



02 2008

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

BLOCK

Laid Bare

The Porcelain Underbelly of Contemporary Architecture

For the sake of a recent renovation I plumbed the depths of depravity; I confess I searched the Flickr website to see what others got up to in their bathrooms. And while the dubious keywords 'other peoples bathrooms' could easily have led to objectionable material, the original sin lay in the voyeuristic impulse, the compulsion to see what others were doing 'over there'. But this is a sin shared by many, one endemic to an island in which it is easy to feel that architecture happens elsewhere. Indeed, the compulsion to look away affects the best of us - Sir Miles Warren once described how it was an enormous advantage as a student in studio to get a Corbu volume before the school library received it. The dissemination of architecture via books, periodicals, film and the internet is a subject of historical relevance to New Zealand.

As Sir Miles leafed through his *Oeuvre Complète* he would have come across a number of bathrooms. The relationship between modern architecture, cleanliness and hygiene has been well documented and the bathroom was seen as an opportunity to showcase the latest technology, to demonstrate ingenuity in planning tight spaces, and to deploy startling material contrasts. But leaf through any current periodical or monograph and a different story emerges. Bathrooms are rarely seen. One could surmise that this is because of the activities they house; the stigma of the objectionable. But this cannot be entirely true, for there is wealth of WCs and WHBs in the 'Special Issues' devoted to kitchens and bathrooms published by the likes of *Trends* and *Houses NZ*. This suggests it is acceptable to inspect others' ablutions so long as we look with a special issue in mind, an issue that divorces the bathroom from the larger work. But why such a clean break? To borrow a phrase from 'The New Zealand House Book' of 1954, why is it that the location of conveniences often poses such a difficult problem?

The answer in part lies on Flickr where the bathrooms of the best are laid bare. For example, if you go looking for the loo in Herzog and de Meuron's new de Young Museum you better have a strong bladder, for in periodicals and publications there is little sign of the WC. But not so on Flickr, thanks to a brave (or deviant) individual with a small camera and an ounce of gumption.

Another Flickr photo captures a Williams and Tsien privy where the photographer didn't even stop to pick up the rubbish before snapping away. When passed around the office, these images drew a similar response, mainly a strange identification with the architects and a wry smirk of acknowledgement that even Pritzker prize winners have to 'do' bathrooms. There was a sense that in the bathroom the architect is laid bare; left exposed to comparison and critique. Arguably this is because the activities taking place

here tend to be explicitly defined and whilst there is room for cultural variations, the bathroom is a place for a telling comparison of how a particular architect treats architecture.

In H&deM's bathroom it's hard to feel the respect that should be held for the Pritzker winning firm. It feels like we are looking at just another room, one that is not too special, but that satisfies a need. And perhaps this is the effect of picturing the bathroom in contemporary periodicals and publications. Whereas the publisher's intention - or the market imperative - is to celebrate architectural heroics, the bathroom can appear as just another room. It is a nod to the everyday side of architecture. As for the Special Issues, once divorced from the rest of the building the bathroom can be elevated to a higher status.

Since its inception in 2004, Flickr has grown exponentially to the point where it now hosts over 2 billion images. It is regarded as one of the web's fastest growing properties and was purchased by Yahoo! in March 2005 for an undisclosed sum. The likes of Flickr and other internet resources (a number of bathrooms by your favorite NZ architects can be viewed at open2view.com) are changing the way in which architecture is disseminated. They ensure us access to places not previously pictured in the hardcopies at *Magazino*. But whilst they are colored by the sense of the amateur and unedited, suspicions must still be held as they would of any representation - one can only trust the photographer when they say the bathroom is by H&deM. Still, the question remains as to the effect of these new access rights on an island where representation plays a telling role. *SF*



H&deM's green WCs at the de Young Museum

Mills - Latin, 3B, 1963

Mediation is the New Environment Court - Block swaps Counsel with the opposition and gives it a whirl

Making a building these days is not unlike running a gauntlet, such are the serried ranks of insults lined up to be hurled at any half-pie idea that pops its head over the ramparts. I'm long used to this peculiarly Kiwi client attitude, based on the belief that they could easily knock the design off if they had time and only really require my services as they are just a tad busy at present. Lately, though, we seem to have cooked up some exquisite bureaucratic devices within the approval system that call into question the wisdom of committing to anything more than a tentative set of propositions before entering the fray. My brief hour upon the stage of the Environment Court last year has been chronicled in these pages and though somewhat abridged I hope that it conveyed the operatic sweep of the proceedings. If that was a show with full production values and a cast of thousands then the mediation show on a court side stage has all the hallmarks of a French farce.

I have been slugging away for about three years on a site so steep my head and shoulders breach the height-in-relation-to-boundary regulations every time I make a site visit. We have tried to fit within the bulk of an existing house but the combined effects of the city's heritage provisions, city plan setbacks and the cruel topography meant a resource consent application was inevitable. In an airless slab block before Christmas we made our arguments before the planning committee and were granted consent. There was, however, a neighbour, and before long we found ourselves in a legal conference and heading off to the Environment Court. A few days in court might be interesting, but they are preceded by days of expensive tedium as evidence and strategy is discussed. In an effort to short circuit the process and stem the outward torrent of client funds the court promoted a mediation process, in which it is hoped the key matters can be agreed and the more arduous hearing process avoided.

Though less formal in structure, all the players were assembled; solicitors, barristers, planners, landscapers, clients, neighbours, and the architect with plans, sketches and models. After the briefest of introductory comments there began the most extraordinary sequence of comings and goings, as various combinations of the cast decamped for side rooms. Consultants only, consultants plus counsel but not clients; like a venn diagram there seemed to be no combination untried. This being a small town the hired hands from both sides of the table were themselves something of a Venn assembly, a cast from last week's hearing reshuffled, or perhaps a frozen square dance: "... barristers take your landscaper by the hand, whirl them round then on again...". This sense of cosy camaraderie was further compounded when the appellant was revealed as a former neighbour of mine, and the hitherto unidentified mediator bumped into me during one of the early scene changes and mumbled sotto voce "Mills, 3b, latin, 1963".

Amid this mobile mayhem the aggrieved neighbour's concerns were outlined and proposals for addressing them started to shake

out. Over the three years of design there was little about the project that had gone undebated, sketched, modelled, analysed, cross referenced and reported on, yet here in the air conditioned bowels of the court this work counted for nought. I found myself simultaneously offended by the callous indifference to our previous labours and intoxicated by the immediacy and directness with which the form was reshaped. The place of architecture in the process was interesting indeed, and I found myself having to respond to proposals on the hoof, calculating the degree of injury to the design that the neighbour's requests would cause, proposing and sketching alternatives, and calming client fears.

Perhaps the most alarming outcome was the feeling that the project was not actually much diminished by this. In fact there was at times a sneaking feeling that the thing was actually a bit better for a couple of rounds of biff. We are all well used to the slings and arrows of critique - it being a foundation stone of architectural education in the studio - but the projectiles delivered in stentorian tones by the appellant's barrister were free of respect for our craft as roofs were shorn, rooms amputated and living courts reduced.

As proposal and counter-proposal were considered, the two sides closed on an agreement and by mid-afternoon papers were being signed, hands shaken, and the spectre of a court case vanquished. Amid the funk of an emptying room, the abandoned white board, and the discarded piles of annotated drawings there was an unspoken assumption that a bit of time twiddling the mouse back in the studio would rescue the project from haphazard chaos. It remains to be seen whether the deals done on the fly have wrought irreparable damage to our project, but I have to say that the exhilaration of the horse-trading and the need to examine and report on a proposal in the same breath made a welcome change from the glacial rate at which projects generally progress. PC

Jun Aoki Lecture

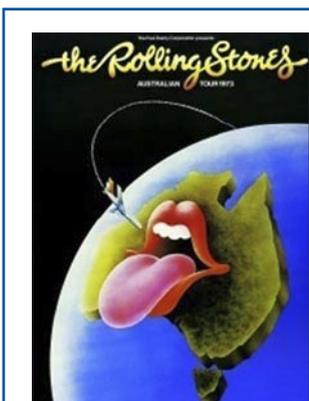
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Rolling Stones tour poster, Ian McCausland, 1973.

PRINT DESIGN CLASSICS #5

When the Rolling Stones announced an Australian tour for early 1973, promoter Paul Dainty commissioned Melbourne-based illustrator Ian McCausland to do the poster. The iconic image of a jet airplane winging its way into the open lips and massive tongue of the famous Rolling Stones logo over a stylised relief map of Australia captured the sense of the tour's importance with absolute perfection. The poster is McCausland's most important claim to international fame and original copies are among the most sought-after items by Stones fans and rock'n'roll memorabilia collectors alike.

Quoted in *Under the Covers*: "I was very influenced

by San Francisco's psychedelic Fillmore posters, Robert Crumb, and Kelly of Mouse Studios". McCausland's work retains that same timeless sense of rock history, of capturing the essence of the performer's music in his imagery and style.

His illustrations and designs for albums by Little River Band, the Aztecs, Spectrum, Daddy Cool, Chain, Skyhooks, Company Caine, Matt Taylor and Carson plus his work as Art Director for the Mushroom label kept him at the forefront of the Australian rock music industry throughout the 1970s. In the days of the LP sleeve, essentially he was the designer of choice when you wanted a quality product.



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Good Books Bear Fruit

Over the last two issues, BLOCK called for donations of books to be sent with the University of Auckland Architecture School's Judy Cockeram to Peshawar, Pakistan, where she is teaching a workshop at a new architecture school in the North West Frontiers. By way of follow up and thanks to all those generous donors, we present extracts from Judy's reports of her adventures to date:

There is so little connection between the mountain city and violence. Think dusty muted colours with snowy mountain backdrops and you have the watercolourist's paradise of Abbottabad. With woollen shawls like blankets men walk with flat hats down potholed tarmac streets, that meet nonexistent paths and simple concrete framed, brick infill walls. The floors are marble and cool your feet when you come in from the seven degree frost. The walls of plastered double brick hold the temperature steady and natural gas heaters roar. The room has been warmed for you and the tea arrives shortly after you do. Bags are carried and doors opened.



The morning retinue - complete with shotgun and assault rifle - before the doors to the Architecture School in Peshwar

Working here in the University is all the above and no photocopier in the building. It is a timetable that has been pushed around till no real structure remains, as recent events have impacted in ways we haven't considered. It is powercuts and diesel engines, and think three cuts a day. It is an 8:30 start, morning tea at 12:00 (toasted pies with boiled chicken and lots of pepper and mayonnaise) and the end of the official work day at 2:00 - home for lunch, the academics return if they are not taking care of, say, a power bill. I am told this can take up to five visits to five different buildings. The students are the same in their eagerness, in their desire to understand, in their eyes when they realise what something means

or why we have done things. 'Getting it' is a powerful sensation and they love it the same as all students I have known. The range of academic characters are the same. The few professionals involved travel three hours plus to do a days critting at the school.

The differences from Friday night at Auckland Uni: no alcohol, no pork, but a fire and a coal bbq in the ground. No Southern Cross but smoke and watering eyes. No wind, no rain, but security with a gun. A big wok is filled with seasoned lamb, students threading them on skewers and laying them on a BBQ pit they built as a Landscape project. There is passionate discourse about just how you should thread the lamb on the skewer.



Abandoned mosque, Toopast

The life here seems simple and historic but is contending with an extraordinary speed of educational change. Mothers who are illiterate have children savvy in mobile phones and computers; what took generations for the west is happening here in years.

I have had the privilege of spending a night in the school's Dr Arshad's home village, staying in his family's complex. And this is really rural Pakistan; nothing fake or Disney. Adobe building, leading to brick and now concrete, which doesn't perform as well as the adobe. Dr Ali does his journey regularly from village to city, from rural Pakistan to offices in Seoul, Singapore and Saudi. He teaches, directs and researches in two Universities, and still makes time for his students. They all love him and this school changes from working around powercuts to generating its own buzz when he is to return. He needs a PA able to speak Urdu, Korean, Pashtu and English. Know of anyone?!!

Cheers - from the City of Poets, where I am with a peaceful and passionate people teaching Architecture.

Judy

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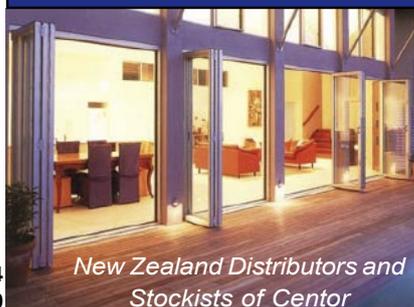
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John Wardle

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John Wardle is an architect obsessed with detail. In his hands joinery ducks and weaves; a single skin of delicately-weighted timber that starts life as a ceiling is likely to trickle out at the end of a bench, having seamlessly transitioned through stairway, cupboard and bookshelf. It is unusual for such deftness of touch to find expression in larger work, where commercial pressures make detailing little more than the reconciliation of a dozen trades, and the scale rule scarcely gets closer than 1 to 10. JWA seems able to transcend these pressures, developing relationships with strong clients and producing work at institutional scale no less finessed than its most carefully wrought houses.

Wardle's studio numbers greater than 60 staff, and operates across all scales of architecture. They've collected 25 awards from the RAI, including its prestigious Sir Zelman Cowen Award for the Kaurua Building at the University of South Australia. The subject of a recent Thames and Hudson monograph, the practice is as serious, ambitious and interesting as any in Australia.

John Wardle will be speaking at the Auckland Girls Grammar School auditorium this coming Monday the 25th February at 6pm. Entry is free and attendance accrues 10 CPD points. RSVP to aaltobooks@xtra.co.nz



UniSA Hawke Building



Waitangi competition entry



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The Fine Print

Excerpts from the reports to NZIA Auckland Branch meeting held Feb. 5th, 2008.

COMMITTEE FOR AKL / FAL PORTFOLIO: Stephen Martin

The Skills for Auckland migrant mentoring pilot project team have been providing advice to the Omega project over summer. Omega is being run by the Committee for Auckland this year with support from thirty-odd Auckland organisations who will provide a mix of mentoring and internship opportunities to skilled new migrants to Auckland. The Committee for Auckland has appointed Justin Treagus as full-time Omega Programme Director. Justin has diverse corporate experience obtained in South Africa, the UK, and Auckland. The programme will be publicised at an opening function on March 5th to coincide with the visit to Auckland of Alan Broadbent, Chairman of The Maytree Foundation, a philanthropic organisation which works to accelerate the settlement of immigrants in large Canadian urban centres. The Omega board has invited the Skills for Auckland project team to continue its involvement with Omega by way of a board position. The board has representation from Simpson Grierson, Auckland Chamber of Commerce, Auckland Regional Migrant Services, Bank of New Zealand and BECA with two or three more appointments to follow.

This is my last report under the Committee for Auckland FAL portfolio – Gary Lawson will take over this from the next meeting. I will continue to report on Omega, as Shannon Joe has been doing with Building Better Schools.

HERITAGE PORTFOLIO: Adam Wild

The Rotherham House, 1950

The concept is to secure the Rotherham House as an architectural centre for the promotion and debate of all things architectural in Auckland. We are currently seeking permission from the Estate to support Julia Gatley's desire to photographically record the place.

Architecture Week

Just when you think its over, someone passes you the latest Listener and there's a piece about Architecture, Auckland, Toy and future potential. See *The Listener* – City Planning "Bay city wreckers", February 2nd, 2008.

Richard Keals

The Branch has received a letter from descendants of Richard Keals, an early Auckland architect, whose grave site they have discovered in a dilapidated state near Boscastle, Cornwall and who are seeking support for its conservation. We have spoken with the family and in contact with NZHPT and English Heritage about what needs to be and can be done. Keals was one of Auckland's earliest trained architects, practising in Auckland by 1863. Keals' practice is credited with designing a number of hotels between 1866 and 1878 while his NZ Insurance Company building of 1870 on Queen Street was one of the grandest commercial buildings in late Victorian Auckland. Surviving buildings of his design include Blackett's Buildings - previously the South British Insurance Building - on the corner of Shortland and Queen Streets (NZHPT Register # 4483, Category I). In 1902, R. Keals and Sons claimed to be the oldest firm of architects in Auckland.

Space available

We have two spaces ideal for architects here at 7 Fenton St Eden Tce. One 1st floor space of 100m² which was once occupied by Malcolm Taylor of Xsite Architecture. It has a separate board room and is light and airy and also has aircon.

The other space is 40m². It has a 3m stud, hardwood floors and is well lit. There are two carparks outside the front of the building with extra parks at the rear. Will rent or lease. Address is 7 Fenton St, Eden Tce and is very handy to Mt Eden Station.

Contact Philip Charlton
p. 09 3799368
m. 0274 769850

NZIA Conference and CPD session 2008

When: 22 – 23 May and CPD session on 24 May 2008
Where: SKYCITY Auckland Convention Centre, Auckland

The Conference theme, *Stand and Deliver: Concept and Detail*, explores current and future directions in architecture, encompassing both new technologies and traditional techniques for design and delivery of projects. Speakers will address a variety of topics including digital design, collaboration, consultation, methods of design and methods of practice.

Confirmed speakers are Gregg Pasquarelli, Brett Steele, Chris Bosse and Peggy Deamer who will be joined by New Zealand architect colleagues.

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