



06 2008

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

BLOCK

Complexity and the Conference

Pip Cheshire abandons BIM and is diving back into Rhino tutorials

Mark Twain said "when faced with a fork in the road, take it" and it was probably useful advice for those attending last month's NZIA conference, such as the diversity of possible futures offered. Unlike many previous conferences which have resembled a sort of intellectual cargo cult - with wide eyed locals waiting on the metaphorical sand for overseas experts to deliver the goods - we had a group of largely unknowns, our own exile from Symonds Street excepted.

Close examination of the speakers' CVs and a little googling suggested an interesting event but, judging from the numbers, not many of the Auckland mob availed themselves of even this basic use of the computer. This may reflect Auckland members' better access to CPD-earning events, the desire of out-of-towners to visit the big smoke, or whatever, but I think the locals who passed up the event missed out as two arresting models of possible futures were presented by speakers Brett Steele and Greg Pasquarelli. Steele, Director of the Architectural Association school of architecture, showed us a school and projects that suggested an approaching maelstrom of data conjured up and manipulated in studios that looked as overcrowded as a first year psychology lab rat experiment. In contrast Pasquarelli rolled out an articulate and ordered exposition of his practice SHoP's erosion of the traditional boundaries of the architect's scope of services, including extensions into self developing, incorporation of sub consultant disciplines, and procurement.



SHoP's Dunescape at PS1 MoMA NYC, 2000

Central to both was computing; in Steel's studios the machines were everywhere, hooked up, grouped around, lent over, spilt on, stacked and discarded, and all delivering a future of rampantly democratic divergence, of complexity and contradiction founded on the empowering strength of the computer driven individual to mold personal meaning from networked chaos. The cool, measured approach of Pasquarelli revealed the seemingly bullet-proof bravado of his previous life as a merchant banker, as he

demonstrated the architectural and commercial leverage gained from the analytical power and manipulative abilities unlocked by the use of the box as layers of software are employed in the development, analysis and promulgation of projects.

Midway along this spectrum Chris Bosse's beautiful Beijing Aquatic Centre seemed a bit ho hum really - a competition, a lovely idea, a heroic team calculating the myriad complexities, then the army of jump suited constructors springing into action to build this world wonder in rapid time. For all the apparent inevitability that hindsight offers it was, at least, a building and furthermore, despite its bubbling visage, a generally rectilinear building and all the more remarkable for being that in those three days of Rhino- and Maya-induced curving, folding and buckling planes.

There was a delicious moment when Pasquarelli asked the darkened hall how many of us were not using "sliders" in our presentations to clients. No hands were raised in what might have been a moment of victory for South Pacific computing but more likely a moment of deep confusion as we struggled to think what a slider might be. They turned out to be mechanisms for making projects responsive to variable project demands through the manipulation of base data upon which the design model was founded. Thus the change in mix of use from, say, 25% residential to 10%, and a commensurate rise in commercial use, might automatically lop off a penthouse and pop in another truck dock complete with roller door and footpath crossing.

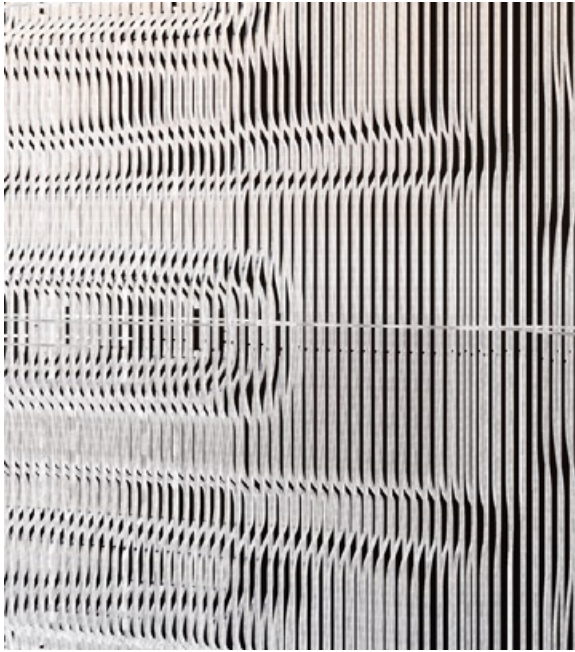
Now this may be old hat to many of you who chose not to attend, perhaps too busy deep in VB script programming your sliders for the next client meeting, but I have to say I found the idea a bit troublesome really. I am afraid I have not quite got used to clients expecting multiple versions of rendered schemes or the domestic client armed with Resene's Ezypaint taking the Ponsonby out of my projects. Indeed the conference did seem a bit top heavy with those of us who straddle the computer age, and was much the poorer for the absence of students - the NZIA still having difficulty in finding a place for the great unwashed.

Across town in the crypt of the Catholic Cathedral students of AUT, Unitec and UoA came together to show their digital wares in a sort of *salon refusé* organized by the Auckland Branch. Though poorly attended by practitioners and NZIA councillors grazing in The Grove across St Patrick's Square, this was where the local energy was, in a show that at long last freed itself from projected images of goopy architecture and showcased some examples of constructed - if that is the right word for it - folded, bent and morphed objects.

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The darkened room and abundant booze of the student event was in stark contrast to the Saturday morning CPD session that promised to deliver the keys to the front door of the BIM age, to make manifest the promise of building information modeling with local examples. Alas the show failed to "Stand and Deliver" as we saw again how experts get stranded in jargon and half-delivered demonstrations. Indeed the rapid assimilation of new technology by the young and those in the thick of making and delivering architecture was a theme hinted at throughout the conference and played out in the last part of the CPD session, where the jibes and throw away lines of those barely in control of Outlook stood in contrast to the earnest engagement of youth.



Detail of Unitec graduates John Dymond and Calum McNaught's plywood-fabricated Gradient Threshold

The NZIA and conference organizers are to be congratulated on the three days, not least for the implicit focus on education, from the pedagogical discourses of Steele and Deamer to the attempt to make BIM accessible to rank and file. Though at times in Deamer's talks the experience and wisdom of the largely grey or no-haired audience seemed to count for naught this was in pleasurable contrast to the blitzkrieg of images delivered by overseas heavies that are a feature of most conferences. PC



Each Block is laid by a dedicated editorial team, all of whom happen to work at Cheshire Architects: Andrew Barrie, Pip Cheshire, Nathaniel Cheshire & Sean Flanagan.

Email nat@cheshirearchitects.com for a full-colour pdf or back issues

Part of the Family?

We've had a huge response to the NZ Architecture Family Tree published with last month's issue of BLOCK. We were especially pleased with the stack of letters and emails from architects sending in information about names, dates and links.

The Family Tree is intended as an ongoing 'open source' project, so if you have information or corrections to contribute please send it to nat@cheshirearchitects.com. The chart is currently a bit Auckland-centric, so if you have information relating to architects from other cities, we're especially keen to hear it. As with the BLOCK itineraries, the Family Tree is available online at the Auckland Architecture Archive website (see www.architecture-archive.auckland.ac.nz), and we hope to have a revised version up in a month or two.

We'd like to make another big thank you to GIB, who generously sponsored the Family Tree's printing and distribution costs, and to Copybook for their invaluable assistance in popping it out at such short notice.



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The Fine Print

Excerpts from the reports to NZIA Auckland Branch meeting held May 6th, 2008.

CHAIR'S REPORT: Christina van Bohemen

I met with Beverley McRae to introduce myself as Branch Chair. We discussed a number of things including Branch/National office communication, events and sponsorship, Graduate Development Programme and PIG amongst other things. We discussed the need for coordination/communication of events and sponsorship. BM noted that Auckland Branch has significant leverage with speakers and sponsors, that other branches do not have. When possible, consideration should be given to enabling repeat sessions in the adjacent region/centres.

The other point made was that some sponsors appear not to distinguish between sponsorship of Auckland Branch versus National events. This should be explicit with letters of thanks following events from the Branch.

National Office is concerned that there is confusion, certainly for the sponsor APL, about the branch and national programmes for graduates. A name change for the branch level programme has been requested so as to distinguish it from the national programme. It seems a reasonable request that the Committee should discuss.

There may be scope for developing Auckland Branch initiatives for wider branch use or for the national programme. Liaison with Joe Grayland is advised.

We discussed the need in general, for improved communication and liaison with the northern branch members as well as the branches in our region. This was the also subject of discussions with northern branch members at the AGM/Conference, so some work is required here which I have already discussed briefly with Lindley Naismith.

Branch Meeting minutes can be sent to Rosemary for putting up on the website, and we discussed the idea of events going up there too, but without conclusion.

The Annual General Meeting in Auckland was presented with the new awards structure and we have been asked to appoint a convener – or two - for Auckland Branch. Continuity of convenors from Local to the New Zealand Awards is integral to the new structure.

Bill McKay is running the evening lecture series at UxA in the next semester and is intending to invite Richard Harris and me to participate. We discussed the need for more informal engagement at local level.

The Branch sponsored the student exhibition organised by Andrew Barrie. A huge thanks to Andrew for all his efforts for this and the tours.

We need to start giving some thought to Architecture Week next year, and before that Architecture Day. World Architecture Day is on October 6 this year. Further discussion required.

UNITEC REPORT: Tony van Raat

Internally we were happy to participate in the digital display 'Gradient Threshold' which showed as an adjunct to the Conference. Students here are ramping up for the end of the semester and are irritable and smelly (but charming) as a result.

The heads of the three schools met at Unitec on 29 April. Discussion ranged over the need for a review and reflection workshop for participants in the regular Visiting Panels, proposed revision to the procedures governing the Annual Student Awards (we'll revert to the location being in the city of the host school), curriculum development in the new Master of Architecture environment, student access (by video-link if necessary) to major conferences such as the recent one (did that happen?) and the proposed new school in Christchurch. On the topic of the new professional masters, I note that about half (32 out of 63) of our Year 4 students met the academic threshold to move to the new program, the remainder continuing with the BArch. We expect this proportion to improve in subsequent years as students meet the challenge of the grade threshold.



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Current projects in the School cover the normal spectrum. Dave Strachan has generously undertaken to manage a design/ documentation/ construction project for a beach house to be constructed and sold to aid children's charity KidsCan. Design was completed at Unitec, construction documentation is proceeding in Dave's office, construction will start at Unitec soon. The building will be trucked to site and be ready for auction towards the end of the year. This is a fantastic exercise; Dave and his team at SGA are keeping pressure on the group to take issues of documentation and construction seriously (something we hardly ever do, alas!). Meanwhile Branko Mitrovic has students producing watercolour renderings of a Palladian villa, so there's variety for you... plus much else, of course.

Meanwhile on May 10th we opened the *Trenta Case* exhibition in Florence. Enormous thanks to the Branch and the Warren Trust for their financial support, substantially increased by the exhibitors themselves. Marsh Cook, Rick Pearson and Jacopo Detti were present and it could not have happened without them – a fantastic team effort, ably assisted by our local architect friends. The lead up to the show was beset with drama and we almost failed to open at all - it was only 18 hours before we opened that customs, under pressure from the Mayor of Florence, the newspapers and the NZ Embassy released the material. A terrible struggle and 24 hours before we opened I thought that it wouldn't happen. However it did and we opened with about 350 people present including Herman Hertzberger (who designed Centraal Beheer and wrote a good book called 'Lessons for Students in Architecture' which I recommend), sundry local dignitaries, architects, students, etc. There was a write up in *La Repubblica* (a national daily in Italy) and I think *Abitare* are doing an article. The next venue in Rome has been arranged (no opening date yet though) and Peggy Deamer is looking for a venue for us on the East Coast of the USA. We have offers to show in Milan, Zurich (or perhaps Mendrisio where Botta and Zumthor teach), Berlin, perhaps Oslo, California, Shanghai and Beijing so don't expect to see it at home for a while. I'm chasing money as it's all proving expensive. The work was very well reported and excited considerable envy, which should cause us all some pleasure.

PRACTICE ISSUES GROUP: Richard Goldie

The second meeting of the Practice Issues Group (PIG) was not as well attended due to short notice. Discussion reinforced the six topics to be covered this year: employment; joint ventures; special contracts; ethics, copyright; mediation; project and design management. The format is that every alternate month the Group will discuss one interest area to scope a presentation by an appropriate panel or individual. This address will then happen the following month. First topic was on June 18th, 2008 - Employment.

CPD PORTFOLIO: Nicole Tarlton

Among the architects I am in contact with there seems to be a low number of CPD points gained under the Project and/or Practice Management competency units compared to Design and Documentation. Open for discussion is the idea of allowing architects to attend the Graduate Development seminars and claim points from these.

GRADUATE DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO: Sarah MacKenzie

Tendering Seminar: May's Tendering Seminar covered aspects of tendering, such as procurement methods, types of tenders, and the tender process. Speakers were Brendon Rawson and Tammy Ashley. The talks was attended by approximately 60 graduates.

Contracts Seminar: The Contracts Seminar was held Monday 26 May at the University of Auckland School of Architecture. Presented by Norrie Johnson and Brendon Rawson, the seminar covered contract administration, including topics such as standard forms of contract, conditions of contract, and parties to and person involved in contracts. The seminar was attended by approximately 65 graduates.

Upcoming APL Graduate Development Seminars: A weekend seminar will be held from 4-5 July covering competencies (experience areas) and case study preparation.

STUDENT REPORT (UoA): James Pearce

Crit Week: The week of Monday 2nd to Friday 6th was crit week. Many students are excited by the idea of professionals from the industry (re)viewing their work, even if we are irritable and smelly - as Tony put it - and I suggest that this is a great way to encourage a stronger connection between the industry and the students, which has already been mentioned to be lacking.

COUNCILLOR'S REPORT: Lindley Naismith

Ath's last full meeting as President: (The AGM was the real last). He will continue to pursue such projects as (re) establishment of 'Government Architect', getting an Architect on the board of the Historic Places Trust (both stalled due to pre-election lack of interest by government), new School of Architecture at Canterbury University, the Warren Architect's Education Trust, being a presence for the NZIA in Wellington (attending DBH meetings, etc), leading an NZIA delegation to visit Local Authorities.

Branches & branch spending: The CEO requested that branches advise the NZIA Office when overseas guest speakers are coming so that they can ensure that 'starved' branches can also benefit where possible. Branches were reminded that sponsorship and donations are the same thing and need to be applied for as set out in the donations policy. As now happens each year, Branch Chairs and Treasurers will be invited to attend the August meeting of Council. The NZIA office will provide branches with some guidelines for budget setting and spending.

Earth Charter: The Council voted to endorse the Charter. Individual members are encouraged to do the same. www.EarthCharter.org.

Membership: Current Practice members: 656. Current individual members: 2261, of which 663 are 'Graduates'. The rule change voted on at the AGM to limit graduate members to those on a pathway to registration, or working in a capacity consistent with the objects of the Institute, was passed.

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Continuum: This is an RAI A distance learning service. Audiotape plus PowerPoint presentations by speakers are recorded then made available on-line. The NZIA has negotiated both to access and contribute to this, and has recorded the Conference presentations with this in mind.

New Awards Structure: Patrick Clifford and Stewart Gardyne presented the new awards programme planned for implementation in June. 'Supreme Awards' replaced by the – single – 'New Zealand Architecture Medal'. In the future this may be 'named' - eg. the RAI A's Robyn Boyd Award. In the meantime agreement on an appropriate name is elusive and needs more debate. Resene remain the sponsor but neither their name nor that of the NZIA will be used, except as 'supporters' of the event.

The Urban Design Forum: The NZIA has joined the UDF. Ath exhorts us all to join as individuals and get involved. He believes Architects belonging to organisations such as this is imperative for the future of the practice of architecture in New Zealand.

Best and Worst Buildings Publicity: The Council had a problem with the bogus survey and undeclared interest here.

Ctrlshift 07: Ath will meet the individuals behind the letter - a hardcore of 2-3 people - and discuss their grievances. The Auckland Branch's view that a concerted attempt should be made by the NZIA to improve relations with, and embrace, the student body was put forward.

NZIA Conferences: The numbers were slightly down on previous years for this conference. Council discussed that with CPD culture now more mature perhaps a change in direction is needed. It was noted that the profession is quite compartmentalised in terms of professional development (eg. Student Conferences, the Graduate Development Programme, NZIA CPD), and there may be an opportunity for more integration. Equally, with the prospect of a recession, smaller, looser 'conference' events (remember Havelock North 199-?) may be more appealing/appropriate, and able to be more inclusive. The Auckland Branch's view that even in the context of the 'big' event a more vibrant conference could be achieved through the involvement of the schools of architecture and the Auckland branch – youth and fringe - was put forward.

NZIA Communications Strategy: Geoff Henly, marketing strategist of Network PR, presented to Council the initial work on a promotional campaign for NZIA Architects. This was also presented at the AGM. The primary outcomes identified are expanded market share for Registered Architects and greater influence by Registered Architects over the built environment. Among the high level objectives identified are establishing the principal that architecture is only possible with an Architect and that architecture is the cultural heritage of tomorrow.

The Future of Practice: Council discussed workshops to provide a strategic review of architectural practice in response to a suggestion by Richard Harris and a paper put forward by Barry Dacombe. These may coincide with the discussion promised

by Ath on NZIA action on the Building Act 2004 championed by Roger Hay at the AGM.

TECHNICAL ISSUES PORTFOLIO: Michael Middlebrook

Building Code Review: The Department of Building and Housing has issued its Statement of Intent 08/11 document outlining its plans for the next 3 years. The Department's focus is on providing a built environment that supports economic growth, families, and which defines our national identity. This document confirms that the emphasis on Building Code changes will be sustainability, energy efficiency and accessibility but gives no timeline for the implementation of these. Recent press on the affects of cold homes on health supports the need for rapid improvement in insulation for existing dwellings with the DBH concentrating on the State Housing stock in the short term.

Building and Construction: The Minister, Shane Jones, has announced a couple of new initiatives over the past month. These include: a nine month extension for Councils to get accredited and registered; Unit Titles Bill introduced to the house to modernise apartment laws. We will meet with both Shane Jones and Nick Smith to discuss: support for a New Building Industry Summit; new role of Government Architect, the proposed Simplified Building Code; DBH operational transparency; Architect self certification and Building and Construction Policy going forward toward the Elections.

Technical Issues Group: We had a good meeting on Tuesday 8th May at Jasmax. We discussed: organising a new Building Industry Summit; issues around self certification by Architects; strategies to raise the quality of documentation being issued by DBH (Draft documents are usually not circulated widely and in the past when we have commented, these comments have not made it into the final document. As a result many of the details say in E2/AS1 may not perform to the required standard and others are overdesigned); increasing inflexibility of the Building Code (As Acceptable Solutions are further developed it is getting more and more difficult to achieve design outside these solutions). Next TIG meeting: 8.00am Thursday 3rd July at Jasmax.

ACE Secondment News: I have completed my secondment to Auckland City. It has been an interesting process which has highlighted the challenges that face designers using Alternative Solutions and the lack of consistent process by officers checking building consent applications. We will be developing some checklists for different building types to help our office better assess compliance and processing risks prior to lodgement. I will be giving a presentation to Jasmax on what I have learned along with guidance on how to handle various building consent issues. We have suggested that the NZIA support writing some Practice Notes including: compliance checklists; guidance on alternative solutions; and guidance on resolving compliance issues. Part of the development of these will be talking with Councils and DBH to get general agreement on the comprehensiveness and dispute processes contained in these.



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