



07 2007

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AUCKLAND BRANCH OF THE NEW ZEALAND INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

**BLOCK**

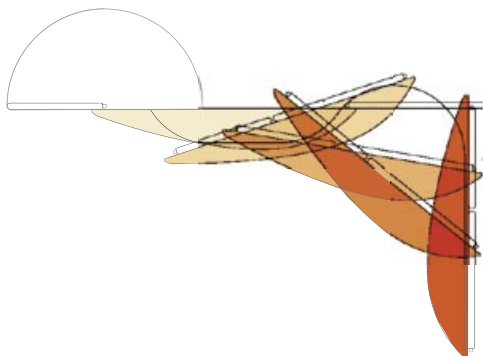
## I Hope I Don't Die Before I Get Old

### Block's own Silver Surfer rallies against the cult of youth

I am unsure if our enthusiasm for the endlessly new is some post colonial condition - a revolution in which anything with a toehold is, by definition, reactionary and of need of purging. Is it perhaps the inevitable sidekick of the pursuit of youthful beauty, or just a further manifestation of the relentless desire for the consumption of novelties? So pervasive is this glorification of the new that even to speculate on its cause is to invite derision and commentary that clearly one is a little long in the tooth oneself, and that one's attention has shifted from creativity to the shoring up of an eroding relevance.

Somewhere midway through the third stella in the half-light crush at the recent pecha kucha there was a moment of clarity; too much youth, too many forty under forty. In that sea of black leather I was feeling the push of an elbow in the ribs a little too acutely and with the certain, if brief, confidence that a little firewater brings I was sure that the time to reverse the tide was at hand - time for **six over sixty!**

James Foote celebrated fifty years of registration as an architect some years ago and apparently has the honour of being the architect registered for the longest period of time in the country. While some might debate the merits of sticking with the Institute for so long and the cynics lay bets on his fate at the hands of the NZRAB regime, Jim continues to be a critical part of many of Jasmx's more interesting and challenging projects.



*James Foote's curved-sliding-folding-unfolding-door mechanics  
Congreve House - Cheshire/JASMAX  
Sometime around AutoCAD version 11*

In a country in which careers are done and dusted by thirty, the careful building of an oeuvre and sixty odd years sensitively practising the craft of architecture is too easily eclipsed by the phalanx of celebrities commanding centre stage. We are though the poorer for not knowing his craft, for setting aside the humane values of handwork in favour of the abstractions of machine work - though Jim was, I hasten to add, one of the first Jasmx staff to gain his AutoCAD 'wings' back around version 11.

After leaving Auckland Grammar Jim started with Horace Massey "while still in shorts", studied under the NZIA part time course before transferring to the architecture school to complete studies. The part time course included University lectures in the likes of structural mechanics, practical mathematics and sanitation and hygiene. Design, however, was done under the tutelage of his employer Geoffrey Rix-Trott, culminating in testimonials of study; invariably sepia coloured classical compositions.

Jim's education straddled the demise of the Beaux Arts and the rise of Modernism and his arrival at the school coincided with the University appointing Professor Light over student choice Ernst Plischke as Head of School. The student body - swollen by world war two 'rehab students' and including such luminaries as Peter Beaven, Bill Toomath, Alan Wild, Marilyn Reynolds and others of the nascent Group - revolted, boycotting lectures and at one stage all offering identical schemes for critique by the hapless Light.

Maxwell Fry's "Fine Building" and Yorke and Penn's "A Key to Modern Architecture" provided a link to the developments of British and European Modernism reinforced by two and a half years working in Britain before returning to New Zealand and establishing practice with Malcolm McKenzie then Jim Stewart. After a period of working on his own, Jim joined JASMaD in 1977 and remains in its offspring, providing the practice with carefully considered design development.

Though current projects involve the full gamut of contemporary materials his earlier work, including his own 1967 house, is informed by the frugality of post world war shortages and a concurrent engagement in the New Zealand condition. Where material restrictions constrained the use of steel that underpinned so much of the received Modernism of post-war Europe and America, the refined substitution of structural timber sat well within a way of building fitted to the local climate, restless topography and informal way of living.

Jim is gracious in his appreciation of the younger people he works with and characteristically modest in his own contribution to projects, ascribing his thoughtful insights to little more than the ability, borne of long experience, to identify and avoid potential detailing difficulties. I have had though the good fortune to be the recipient of such wisdom (Congreve House) and can attest to the potent intellect and wide range of intellectual, drawing and computing skills that Jim will bring to bear on a project.

For many professions sixty is a time of pulling back and taking it easy yet for architecture it is often a time of growth and fecundity when the seemingly irreconcilable strands of the craft come together. Wright's multiple careers seemed to be mere preludes to that which started at sixty, Gehry began anew with his own Santa Monica alterations at a similar age and Oscar Neimeyer seems as ageless and ever-present as Rio's Cristo Redentor. Admittedly these are big personalities, a long way from the self-effacing modesty that the middle twentieth century tended to foster in New Zealand, but you get the idea.

The innate conservatism of those commissioning projects invariably makes for a long apprenticeship and it is right that positive discrimination gives those under forty a leg up, just as it is right that students at a pecha kucha will rail against the NZIA and any other constraint on creativity. Yet let us not cast aside the accumulation of skills and wisdom that are the rewards of experience. Just as a career is an aggregation of insights gained though learning, cunning and hard knocks, so our profession should see, hear and honour the aggregated wisdom of its senior practitioners. For their part, some of those same practitioners might rage a little more against the rising hegemony of youth, and go a little less gently into that good night. *PC*



## The Green Star Alliance and the Rise of the Silver Surfer

It often seems that I have spent far too much of my career studying, designing, writing, teaching and practicing aspects of green architecture. Just recently though, my eyes must have slipped off the ball for a microsecond or two because suddenly green architecture (and green architects) had become fun, trendy and above all profitable. It was only yesterday morning when it seemed that initiatives putting forward a cohesive policy of environmental architecture for the profession were being blocked by some policy fixing circles of the Institute and/or its mysterious arrays of committees and advisors. These proposals by architects' environment groups and other such ambiently aligned collectives in and around the profession had gone largely unheard for at least three decades.

Even as late as yesterday afternoon it was considered not to be good business by some larger practices to raise ones head too far above the wall on green issues less it frighten off the investors and developers. The fear was that it would all be too costly - or at least more so - and that the accepted liturgy from those who provided the where-with-all to build was inherently a conservative one. At least when it came to exploring themes associated with planet preserving initiatives.

Any serious discussion of climate change and global warming at these levels was to cast doubt on the soundness of a practice credentials. At job interviews (perhaps as recently as last week) it was well known that one should not mention the possibility of sea level rise, for instance, (or non rectilinear form composition - yes I was that man) because in doing so one surely risked missing the job (I did).

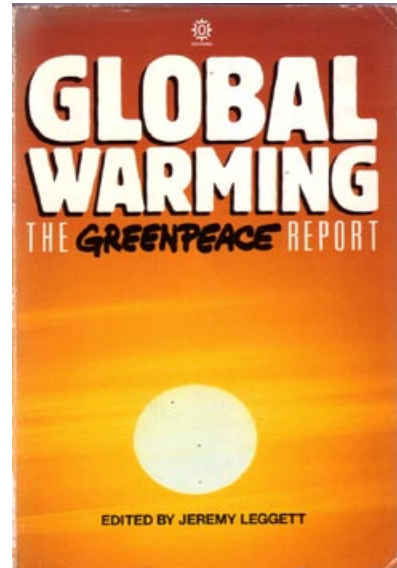
Hell! - so what happened?

Its all a bit of a shock for all us greenies from the 60's, 70s, 80s, 90s and even early 2000's. Was it really the same gals and guys who only a blink of an eye ago were telling us to watch our step, unless the profession move out of favour by our proposing of these radical and unproven eco initiatives, who were now telling us we were too slow on the uptake for this great new field. We needed, it appeared, to be replaced by a newer breed of more contemporary designers, specialists in the latest developments.

Great mentors of environmentally aware design in New Zealand, many now in voluntary (and involuntary) suspended registration, must surely be smiling gently at this rediscovery of what must be some of the most ancient principals of architecture. Vitruvius, I believe, spends a good amount of time emphasising these sustainable principals (climate, the architects friend) which he considered to be an essential part of what constituted just the core knowledge that architects must have and practice. Other more recent writers of architectural prose based closer to home are still a thorn in the side of those architects who assume they have environmentally conscious design sorted. Pointing out the occasional flimsy design rationales and narrowly argued justifications for incorporating certain received formulas and themes of this newly marketable style of building into architecture will never be a popular occupation. It is however a necessary one.

Evidence that the times they are changing and that it is experience that really counts is seen in Graeme North - New Zealand's own genius of earth and

sustainable building - is now voted on to the NZIA Council. One also recalls the many classic written works that instigated the environmental architecture movement: Design With Climate, Victor Olgyay, 1963: Design With Nature, Ian L McHarc, 1969: Small Is Beautiful, E F Schumacher, 1973: Design For the Sun, Pacific Energy Design (Dave Breuer et al), 1985: Passive Solar in New Zealand, Michael Donn and Ian Van Der Werff, 1990: Global Warming - The Greenpeace Report, Jeremy Legget et al, 1990: Green Architecture: Design for an Energy Conscious Future, Brenda and Robert Vale, 1992: along with a hundred other titles and their ground breaking originators who continue to inspire generations of eco-concious designers.



A silver legacy of green knowledge

The New Zealand Green Building Council has recently produced the Green Star building rating system adapted from the Australian system and developed with the support of many sponsors. This system now available in New Zealand is already changing the face of the way we practice architecture. Now clients are insisting on a four star or better result and this is adding value to buildings and more than covering any cost increases that a no lesser task than saving the planet may have on the finished building.

So as it was in the movie, the planet destroying force (the silver surfer) that wanted only to extract the energy force out of the earth for its own aggrandisement and survival, has been stripped and revealed as "just an ordinary bhuddist monk" as the Dalai Lama says. Architects are perhaps now seeking, in what still could be the final few hours of the day, to remedy past actions through developing environmental design values. Transcendence of the good is assured we are told and although the "surfer" goes out in a blaze of glorious fire and light in the final scene we suspect because of tenacity there is another sequel still in the offing.  
Geoffrey W Richards

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# The Fine Print

## Excerpts from the reports to NZIA Auckland Branch meeting held July 3rd, 2007

### COMMITTEE FOR AUCKLAND FAL PORTFOLIO: Stephen Martin

The Skills for Auckland migrant mentoring pilot project launched last month with a function at the University of Auckland Clock Tower Building involving migrants selected for the programme (currently numbering nine), mentors and the project team. The migrants shared their personal stories of their time seeking suitable employment in Auckland with passion and vigour. As the research indicated underemployment is a common and frustrating theme.

The mentors have been selected from Auckland businesses; these are largely Committee for Auckland member organisations. Training seminars were held for both migrants and mentors by a professional mentoring teacher. All migrants have been matched with a personal mentor. They are currently working together to assess individual migrant's needs. The mentors work in industry sectors complementary to the migrants' skills and qualifications.

The project team have been invited to discuss our experiences to date with the Omega Project later this month. This is a comparable new migrant focused initiative associated with The Tindall Foundation and the Committee for Auckland. It is in the planning stage.

### COMMITTEE FOR AUCKLAND / UIG PORTFOLIO: Shannon Joe

Building Better Schools Project:  
KPMG and Sir Edmund Hillary Primary have signed a Memorandum of Understanding. This is the first non-pilot school to start.

Two large Corporations have agreed to go into partnership with 6 low decile schools in South Auckland.

The group continues to develop its strategy and marketing components.

#### Urban Issues:

The Mt Wellington Quarry project is now at the Environment Court. Auckland International Airport - UIG to contact Doug Leighton to present to the committee the latest design issues. Beca has been appointed Urban Designers for the Airport development.

Victoria Park Tunnel: Only one portion of site is to be tunneled.

Wynyard Point: Suggestion that there will be a big presentation on 11 July. A proposition of a ferry landing is to be included at the point for ferry transportation to Great Barrier Island.

#### Future Projects on Agenda

The UIG committee has agreed the following projects taken from our current agenda will remain on future meeting agendas:  
Auckland International Airport, Wynyard Point, Aotea Square, Onehunga Foreshore

#### New Business:

48 Greys Ave Development (opposite Aotea Sq)  
A block of new apartments have been proposed to the above site. The project's developer was responsible for Zest on Nelson Street. The Planner's Report acknowledges good urban design principles have been considered into the building design. The UIG believe the UDP's report was not provided to the Commissioners to determine application should be notified. DM to prepare a draft letter and issue to GS outlining the concerns.

The UIG would like to thank Aaron Sills and Graeme Scott or their time and efforts in presenting, respectively, Swedish housing and urban motorways to the Group.

### SPONSORSHIP PORTFOLIO: Stephen Martin

Sponsorship prospects for Architecture Week are welcome – please refer any to John Balasoglou, (09) 529 2211.

### GRADUATE DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO: Nicole Tarlton

The Tendering Seminar at Unitec, Lecture Theatre 1 was a success.

Tonight (Tuesday 3rd July) is a Contracts Seminar by Norrie Johnson & Brendan Rawson. This will be held at the same venue.

### HERITAGE PORTFOLIO: Adam Wild

Since the dissolution of task groups, 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.

#### The Rotherham house, 1950:

The concept is to secure the Rotherham House (the "third" group construction company house) as an Auckland architectural centre for the promotion of architecture, architectural debate, and architectural issues. The house could be offered as an architect-in-residence studio to visiting architects wishing for some "thinking" space and prepared to talk about it. As well as providing a facility for a resident architect, the house could be staffed by students of architecture from both Auckland Schools who would act as guide, assistant and house keeper at some time during their degree course. No further word from the Warren Trust concerning the potential for assistance. North Shore City Council have reservations about non-residential activity in a residential zone. It would be unlikely that the Rotherham House would be the centre for exhibitions or debate, but more the generator of them.

The executors of the estate are keen to explore the options ahead on behalf of the family and we remain in contact with them. The family are sensitive to the interest and value of the place and our discretion is important if we are to make a meaningful difference. This is a real chance to ensure the safety of one of the most important pieces of New Zealand's architectural legacy and promote what architects can do.

#### Architecture Week:

We are underway with planning a retrospective of Dick Toy; principally his Auckland Churches. 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. Toy Churches for a possible tour include: St Hilda's in Mt Wellington (but was this actually built to Toy's scheme?); Henderson Anglican Church (1962, but was Toy the architect?); All Saints Church, Ponsonby, 1957; and St Oswald's Church, Greenlane, 1958.

The group and donor architectural archives need help - The University of Auckland's Architecture Archive has identified a number of original drawings by the Group and TK Donner that require urgent conservation. The following list identifies some of these works and funds are being sought to meet the costs involved. The Branch has been asked to consider a contribution to these costs. Estimates for conservation work on key Group and Donner archives - totaling ca \$5,000 target the following items: 1. Donner. PARNELL SWIMMING POOL: MURALS (6 items) 2. Donner. LANDSCAPE DESIGN: ALBERT PARK (1 item) 3. Donner. SAVAGE MEMORIAL (various) 4. Donner. DONNER RESIDENCE (3 items) 5. Group. FIRST HOUSE (3 items) 6. Group. SECOND HOUSE (2 items) 7. Group. HEINE HOUSE (3 items) 8. Group. MOFFAT HOUSE (2 items)

Architectural register of architects, buildings 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 one of places at risk; designed to draw attention to places that might otherwise be missed by conventional registers. We would like to keep these registers live for the Auckland region and look forward to receiving nominations for good architecture or places at risk.

Calder  Stewart  
Roofing





## Question of the month

Can anyone do a decent code-compliant balustrade in this draconian age? Send your references, clippings, or - much better still - sketches to [pip@cheshirearchitects.com](mailto:pip@cheshirearchitects.com)

Last month we belligerently wagered against there being a great building of the twentieth century that had a hipped roof. We of course excluded Wright, who could do anything well, and hips set to minimum drainage fall.

Turns out that for but a pair of sublime exceptions and a couple of cunning half-breeds we were right. The pretenders:



1. Erik Gunnar Asplund's Woodland Chapel, 1918-20



2. Kahn's Trenton Bath House at the Jewish Community Center, 1954-59



3. I M Pei's Pyramid at The Louvre, 1989 (a particularly cunning submission from Grant Neill)



4. John Scott's Futuna Chapel, 1958-60 (only 1/2 a point in keeping with its hip to gable ratio)

Continued from back cover...

the last time you quoted Deleuze or took pictures of rubbish? Convince your boss to give you a morning to put together an entry. Call it professional development. Or pull a sickie (coughing on the phone helps). Get a collective together, come up with a cool name, do some architecture, and fight about who gets to keep the TV later.

*"Do not think the embarrassment of such an old-fashioned response is not evident to us. As we sit around this table and write this document, we are finding it hard to look each other in the eye. Are we Marxists, we who have never read Marx? Are we petty rioters with baseball caps and scarves over our faces, spitting on bankers and going home to watch ourselves on television? No: one of us is a draughtsman, another a writer, another a box-maker. Do you think we are not serious? Are you laughing at us? Well then, this too we must put up with."*

*-The Barricades Commission June 27, 2006"*

Carl Douglas ([carl.douglas@aut.ac.nz](mailto:carl.douglas@aut.ac.nz) <http://del.icio.us/agfa8x>)

## Enter Urban Gaze

Visit [www.aaa.org.nz](http://www.aaa.org.nz) and register before Wednesday 1st of August 2007 by emailing [aaa.aucklandarchitects@gmail.com](mailto:aaa.aucklandarchitects@gmail.com)

## FJMT and the UoA's lecture series

On Monday night Richard Francis Jones (the FJ of Australia's three-city practice FJMT) presented a body of very beautiful projects to a solid crowd admirably peppered with heavyweights of our own. A continuous reference to intuition - a 'defensive trench' deployed to protect architecture from increasingly aggressive time constraints - left the projects slightly distant, but we find it hard to argue with work so rigorously executed. Look forward to a *Block* guide on Australian architects violating the Auckland skyline sometime soon.

In a shameless plug *Block's* own Pip Cheshire speaks this coming Monday the 30th, Felicity Wallace follows the week after on August the 6th, and Joanna Smith from Chow: Hill on August the 13th. Clifford, Patterson, Stout, McBryde and Nigel McKenna will follow - *Block* will keep you in the loop with dates.

And next time, if they insist on 'discussion', can someone with a reputation put it on the line and ask a decent question rather than deflating our guest with a roomful of silence, or worse - making them suffer ham-fisted questions from the kids, or academics more interested in themselves?

## Ancient Modern

The votes kept coming for contemporary buildings that should be identified for protection; the top twenty-odd are listed below, with numbers of votes alongside. We'll keep the ballot open a little longer...

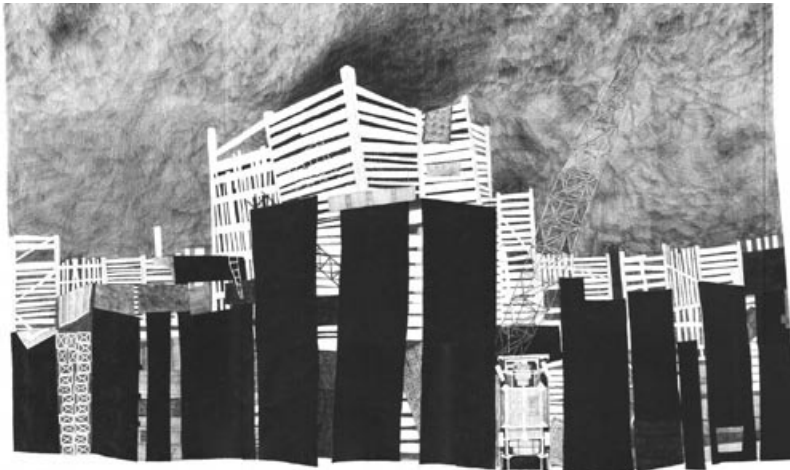
West Plaza	8 Price Adams Dodd
Wanganui War Memorial Hall	7 Smith/Greenhough, Smith and Newman.
Futuna Chapel	6 John Scott
Christchurch College	5 W&M
Congreve House	5 Cheshire/JASMAX
Mitchell Stout	4 Mitchell Stout
Athfield House	3 Ian Athfield
Blumenthal House	3 Vlad Cacala
Brake House	3 Ron Sang
Canterbury Arcade	3 Peter Beaven
Chappel House	3 Mike Austin
Harewood Crematorium	3 W&M
AMP Building	2 Manning/TCPD
Cacala - Own House	2 Cacala
Civic Admin Building	2 Tibor Donner/ACC
First Gibbs	2 Mitchell
Heatley House Bay of Islands	2 Pete Bossley
Jewish Synagogue	2 John Goldwater
Lytelton Rd Tunnel Authority Building	2 Peter beaven
Miles Warren - Own House	2 W&M
Parnell Baths	2 Donner/ACC
Rotherham House	2 Bruce Roteham
Skybox	2 Herriot Melhuish

Each *Block* is laid by a dedicated editorial team, all of whom happen to work at Cheshire Architects:

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# A Wistful Gaze

**Lie to your employer, throw down your chains, and start producing rubbish - Carl Douglas incites the mob**



Detail of Douglas' *The Barricades Commission*, 2006  
Pencil on paper, 841x594mm

*"Barricades are needed! We, the mob, must begin work immediately. We will pile up, wedge in place, stack, compact, and fill them with holes. Our barricades will clot the city. They will be massive, tall, silent, tense and intimidating. They will be as great and as trivial as the barricade of which Hugo wrote, 'One seemed to behold riot turned to rubble. One seemed to hear, buzzing over that barricade as though it were their hive, the gigantic dark-bodied bees of violent progress...it was a pile of garbage and it was Sinai.'"*

The AAA Urban Gaze Competition is a chance to get your name in Architecture NZ; a chance to win a TV or a camera; a chance for a few drinks. But essentially, it is a waste of time.

Waste in an economic sense is bad. Good business aims to minimise waste in order to maximise value. In this context, waste is everything broken, contaminated, incomplete, undesirable - everything that has no direct exchange value. In ecological systems, however, waste plays an essential role. In rainforests, the litter of the forest floor (comprised of fallen and decomposing plant material) is a

foundational bed of biomass. It holds moisture, regulates temperature, maintains a ground-level microclimate, and provides the primary nutrient source for the forest. From an ecological perspective there is no waste, only material being processed at different speeds. It is important to distinguish between these economic and ecological senses of 'waste'. Economic waste is essentially valueless, but ecological waste represents a concentration of value.

Although economic considerations are often foregrounded in architectural practice, architecture is an ecology, not an economy. Waste materials: the broken, contaminated, incomplete, unrealistic, ridiculous, unsaleable, temporary, and rejected, form the communal mass of nascent architectural value. The production of this kind of waste is a contribution to architectural ecology.

There is a close relationship between waste and the idea of the gift. As a certain French philosopher has argued, a gift in its purest form is given without expectation of reciprocity. As soon as there is any kind of payment (even complimenting yourself on your own generosity), you are engaged in an economic transaction, not a gift. A gift is necessarily wasteful: an expression of faith in non-economic value.

*"There is no payment, concession or appeasement that is enough to satisfy us and make our barricades redundant. They will refuse to be digested by an economy, the rules of someone else's house."*

Hadid, Libeskind and Koolhaas started their careers with incomprehensible drawings. Piranesi's biggest contribution to architecture was his set of Carceri drawings and a semi-bogus map of Rome.

AAA Urban Gaze Entries should be made late at night, or on a plane. They should be drawn up (like *The Barricades Commission*) hunched over a coffee table. They should be photoshopped together from the unrecognisable remains of several great projects that went sour. When was

*Continued on inside back cover...*



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