



07 2007

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

**BLOCK**

## Child's Play

### BLOCK converses with recent RIBA award winner & reverse colonist Anthony Hoete

An abundance of 'literature' drifts through architect's offices and an occasional dip into this flotsam and jetsam can prove rewarding. This was the case when a lunchtime reading of AJ brought to light the success of an ex-pat Kiwi architect in this year's RIBA awards. The London based practice WHAT\_architecture won a National Award for their design of a Rooftop Nursery in Hackney, London. The practice was founded in 2002 by Anthony Hoete, who studied architecture and engineering at Auckland University in the mid-to-late 80s before heading overseas for post-graduate study and to work for several notable firms.

The award winning Rooftop Nursery is a low-cost 'belts and braces' building set in a low economic area of London. Its conceptual basis is best captured in the project tagline "50 ways to leave your loved one," because the building can be physically reconfigured to suit the different age groups who use the centre. At least 50 plan arrangements can be achieved by reconfiguring the interior's size, scale, and materiality in a kind of architectural play that complements the kids' developing spatial awareness.

The single storey building is a robust construction of double-skin masonry block with tough-wearing linoleum floors on the interior. The potentially alienating palette of materials – masonry, steel framed canopies, and galvanised welded mesh fences – form a canvas for a paint palette of pinks and greens that assert the building's playful identity in the urban environment and melt the masonry modules into a strange plastic whole. Atop the building is a roof garden play area described as the UK's first granulated rubber shock absorbing safe play roof.

In addition to the Rooftop Nursery, Hoete is perhaps best known to New Zealand architects for two photographs that ironically capture the act of construction rather than the edifice itself. This focus upon the process is not surprising when considered in the light of WHAT\_architecture's catch-cry "Life without buildings!". The first picture captures a helicopter high in the air with a steel component slung some 20m beneath. The chopper and payload are pictured against menacing clouds that suggest an approaching storm. The second picture is of a cattle barge loaded to the gunwales with construction materials and whanau. The barge, like the helicopter, has set a course across the Bay of Plenty towards Motiti Island, the site of a house Hoete designed for his father and which was completed in 2001. The images are rich with the poetry of a 21<sup>st</sup> century 'do it yourself' culture and can be seen as a youthful critique of that other iconic image of New Zealand architecture, the pioneer sitting alone on the

verandah of his bush hut. Hoete's images capture the spirit of the pioneer, but they are underwritten by his understanding of the dominant narrative of New Zealand as a country uncorrupted by the excesses of architecture. The images both acknowledge and refute the country's status as a clean slate.

Whilst many will recognise these photographs, fewer people can in fact describe the completed building, though it has been published in several books and periodicals and deserves to be sought out (see *Blueprint Magazine*, July/August 1998). The project resonates with the guile and audaciousness that now holds sway at WHAT\_architecture.

To mark WHAT\_architecture's success, Block contacted Anthony Hoete and put a few questions to him about the nursery and other things. He responded with great enthusiasm in both words and drawings:



The Matrix - WHAT\_Architecture's Fifty ways to leave your loved one

The rooftop nursery is described as a re-playable building with 50 possible plan configurations. Can you describe some of the changes that reconfigure the nursery space?

The various plan configurations are possible due to two architectural elements: curtained alcoves and sliding walls. The 'plan mode' responds to two criteria: scale and use.

Regarding scale; in theory, OfSTED (Office for Standards in Education) regulations determine the size of a child-space area according to the children's age, but in practice the demography of number of children versus ages means the user number is unknown when the (Rooftop) nursery is open.

Continued over...

Regarding use; differently forms of play require differently materialised spaces such as wet (rubber) versus dry (underheated floor) play, light (translucent acrylic) versus dark (velvet), big (one space with no interior walls) versus small (six differently sized spaces).

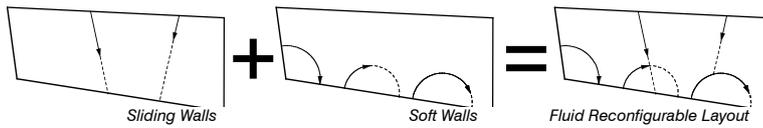


Photo: Dave Cowland

A traditional model of thought might propose that the architect works from a general understanding of a project, where multiple proposals exist and plans and sections come and go throughout the design process, towards a very particular proposal. The notion of a re-playable building complicates this model. The nursery is a very particular proposal (a concrete construction) marked by multiple possibilities. What strategies are required to present a project of this nature to clients (a Borough Council no less) for whom such multiple opportunities could prove frightening?

We had to point out to the Local Education Authority (LEA) that whilst OfSTED's national regulations must be adhered to, these 'minimum' regulations were based on anticipating the demography of the end user group. Babies for example require a minimum of 3.5m<sup>2</sup>/child plus a carer: child minimum ratio of 1:3. In fact, one cannot accurately predict who (what age, how many) would actually walk through the door when the (Rooftop) nursery opened. Accepting this, we had a platform to abandon fixing the location of the various child care spaces for babies (6 months-2y @ 3.5/m<sup>2</sup> and 1:3), toddlers (2-3y @ 2.5/m<sup>2</sup> and 1:4) and infants (3-4y @ 2.0/m<sup>2</sup> and 1:6). From minimal regulations came maximal configurations and in this way the plan organisation of the Rooftop Nursery is like a game: the building is meant to be re-visitible, re-playable. A daily balance between similarity (care) and difference (education).

Does the completed building come with an operating manual, do you provide on-site assistance, or is the discovery of the configurations left entirely to play?

We provided a spreadsheet of plan organisation v. age, for example, that does not determine but suggest how to lay out the plan organisation.

Architecture can be seen as a discipline responsible for constructing experiences. The notions of discipline and construction could preclude play.

What design methods do you employ to introduce play into architecture?

The educational spaces of the Nursery evolved in part thanks to studio teaching - at the Bartlett, the American University of Beirut and the Technical University of Delft in The Netherlands. Teaching is a form of research that can be applied to design. The WHAT architecture methodology of 'design in quick time' demands short, fast iterative loops in the design process. This recognises that 'architectural practice makes perfect'. Much like in play, practice improves performance and therefore maximises the ground one can cover by passing through the entire design process from start-to-end many times. 'Action Re:Play' for example, a design programme that I ran at the Bartlett, asked students to quantify the 'field of play', 'duration of occupation', 'rule bending' but not breaking... the design mantra being 'Rigour With Vigour'!

There are a number of reasons, both admirable and questionable, as to why a council might want to facilitate mothers/parents getting back to work. From the council's perspective and from your perspective, what motives underwrote the nursery project?

The cost of child care in central London (minimum of £700/month/child). And my now three year old son, Maui, who was born during planning (though not Family Planning!).

In addition to the nursery, what other kinds of projects do you believe could help in the support of parents?

Libraries. Art Galleries. And my favourite, which I am hoping to work on soon, family gymnasiums: crechésports! All very 2012 London Olympiad I know....

The house you designed and built on Motiti Island sits outside the rules. The land is Maori territory and cannot be brought or sold. Further, the land is described as sitting outside of central government jurisdiction, including planning controls. I've heard stories of the vertiginous staircase to the roof deck, a staircase unimaginable for a majority of architects here because of the strictures of compliance codes. I understand that you also have some interesting moves planned for a house in a Residential 1 classified area of Auckland. Further, your proposal for the 'House Hijacked' additions and alterations are an audacious response to the expectations of propriety that often influence architects. Can you describe how you view rules, regulations, and expectations?

Working within rules, possibilities open up and the unexpected can happen. Some rules are meant to be broken, the best interpretations require a more subtle politics: bend rules and stay within the field of play. This can also be applied not only to the design process but the procurement process as well. I told the LEA at Hackney that the design, construction and procurement process was 'unorthodox though accountable' given the funding deadlines.

Continued on back cover...

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# The Fine Print

## Excerpts from the reports to NZIA Auckland Branch meeting held August 7th, 2007

### COMMITTEE FOR AUCKLAND FAL PORTFOLIO: Stephen Martin

#### *Skills for Auckland*

The Skills for Auckland project team shared our skilled new migrant mentoring pilot project experiences to date with the OMEGA project steering group and other interested parties. OMEGA (Organisation for Migrant Employment in Greater Auckland) aims to broaden the scope of the Skills for Auckland pilot project to include further skilled migrant employment initiatives such as internships, awards, advertising and formalised relationships between groups with an interest in this area. OMEGA is in the planning phase, and is being lead by the Committee for Auckland with some project start-up input from The Tindall Foundation and specialist migrant and business consultants. It takes its inspiration from the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, which has been very successful in improving access to employment for skilled immigrants. One hundred and eighty staff work in this sector in Toronto, as the city has learned from research that the opportunity cost to the city economy and social health of migrant underemployment is too significant to ignore. The Committee for Auckland has hired a past TRIEC staff member to develop the OMEGA project planning in Auckland. It is hoped that OMEGA will build on the pilot project experience of Skills for Auckland to fulfil the legacy objective required of all FAL projects.

Three of the nine migrants participating in the Skills for Auckland programme have attained employment in Auckland in jobs that match their skills and experience. Last month the first information session of the programme was held for the migrant group, with sponsorship from Simpson Grierson. The session commenced with a tutorial by Mike de Boer of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce new kiwis service on job seeking strategies for skilled new migrants to the Auckland workplace. This was insightful, helpful and well received by the participants.

#### *Crunch Time*

On Auckland's wildest night of the year, Bell Gully hosted a seminar in their 'Crunch Time' thought leadership series. The Vero Tower rattled but didn't crunch as Dr Simon Longstaff, Executive Director of the St James Ethics Centre in Sydney gave a considered introduction to the topic of 'Ethics in the Boardroom'. The Centre is unique in offering an ethics counselling advice service to all sectors and individuals free of charge, in addition to its ethics consulting, training, leadership and advocacy programmes. Simon, plus speakers Hugh Fletcher and Alison Paterson made the following key points:

- The first obligation of a board (or individual director) is to set and communicate a clearly defined set of ethical principles so that all individuals in and the organisation itself consistently make 'good' decisions
- Directors must act in the interests of the company as a whole, not just shareholders - including shareholders in perpetuity
- Future proof your decision making to safeguard your reputation

See <http://www.ethics.org.au>

### GRADUATE DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO: Nicole Tarlton

The Insurances Seminar held at Unitec on July 10th went well with numerous graduates commenting how helpful it was. Graham Strez and Norrie Johnson were the presenters.

Sarah King has been replaced by Justine Francis as the NZIA's APL Graduate Development Programme event manager.

### ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP PORTFOLIO: Carolyn Savage

The July presentation was attended by 20 members on a night that most people would have preferred to stay home. The room was warm thanks to the assistance from Rosemary Geard and was set up for 30 people with the potential to open up the remainder of the area if required. Thanks to Don McRae for stepping into the breach and looking after the guest speaker and for sending through the CPD registration form to Rosemary.

Fred Braxton, the Eco Design Advisor from Waitakere City Council presented a Powerpoint display (a copy has been forward to my office if anyone would like to view it) and was well received by all. Fred Braxton provided handouts which included a number of web links for resources, solar hot water heating and its costs and benefits to name but a few. Both Fred Braxton and the members who attended benefited from the meeting with future working relationships being forged.

### TECHNICAL ISSUES PORTFOLIO: Michael Middlebrook

*Building Control Issues - Documents for Code Compliance Paper*  
We have issued a paper recommending the separation of BC Code Compliance documents and Construction documents. We believe that this separation is required because of a mismatch between the purpose and types of information required for consents and construction. This will make Consent process more efficient and reduce delays.

*Building Control Issues - NZIA AKL Branch Meeting on BC Issues*  
We recommend that a special meeting of NZIA Auckland Branch members be scheduled to discuss Building Control Issues similar to the meeting that was held a couple of years ago.

### HERITAGE PORTFOLIO: Adam Wild

#### *NZIA Heritage*

The President of the NZIA is keen that the NZIA is permanently represented on the Board of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust.

#### *The Rotherham House, 1950*

The concept is to secure the Rotherham House as an Auckland centre for the promotion of architecture, architectural debate, and architectural issues. Sir Miles advises that the Warren Trust does not fund the acquisition of buildings.

#### *Architecture Week '07*

We have been busy with planning a retrospective of Dick Toy; principally focussing on his thinking and work through his church buildings in Auckland. In collaboration with the Architecture Archive at the University of Auckland and each of the participating Toy church communities we will present a number of associated activities and a Toy Archive publication.

#### *The Group and Donner Architectural Archives*

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 Branch has been asked to consider a contribution to these costs. Estimates for conservation work on key Group and Donner archives (totalling around \$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)

**Auckland City Plan Change 192**

This plan change introduces District Plan rule changes to Residential 3 zones. These zones are associated with Auckland's volcanic cones and coastal cliffs and the outstanding natural landforms they represent for the city. Linked to the Plan Change are rules similar to those introduced in Plan Change 163 providing indiscriminate protection to all pre-1940 buildings.

**COMMITTEE FOR AUCKLAND/UG PORTFOLIO: Shannon Joe**

**Urban Issues Group**

Notes of a meeting held at D72 on Tuesday 17 July 2007.  
 Present: Graeme Scott, Shannon Joe, Don McRae, Peter Hollenstein, Stuart Mackie, Dushko Bogunovich, Julie Stout, Doug Leighton, Hannah Ickert, Doug Leighton, Rodney Davies, Paul Edmond, Andre De Graaf, Pete Maher. Apologies: Joanna Smith, Lorraine Knight  
 Hobsonville: Sean Bignell and Tom Bridgman from the Hobsonville Land Company presented the planning so far for the site, and answered questions. A note of thanks was sent. David Irwin from Isthmus Group also came to join the discussion.  
 Wynyard Quarter: Special meeting to be held for those interested in helping write a brief submission to the Plan Change. This will be at D72 on Tuesday 31 July at 5.45pm.  
 Queen Street Bus Lanes: Decided to send a brief submission outlined the too short consultation period and the undesirability of regional diesel buses moving closely along the kerbside of the new footpaths.  
 Next Meeting: Tuesday 21 August 2007. Guest is Ludo Campbell-Reid. Guest Amanda Reynolds will be speaking at the UIG meeting on Tue 4 Sep 07 on some of her latest work in the UK.

**Committee for Auckland**

"Reinventing Paradise" author Rod Oran and publisher Penguin Group NZ book launch hosted by CFA.  
 "Is the media strangling New Zealand leadership?" - As part of New Zealand Leadership Week, Excelerator at The University of Auckland Business School has organised a debate critically assessing the media's track record in helping or hindering the country's leadership.  
 CFA are preparing a submission on the proposed waterfront plan change.

**Building Betters Schools Project:** Two more partnerships have been established and a Memorandum of Understandings signed; Westpac with Bailey Road School and ASB with Hay Park Primary.

**Apologia**

June - Richard Francis Jones somehow got transposed into the Ocker backline of a few years back and became a Farr Jones - problems of typing amid the melee of a trans-Tasman footy match, I'm sorry.

July - The list of projects needing love and protection attributed the Wanganui memorial Hall to Geoff Newman rather than Gordon Smith of practice Newman, Smith and Greenhough as it should have done, whilst somehow the Skybox was attributed to Herriot Melhuish where it was of course Melling Morse.

Errol Haarhoff's *Guide to the Architecture of Central Auckland* ought have been acknowledged as a valuable source for Andrew Barrie and Julia Gatley's guide to apartment buildings.

With all that to apologise for you'd think Block was put together on a wing and a prayer at four in the morning...



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BLOCK is delighted to have been approached by COPYBOOK - those people who somehow turn a CD on your reception desk into an enormous roll of tender drawings before you've even noticed it's gone - and has the great pleasure of announcing their support of the broadsheet.

COPYBOOK print everything from glossy marketing pamphlets and pin-up sheets to reams and reams of black and white documentation. They felt sponsoring BLOCK was the perfect opportunity to give something back to the architecture community - it takes enormous energy to put together a publication even as small as this humble two-sheeter, and BLOCK is truly grateful to have them on board. Enjoy your new offset-printed masthead and refined paper stock, and go visit COPYBOOK on Mayoral drive.

## Child's Play cont. from inside cover...

The Premiership season just started and as regulated as football is, the associated rules define the (beautiful) game. Rules create opportunities for play in space and time. Sigfried Gideon was probably a referee. Also you might want to check my interview with Jacques Herzog: <http://www.kultureflash.net/archive/200/priview.html>

*You have often worked in conjunction with other architects and designers. What skills do you value in staff and colleagues? In what areas do you most appreciate assistance?*

Running the office is like managing a football team. Sometimes motivation is required, at other times discipline, technique, or experience ... WHAT - architecture, as an office name, deliberately does not bear the singular authorial imprint of a director surname. I hope big team players will emerge and take up senior positions. For example, we are currently looking for an assistant manager (an office administrator who shares the office's vision) and hope to sign this week our most expensive salaried team player - a young German who I taught at the Architecture Association this year who has potential. Let's see what happens over the course of the new season.

Skills? Honesty, diligence, intelligence. In that order. Fun and games is an office given.

For more information, see: [www.whatarchitecture.com](http://www.whatarchitecture.com)

### ADVANCE NOTICE

We have been giving consideration to founding what might be called the 'non-traditional' group (NTG). The focus will be on the peculiarities of undertaking projects non-traditionally - which many of us are doing now to a greater or lesser degree. At the first meeting we might describe the range of non-traditional issues - novation, non-traditional procurement, design build, urban design and heritage subtleties, liability, insurance, LBPs, etc. Liaison and intelligence sharing with other Branch Groups - UIG, HIG, TIG and others - will be essential. Of interest is the upcoming review (2008?) of core competencies which may be broadened, and we may look to lobby the NZIA and RAIA to include the aspects of practice that are fast becoming 'traditional'. This would be of particular relevance to graduates (and their employers) working in large practices where experience in the traditional core competencies is becoming increasingly hard to achieve. We will endeavour to make attendance CPD accruing.

Please put your thinking caps on. I will give notice of the first gathering, which is intended for early September. Richard Goldie, Peddie Thorp.

## A Letter to the Editor!

### BLOCK's very first

*We've been threatened with a few letters, but the first has finally landed on our doorstep, prompted by the sudden departure - after barely six months as head of the UoA School of Architecture - by Peggy Deamer. Deamer was formerly Assistant Dean at Yale, principal of the New York practice Deamer + Phillips, and holds a Ph.D from Princeton.*

On Friday August 17<sup>th</sup>, Professor Peggy Deamer, Head of the School of Architecture at Auckland University resigned after only six months in the job. She explained that her views about the School's future direction were in deep misalignment with those of the University.

There has been no explanation about Deamer's departure by the University to the Students or the Staff.

Our argument is not with the teachers at the School of Architecture, but with the higher University powers whom we believe are preventing passionate staff and students from moving forward in a positive direction.

Deamer's departure needs to be taken as a serious wake-up call, both by the University and more importantly by the wider architecture profession of New Zealand.

Practitioners need to be aware of the upheaval occurring at the School, and understand how it will directly affect the profession. The people most affected are your future employees and colleagues.

As a student body, we are trying desperately to ensure our education is not further compromised by the attitude of the University.

We the students now ask for your support. Voice your concerns!

The Student Body  
School of Architecture  
University of Auckland  
[sos.auckland@gmail.com](mailto:sos.auckland@gmail.com)

### EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Office Space Available 2008  
We are in the process of establishing an Environmental Resource Centre based in Henderson Valley, Waitakere City. It is planned to have available a shared professional office suite to rent/lease out to a suitable Architect with an interest in Green Architecture.

If you have an interest in the natural environment and sustainable green design solutions in Architecture we would like to hear from you.

Contact: Gilbert Brakey  
Mb. 0274 378867 or  
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## PRINT DESIGN CLASSICS



Poster for Anhalt Art Union exhibition celebrating Kandinsky's 60th birthday. Herbert Bayer. 1926.

Austrian born artist Herbert Bayer's poster is a striking statement of the new approach to graphic design that he pioneered at the Bauhaus. It boldly reduces the message to its essentials, the name of Kandinsky exploding like a shouted slogan, with vivid use of reds and blacks on yellow paper. The strong grid structure, using horizontal and vertical bars for emphasis, is dramatically enhanced by the daring asymmetry of the composition and exposure of large areas of blank paper. In keeping with the impersonality conveyed by the grid, Kandinsky looks coolly away from the viewer.

The Bauhaus resident Constructivist, László Maholy-Nagy, taught that photography should be integrated with typography. Photographic images gave typographic signs an essential connection with

reality. Also characteristic of Constructivism is the dynamic diagonal tilt of the composition, suggesting the constantly changing character of modernity. The expanses of blank paper suggest a Utopian infinite space, in which these elements have momentarily come together.

Bayer influenced nearly every aspect of culture during his long career as an artist, graphic designer, teacher and architect. Educated under Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky at the Bauhaus between 1921 and 1923, Bayer returned in 1924 to take a position as director of the printing and advertising department. His ideas on typography were foundational to contemporary graphic design.



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