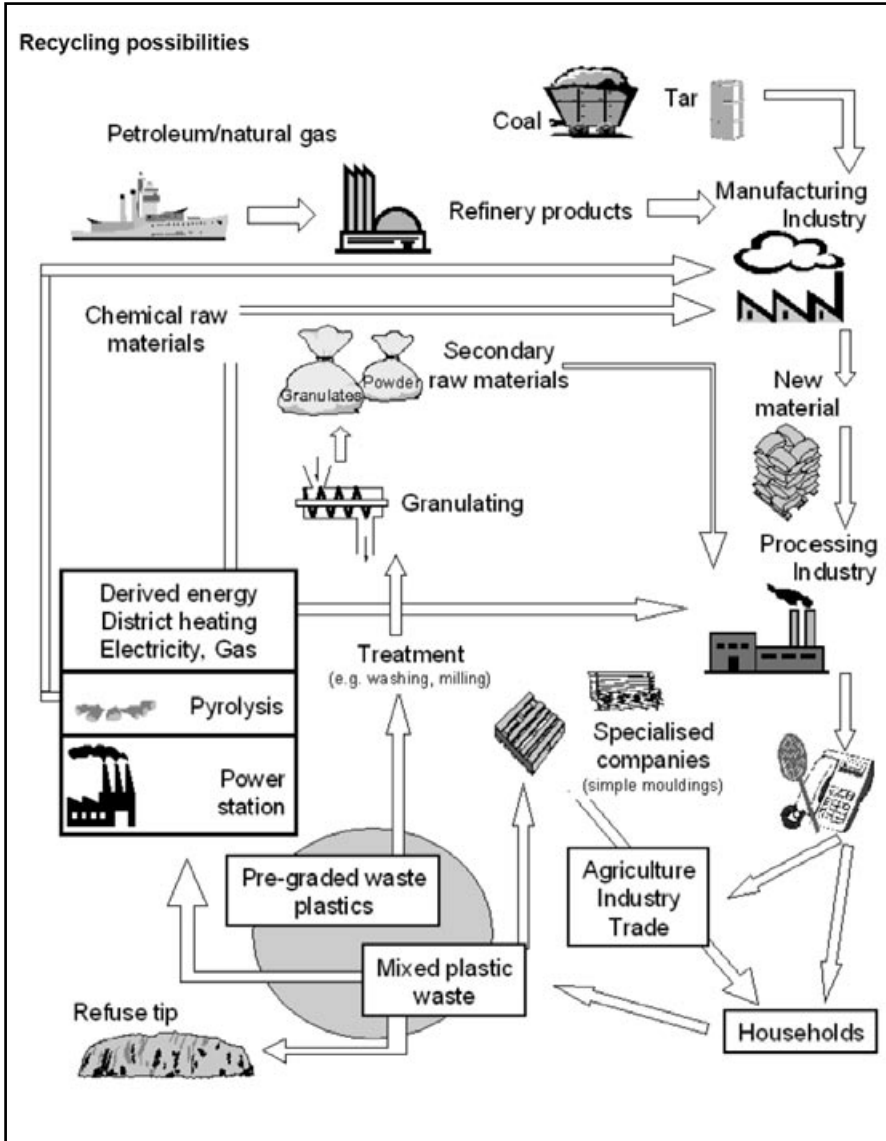
"These chemicals are some of the most dangerous on Earth and are contaminating the environment and affecting human health world-wide. Exposure to POPs has been linked to a wide range of effects on the health and development of both wildlife and humans including cancers, endometriosis, learning disorders and the disruption of the hormone system. Of particular concern are the toxic effects of persistent organic pollutants on young children and the developing foetus."

Karl Brentnall of Asmuss Plastic Systems Limited on the Shore notes that: "While all [plastic piping products stocked by Asmuss] can replace traditional metals such as copper and galv. pipe, in the building industry for potable water and waste lines, the materials that are gaining favour are the welded plastics such as Polyethylene (PE), Polypropylene (PP) and Polybutylene (PB). These are all lightweight, flexible, environmentally friendly and offer the perfect long term solution for modern buildings."

Georg Fischer of +GF+ Piping in describing recycling of plastics says that: "Although plastics make up only 6 % of oil consumption, the conclusion is that the energy value of plastic must be used. There are two possibilities of recycling: reutilisation, [that is,] the production of new products, and combustion, [which is] the production of thermal energy."

"In the case of reutilisation the plastic waste is brought back to its original form in different procedures (hydrolysis, pyrolysis, regranulation). The production of corrosive combustion products is not possible in the case of polyolefines (PE, PP, PB) and ABS as halogens (e.g. chlorine) are missing in the molecular structure. In the case of PVC-U, PVC-C and PVDF, special scrubbing towers are required. Plastics as well as other materials cannot be transformed into nothing, so disposal in waste dumps is not the solution. This is why the use of recyclable and energy recyclable plastics should be promoted."

For more on plastics contact Karl Brentnall on 477 2326 or get CPD points by attending Karl's presentation at the Branch Environmental Group meeting 5:45pm, June 12<sup>th</sup>, NZIA rooms, 16 Dominion Road.



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# The Fine Print

## Excerpts from the reports to NZIA Auckland Branch meeting held May 1st, 2007.

HERITAGE PORTFOLIO: Adam wild

### *NZIA Heritage Task Group*

Since the dissolution of task groups, both the ability to offer guidance to the membership and the "high ground" to the debate has fallen to the NZIA Council. The Auckland Branch must continue to advance the portfolio.

### *Architecture Week '07*

We are considering a retrospective of Dick Toy. In collaboration with the Architecture Archive at the University of Auckland we hope to present a number of associated activities and a Toy Archive publication.

### *Architectural Register and Places at Risk*

Before it was "relinquished", the Heritage Task Group was considering compiling a register of places of architectural value with architecture being the key assessment criteria. Associated with this register is another list of places at risk – it is intended to draw attention to places that might otherwise be missed by conventional mechanisms. We would like to keep these registers updated and look forward to receiving nominations for good architecture or places at risk.

GRADUATE DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO: Nicole Tarlton

The Minister of the DBH has replied to our concerns regarding the raised fee. He has not yet made a decision but NZRAB are hoping for an answer this week so that they can get prepared in time for the next round of assessments. He has asked the board to undertake further work on instalment payments and options for applicants who resit. This is very unlikely to be in place for the next registrants.

Approximately 75 graduates came to the National Office organised APL GDP Weekend Seminar in Wellington from all around NZ. It was a very good event and weekend.

This Thursday on May 3rd at D72 we will have a presentation by three recently registered architects about their techniques in preparing for and experiences sitting, assessment. This event was booked out within a day and there is a shortlist for it. The smaller venue was chosen due to the volunteer presenters being a bit nervous about a large audience and in this venue the audience can be broken into 3 groups.

Unitec has volunteered to provide a room for the following seminars:  
June 12th = Tendering by Norrie Johnson & Brendan Rawson  
July 3rd = Contracts by Norrie Johnson & Brendan Rawson  
July 10th = Insurances by Graham Strez & Norrie Johnson

COMMITTEE FOR AUCKLAND: Shannon Joe

The Building Better Schools project is progressing well.  
- Telecom + McConnell Properties have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Papakura High School.  
- The BBS project with the 3No. pilot schools was presented at the Manukau Education Conference in Auckland on 28.04.07. The presentation proved to be very successful.  
- An additional 5 partnerships are envisioned to be complete by the end of this year.  
- Executive Director, Researcher and PA have be appointed to the project.  
- Additional funding continues to be sourced along with further schools and businesses within the cluster arrangement.

FUTURE AUCKLAND LEADERS PORTFOLIO: Stephen Martin

### *ASB Community Trust*

I attended a presentation to the group by Jennifer Gill, CEO of the ASB Community Trust, and Margy-Jean Malcolm, Programme Director of the Unitec New Zealand Graduate Diploma in Not for Profit Management. The presentation focussed on the contribution of the voluntary and philanthropic sector to Auckland.

ASB Community Trust is an independent grant-making organisation supporting the work of not-for-profit groups in Auckland and Northland. Any incorporated society or charitable trust in these areas can apply for funds, provided they are a not-for-profit organisation. The trust has an investment portfolio of over \$NZ1 billion from which it makes grants – totalling about \$NZ50 million annually in the last couple of years. Among others, the trust funds projects that preserve heritage, support art and culture, and protect the environment. Architectural projects are eligible for funding – a recent example is the Auckland Museum extension.

### *Skills for Auckland*

I have joined the 'Skills for Auckland' FAL project group. Research confirms that obtaining employment that reflects qualifications and experience is one of the biggest hurdles facing skilled new migrants to New Zealand. Achieving suitable employment is a key determinant of settlement success. Auckland faces serious skill shortages across multiple industry sectors; this is a constraint to growth.

The objective of the project is to develop, implement and evaluate a four month mentoring programme for up to fifteen new migrants to Auckland. At the conclusion of the programme it is hoped that the participants will have obtained employment in Auckland that is suited to their skills. The project is modelled on successful similar programmes in Melbourne and Toronto.

Fifteen migrant candidates are currently being evaluated for participation in the programme by the Auckland Regional Migrant Service. Committee for Auckland member organisations will be approached in the next month to assist with the provision of mentors, who will receive training to assist the migrants toward suitable employment.

TECHNICAL ISSUES PORTFOLIO: Michael Middlebrook

### *Building Control Issues*

The Technical Sub Committee of the NZIA Auckland Branch (Michael Middlebrook, Alex Shaw, John Sutherland, Rosemary Scofield) is working on resolving building control issues in the Auckland region. Goal is to improve the interface between architects and the various BCA's.

Feedback from selected Auckland practices on the scope of BC issues: The issues for bigger practices are: consistency, performance specification, contractor design, fire reports and product verification. The issues for smaller practices are: documentation formats, communication and quality of staff. We are holding off on the web based survey as CTMA are currently doing a similar survey and this has been endorsed by the NZIA.

The Auckland Regional Building Consent Managers meet monthly to discuss common issues. We attended the April meeting held at North Shore City. The meetings aim to achieve a uniform approach between Councils on BA issues. In summary:

Consistency will continue to improve as the BCA's work toward accreditation and develop similar QA processes. There was a general consensus that on larger and more complex processes, Building Consent pre-vet meetings could be requested so that performance based design solutions (alternative solutions) could be previewed before submission and peer reviews arranged. Ideally peer review would happen in tandem with developed design and construction documentation. BCA's generally appoint Case leaders for larger projects and this works well.

Alex Shaw presented the "Building Consent Process Review" document that he had written on behalf of the NZIA for Auckland City saying that this document needed to be read with the understanding that there had been substantial improvements in BC processing in the 18 months since it was written.

John Sutherland highlighted issues with Contractor design and précised a paper that he is presenting to the BEAP this month. Councils already encourage staged building consents and architects are using contractor and/or system nomination to allow for contractor design. John highlighted the need for the acceptance of performance based design for work that cannot be easily staged such as mechanical services. Contractor design documents would be submitted after the BC has been granted. The Councils said that in these cases they may require the designer to supervise the installation and that they recommend that Architects take on a higher level of





supervision perhaps doing some of the inspection work currently done by building inspectors.

Rosemary Scofield outlined the issue of Fire Engineering and peer reviews where approved lists are being over ridden in some cases. The DBH have issued competencies and draft unit standards for building officials for comment and the final document is due out in June 2007. With increased qualification requirements for building officials this may be a good alternative career path for the 25% of architectural students who, after the BAS will not go on to do their B.Arch/M.Arch There are also regular regional IQP and technical meetings of Building Consent officials. The technical meetings discuss performance based design solutions (alternative solutions) that have been accepted by one BCA so that other BCA's understand the issues and will also accept.

Agreed that we will attend the June meeting Building Consent Managers meeting in order to bring one or two central issues to the table for resolution.

**Building Code Review**

We have asked Chris Mason to keep us informed of progress on the Building Code Review. The drafts of the various new sections have been issued internally for review by the Working Groups and we expect a public review document to be issued shortly as this needs to be completed by July. Final Report of the Building Code Review to be with the Minister(s) by November 2007.

**Kengo Kuma**

Japanese architect Kengo Kuma will speak at the Dorothy Winstone Center on the evening of July 2<sup>nd</sup>.  
(Note the change in date).

**Pecha Kucha Night**

The next PKN is scheduled for June 20th at Galatos.  
CPD points available.  
Check the website for further information:  
[www.pechakucha.co.nz](http://www.pechakucha.co.nz)

**Block's Top Ten Post-war Buildings Deserving Preservation**

Last issue we asked you to nominate ten contemporary buildings that should be identified for protection, I am pleased to report we have a list of about 60 buildings up and down the country. The following are the top ten vote getters but the ballot is still open...

West Plaza	7	Price Adams Dodd
Futuna Chapel	6	John Scott
Wanganui War Memorial Hall	6	Geoff Newman
Congreve House	5	Cheshire/JASMAX
Christchurch College	5	Warren & Mahoney
Mitchell Stout House	4	Mitchell and Stout
Athfield House	3	Ian Athfield
Brake House	3	Ron Sang
Chappel House	3	Mike Austin
Canterbury Arcade	3	Peter Beaven

Send your top ten list to [pip@cheshirearchitects.com](mailto:pip@cheshirearchitects.com)



Takaharu & Yui Tezuka's Roof House

*Continued from back cover...*

The Tezukas were led to the Roof House by clients who previously owned a town-house where the roof represented a liberated place to dwell; somewhere they could experience the outdoors and the long vistas as a counterpoint to urban confinement. The clients described how they would climb out onto the roof for precarious family picnics. The Tezuka's focussed upon this ritual as a site of meaning and pursued it as a leading concept.

Internally, the roof house is traditionally planned. Sliding partitions allow the large communal space to be subdivided into private areas. With the roof representing the key spatial experience, others areas were left to develop quietly. Each room contains its own skylight to access the roof, along with either a permanent set of timber steps or a collapsible ladder. The house produced effects that were incalculable at the time of design. The roof plane is a site of picnics and social gatherings, but it has other uses too. The client's daughter is the mid-field captain of her local football team. The tilted roof plane proved the ideal training ground where she could practice her passing skills and the ball always rolled back.

The Roof House became a local attraction. As its reputation grew, so too did the number of visitors. The Tezukas spoke of the ongoing competition at the local Pizza Hut for the rights to deliver pizza to the people on the roof. The house also attracted another client. The developers of the new Fuji Kindergarten became aware of the social benefits stemming from the unique arrangements and the joy in the act of crawling up onto the roof. They were so impressed by the kind of life envisaged that they commissioned the Tezukas to design their kindergarten in the model of the Roof House, but this time with a roof with the capacity to hold 600 pre-schoolers. The Tezukas showed photographs of the recently opened kindergarten. They clearly revel in the enjoyment it imparts to its users.

"So it's time for you to show us around." Departure Lounge concluded with a teleconference with EMBT Architects in Barcelona. Cameras located in the conference centre and in the architects' office allowed all involved to see and hear one another.

Tagliabue's walk around the studio introduced us to many young architects. Given an opportunity to discuss their projects, they conveyed the sense that everyone in the office took responsibility for the work. This sense of a practicing community was one of the reasons that Hill invited EMBT to participate. Here, a leading figure had passed-away (Enric Miralles died in July 2000) and yet the office continued to flourish. The practice was not haunted by Miralles' spectre. Instead, it was moving forward and exploring different directions. This was a telling demonstration of the redundancy of the myth of the heroic architect. EMBT were well lead by Miralles, indeed the firm would not have existed without him and he instilled a wonderful design ethos, but the practice continues without him and with great success.

The visit to the office allowed one to explore the differences and similarities between EMBT and one's own workplace. Alongside notable projects like the Scottish Parliament and the Hafencity development, delegates could see the apartments and the commercial work that was on the boards. Little may be said of such projects, but the acknowledgement that EMBT undertook more conventional work helped to furnish a life size image of the practice.

Calder  Stewart

Roofing



# Dearly Departed

## Sean Flanagan looks back fondly at last month's RAIA 'Departure Lounge' conference.

Conference organisers often pin their hopes upon celebrity guests to generate discourse and guide proceedings. Under these circumstances, the notion of a conference 'creative director' becomes a misnomer. Celebrity guests can also prove so dominating as to trounce any sense of direction. Last year's RAIA conference provided a clear example of this. In a scene reminiscent of Vegas fight-night, Coop Himmelb(L)au's Wolf Prix took to the stage to the chorus of the Stone's "Get Off Of My Cloud", where upon he delivered one knock-out project after another. Over the course of 2 hours, the commotion rarely dimmed, and with the audience flat on the canvas and victory-rock tearing up the speakers, he bundled up his laptop, brushing aside audience questions.

This year's RAIA 'Departure Lounge' conference was very different. Creative director Timothy Hill considered the complexities of practice to be an issue deserving discussion at a national conference. Granted the license of creative director, he pursued the question of practice over the course of the 2 days in Melbourne. He guided delegates when they needed guidance, cajoled us when we turned hostile, challenged us with his personal insights, and heaped praise upon us whenever we agreed with him. The result was a difficult but rewarding conference. Hill took a risk in trying to direct the proceedings in front of 1200 delegates. When one creates a direction, it is easy to alienate people.

Departure Lounge focussed upon the practice of architecture rather than its products. This emphasis goes against the Vegas-style entertainment where architects sit and look at slides, salivate over the guest stars achievements and then, at morning tea, profess how they would have done it better. It was precisely this easy approach that Hill wanted to avoid. Six months prior to the conference, he had expressed an interest in freeing us up to "tell the story about what we do, rather than having to whip up interest in why our outputs are important." If you take away the emphasis upon outputs, you can concentrate upon the stories of what architects do.

Conference presenters emphasised how different places promote different forms of practice. Questions were also raised about contemporary procurement processes, how these differ from historical forms of procurement and how different processes influence architecture. Contemporary forms of practice were also contrasted with the encumbered systems for evaluating and awarding architecture; systems that rely upon a dated view of the architect as a heroic figure translating their ideas into buildings. Hill comments, "Nearly every publication reveals numbers of marvels with descriptions of the buildings, the 'Architecture,' as the gracious rendition of the architect's canny insights breezily brought to fruition. In turn, this allows the Alain de Botton's of the world to announce that 'Architecture is significant' because of its cultural potential, and to bemoan that so much architecture is lacking. But de Botton naively thinks that architects have some form of direct, nineteenth-century association with the buildings society ends up producing. You and I know better."

Guest speakers were selected because of their capacity to speak plainly about what architects do. Some highlights are outlined below.

Tom Daniell is a New Zealander shaping an architectural career in Kyoto, Japan. He is a director of the firm Thomas Daniell Architects, teaches at Kyoto University and is a PhD candidate in RMIT's SIAL department. His presentation outlined the context of Japanese practice as an introduction to the work of Takaharu and Yui Tezuka. Daniell discussed the forces that help to shape Japan as a markedly different context for practice. A lot of Japanese architecture in publications appears, to the outsider, to be experimental in terms of the geometries pursued and the planning strategies employed. Daniell explained that the unorthodox proposals were a condition of urban forces stemming from the planning regulations that rule the major cities. In this respect, the strange buildings shaped by progressive Japanese architects stem



Takaharu & Yui Tezuka's Roof House

Photo: Andrew Barrir

from a kind of opportunistic pragmatism. To put it simply, the severe application of Japanese planning regulations results in unusual building forms. Historical patterns of urban development have also contributed to city sites being formidably long and narrow. This compels unique plan and section arrangements. Japanese planning codes are also applied parametrically, meaning that code requirements can differ radically from one site to the next. Hence, buildings proposed for neighbouring sites may respond to very different planning rules.

By speaking plainly about these urban forces, Daniell did not wish to downplay the inventiveness of Japanese architecture. Instead he was trying to share a sense of the unique, and at times bizarre, context for practice in Japan. The emphasis upon the impact of planning codes does not simplify the architecture, for in the opportunistic pragmatism lies a theoretical concern for exercising a relationship between the power of legislation to promote conformity and architectural aspirations to challenge and explore.

During question time, Daniell commented upon urban Japan's irreverence for tradition and the fervent acceptance of modernity. He described Tokyo as a city that has been rebuilt nearly every 20 years for the past century. In this context, modernity is embraced at every level, even at a regulatory level. It is rare for a local authority to have a problem with 'modern' (insert here: adventurous, strange, and possibly ruthless) design. There is even less concern about what buildings look like. Daniell had never encountered a problem with a project in terms of its 'visual impact' upon the neighbourhood, no matter how historic a neighbourhood might appear. This statement drew gasps from an audience accustomed to the regulatory powers of heritage bodies and local authorities.

The husband and wife team of Takaharu and Yui Tezuka established Tezuka Architects in 1994. In the space of the conference, the Tezukas represented a practice where projects develop as a celebration of domestic rituals and family traditions. Their work stood in contrast to leaden weight that architecture can become in a western context where the joy of primary events and spatial experiences is at risk of being subsumed by bureaucratic processes or the pressures for formal inventiveness. Daniell describes their work as follows: "Avoiding needless experimentation with form for its own sake, their buildings are conceived as devices to enhance life's simple pleasures: sunlight, breezes, views, family interactions." He describes their practice as one courageous enough to attempt "so little, so quietly."

Two projects combined to demonstrate the Tezuka's philosophy of elevating simple pleasures. The first was their Roof House, where the roof is conceived as an important outdoor space. This calls to mind the modern roof garden, but in this case no attempt is made to efface the sense that one is actually occupying a roof. Instead, the project is marked by the exhilaration and trepidation of sneaking out onto a plane that is typically unoccupied. Domestic elements like a table and chairs, a small screen wall, a kitchen sink and an outdoor shower, sit in an uncanny fashion on a roof which has a shallow pitch and no balustrade.

Continued on inside cover...

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