



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

**BLOCK**

## Multiplicity

### Poly-Modernism and the Skip-Bin of Dead Ideas: the First of a Two-Part Essay

Last Sunday I read Philip Ursprung and the great Lars Muller's Herzog & de Meuron; *Natural History*. Professing to sit stylistically between scientific and art historical conventions it is a beautiful book. A soft cover whose supple black surface – manipulated and pressed in shallow relief – enfolds a beautifully sized and weighted book of two different paper stocks, serified and sans-serifed text, gloss and matte images, drawings and models, development and realisation, ephemera and exegesis, treasure and waste.

There are a great many things one might discuss in relation to H&deM's practice, and with no fewer than thirty essays in this book few topics have gone unmolested. In the end, however, it is not so much the relation of their practice to the unusual stones collected by Chinese scholars of the Qing Dynasty - nor the relevance of rags found in Parisian drains for that matter - that seems most illuminating, but the fact that there are so many such subjects to choose from.

And this, I think, is the single most interesting feature of an increasingly dominant contemporary design process: it relies on multiplicity in production and in subject. H&deM are one of a sea of Avant-Garde practices whose advances are contingent upon an exhaustive search for - and testing of - diverse and challenging ideas.

Block's own Dr Andrew Barrie has written on the discovery of this same practice in the unsettling work of Kazuyo Sejima and Rue Nishizawa's SANAA office. He reveals a process close to Karl Popper's theory of Falsificationism in Science, whereby the greatest progress is understood to be made when safe hypotheses (time and space are constant) are disproved, or radical ones resist disproof (the earth is not flat). The SANAA office runs more-or-less twenty-four hours a day, and everyone – even the 'free seat' intern – is continuously producing study after study, model after model. The Doctor suggests they are searching for mutants – the statistical reality that in any large set of subjects there will occasionally occur 'rule-breakers'. They start with the obvious solutions and work tirelessly until such options are exhausted, and the 'freaks' begin to appear. Odd, ungainly propositions built upon the collective lessons of their predecessors, these propositions begin to open up new opportunities for architecture whilst refusing to fail under conventional critique.

In the context of SANAA's white-in-white practice, Dr Barrie calls these exceptions Albinos. Contemporary disability theory posits that if a 'disability' occurs in more than 5% of the population, it is likely to conceal a genetic advantage – the mutation holds a germ for the continuing evolution of the species. It is this accelerated evolution that SANAA is searching for amidst the drifts of card and paper.



Multiplicity in action: SANAA's studio during the design of the Kanazawa Art Museum

*Natural History* is a sort of model of this process. Here is a book whose essays were written by thirty different academics, each independent of the other. The publishers are deliberate about this; texts that deal with similar subjects are located sequentially – sometimes profiting from the proximity, sometimes exasperating by pulling further on an already stretched subject - and illustrations are often repeated. The same subject – the practice of H&deM – is attacked from as many different angles as might be mustered in a book this size. This is theory and critique by mass-testing; thirty fine writers produce twenty-odd fine essays, one or two of those are extraordinary, and the rest will tell you why.

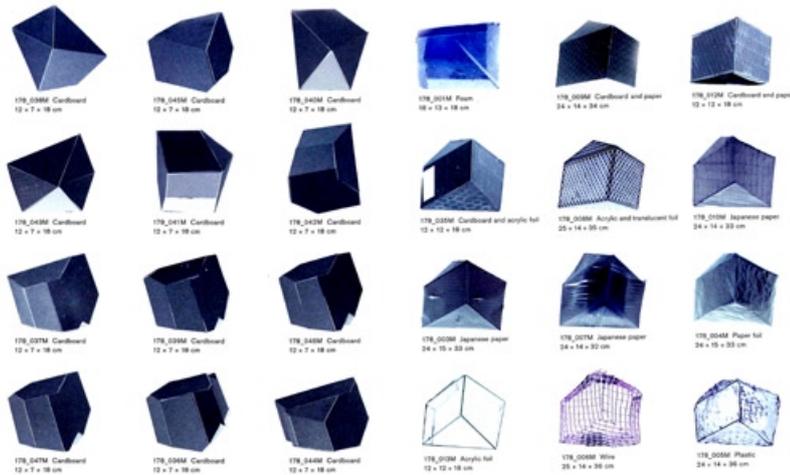
Projects like the Aoyama Prada store are illustrated by rows and rows of models, each attacking the received form with varied inflection, nuance and material and structural schema. Assembled in ranks like this they resemble the Victorian collections of crystal formations suggested by the book's title. Each is superb, but together they are testament to the virtuosity of the highly evolved, finished work.

H&deM is a practice on the other side of the world from Sejima and Nishizawa's SANAA, but is practicing the same form of rampant and incessant production; 50 pages through the book we learn that the entirety of the lower floor of the 120-person Basel office is filled with the 'waste products' of this process, and by page 100 it becomes apparent that the entire exhibition which this catalogue accompanies has been conceived in order that something be 'done' with it.

*Continued overleaf...*

## Multiplicity

Continued from front cover...



The beautiful crystalline studies for H&deM's Prada Aoyama (above), and the completed work (below)



Richard Roger's office produces 3,000 models a year from its rapid-prototyping machines, a quick peruse of YouTube reveals that OMA and Hadid are, if anything, more prolific. Clearly at the core of these practices' operational ideology, that praxis of mass-production and diversity seems now the common thread binding this era's most adventurous architects. It is an ideology worthy of closer examination. *NC*

The second part of Multiplicity will be published in the February issue of *BLOCK*

Each Block is laid by a dedicated editorial team, all of whom happen to work at Cheshire Architects. Email Nat for a full-colour pdf, or back issues

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## The Fine Print

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

CHAIRS REPORT: Christina van Bohemen

November was a relatively quiet month.

*Plan Change 163:* Mayoral forum on PC 163 was held on Friday 28 November. Agreement of the criteria for demolition, alterations and new building were agreed by all parties, along with the criteria by which those houses in Residential 2 will be reviewed for inclusion within the no demolition rule. Salmond Reed Architects have been engaged by ACC to undertake a survey of Residential 2 areas to determine those sites for inclusion under the no demolition rule. Parties to the forum will review the survey results with the City, following up with consultation with affected parties.

*Urban Design Panel Nominations:* Names have been sent to Auckland City. These will be made public once ACC has selected members from the list.

*NZIA Recruitment Service:* I have written to the NZIA Chief Executive expressing concern about the removal of the jobs page on the NZIA website and the promotion of a private organization as the official recruitment agency.

UoA STUDENT REPORT: Angus Muir, Klaus Carson

*Design 4 Exhibition:* Second year design students last semester worked on a project based on the redevelopment of state housing in the Glen Innes area. Throughout the semester students selected specific sites and developed a variety of building proposals. At various stages throughout the semester HNZC and other architects were involved in the critiquing process. The final crit saw some innovative and intriguing designs which impressed and interested the critics.

Five selected projects were later represented alongside work from practices operating on the same sites in GI, at an evening organised by Michael Davis. These practices included Crosson Clarke Carnachan, Designgroup Stapleton Architects and Jasmx.

The exhibition received great responses and the School of Architecture is keen to run a similar design program next year.

UNITEC REPORT: Tony Van Raat

This month's report is a brief one. We did well in the Cavalier Bremworth Awards with a first and a second out of 71 entries in the student category. Not so well in the SDA however - our congratulations to the University of Auckland there. Prizegiving week was a big event with large crowds and lots of celebration. We have had

Continued overleaf

## The Fine Print

*Continued from inside front cover...*

a delegation from China in the School and our External Examiners (Prof Roger Fay from Tasmania, Ken Crossan, and Sarah Hayden from Jasmox) in the School for 3 days looking at the year's work. I'm off to China to join 5 colleagues delivering parts of our block courses there.

HERITAGE PORTFOLIO: Adam Wild

Working collaboratively: The Heritage group is keen to explore and promote the overlap between other Branch portfolios (e.g. environmental and urban issues), working groups (the Committee for Auckland and the Urban Design Panel) and other NZIA branches.

NZIA Heritage Policy: awaiting Branch feedback. I have received a paper entitled "Towards a Heritage Policy" from Jeremy Salmond. Jeremy was a member of the now "disestablished" heritage task group. The paper could be used in developing a useful practice note.

URBAN ISSUES GROUP: Shannon Joe

Royal Commission

Selected external stakeholders (SJ on behalf of the UIG) were invited to an informal meeting with the Royal Commissioners on Auckland Governance (Hon Peter Salmon, Dame Margaret Bazley and David Shand) on 13th November.

The Commissioners wanted to discuss some of their latest thoughts following the submission period but more importantly the major issues learnt from their overseas visits to six international cities and meetings with relevant Local Government executives, professionals in the private and public sector and academics. The cities visited were Vancouver, London, Toronto, Seattle, Brisbane and Melbourne.

The major points raised:

1. City leadership – the Mayor plays an important role
2. Urban design is essential – urban design panels set up and policies, strategic plans, long term vision and frameworks in place. Regional and local government committed – needs urban design leadership.
3. Focus on the city's livability, sustainability, social and cultural diversity
4. Growth - limit urban expansion, compact urban form and building critical mass around transport corridors.
5. Protecting coastal environments and green belts
6. Attractive pedestrian, cyclist and public transport routes
7. Aim to cap road development
8. Strengthen existing heritage
9. Waterfront as a recreational area
10. Improve CBD
11. Toronto Mayor networking with all bodies / relationships with public and private sector – capacity building.
12. Community Boards not known overseas. Vancouver Mayor has established and maintained discussion groups consisting of invited individuals from a broad range of disciplines and organisations.

13. City's financial savings not strong

14. Vancouver enforce developer contribution in the way of creating public opens spaces and landscape routes

15. Making cities livable for both young and old

16. Density is viewed at a macro scale and considered as a regional issue – establishing urban limits

17. Local government best to understand the needs of their city. The Commissioners are aiming to have their final report and recommendation on Auckland's preferred governance structure by 31 March 2009.

<http://www.royalcommission.govt.nz>

UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND REPORT: Prof. Jenny Dixon

The last few weeks of the year have seen a flurry of activity in the School and this report summarises activities over October and November. There were two major public events in October. The first was Claystation—a modelling event to allow people of all ages to redesign their city, organised by Dory Reeves and Kathy Waghorn, and held over a weekend at the Gus Fisher Gallery. The second was the launch of Julia Gatley's book - Long the live the Modern – in mid-October, also at the Gus Fisher Gallery. It was accompanied by an exhibition, co-curated with Bill McKay. A second printing of the book is already underway.

This month we were very pleased to host a visit by Professor Joseph Rykwert, who came as a University of Auckland Distinguished Visitor. Ross Jenner and others organised a successful seminar in honour of Professor Rykwert— On Adam's House in the Pacific - on the 14th and 15th November where a number of papers were presented. The programme included a lecture given by Professor Rykwert. A publication of the seminar's proceedings will be forthcoming in 2009. And at the seminar we launched this year's issue of Interstices 09 with the theme of Expat: Places/Spaces/Baggage, produced by the University of Auckland and Auckland University of Technology.

The Annual Visiting Panel (representing the New Zealand Institute of Architects and the New Zealand Registered Architects Board) met with staff and students to review progress with the implementation of recommendations from the National Visiting Panel (NVP) in 2006. The Panel visits each year until the next major visit of the NVP scheduled for 2011 when the School's architecture programmes are once again assessed for accreditation. The Panel reported positively on the School's progress in 2008.

This year the Graphisoft Student Design Award was won by an University of Auckland student Sarosh Mulla for his work entitled "Interconnections of System Densities Through Collapsible Space and Time". This sustainable design provided temporary accommodation for health care professionals in the rice terraces of the Philippine Cordillera - one of the most endangered World Heritage Sites. We were also delighted to learn in the same week that Sonia Huang and Kevin Wang (fifth year students) have been placed 2nd in the AEEA International Challenge for Students in Architecture (Present - Architecture's Challenge was the theme), an event that has considerable prestige within the European student architectural body. Eighty-six projects were submitted from 11 countries. The fifth year students continued their tradition of publishing work from the final year in Modos, with this year's theme of Epilogue. As in previous years, the work is of a high standard. The School's teaching year formally concluded with Prizegiving on November 27th and exhibition of student work co-curated by Paola Leardini and Uwe Rieger. From 2010 Prizegiving will be held in conjunction with May Graduation although we will be planning an exhibition of student work for the end of 2009.

## PRACTICE ISSUES GROUP: Richard Goldie

The meeting was kindly conducted by David Gibbs, both Charissa and Richard being out of action - our thanks to David. The meeting attendance was down to 2! Our experience is that the December presentation is likely to inflate this number somewhat.

The following is a summary of issues raised in David Gibb's and Don McRae's discussion that might be further elaborated on in 2009:

### Standard Copyright:

- Is there a problem with this in practice? Experienced commercial clients often seek to have the NZIA AAS clause on this changed in their favour. The explanation often hinges around (1) "I've paid for it (or I will have paid for it), so I want it", or (2) "I don't want to be held to ransom, if I change architect later" ie I still want to be able to use your design if we fall out for some reason
- If you agree to relinquish copyright: (1) what does that mean regarding ownership of your CAD file used to create the drawings? Issues here can be considerable, (2) How do you prevent subsequent changes by others to the file (that later cause problems) being attributed to you? (3) Who pays the (sometimes) considerable cost of exporting the files in the format requested by others? (4) Is there a commercial advantage in retaining the copyright that is valuable in helping to ensure payment?
- The traditional arguments for architects retaining copyright appear to hinge around three issues: (1) "should we be entitled to the same protection as authors, artist and other creative people" - but do artist and authors have the same type of relationship with their clients as architects do? (2) "I don't want my design being applied without my agreement to an inappropriate site" (that could be a problem for my reputation) Solvable by agreement? (3) "I don't see why a client should be able to apply my design to another site without some payment to me" Solvable by agreement?

### Ethics:

- Do architects experience problems with this in practice?
- NZIA has membership rules, NZRAB has a code of conduct - should there be harmony between the two, or do they serve different purposes?
- Suggestion that NZRAB adopted a "scaled down" version of the UIA rules and we should have adopted the genuine article as Australia has done. Don McRae's argument is that we should adopt an international standard if we wish to be seen as credible international players (APEC architect and all that). He thinks we appear lax even against IPENZ's code of conduct
- Don believes the NZIA rules are too lax and in fact wrote to NZIA on this matter this year.

## PUBLICITY PORTFOLIO: Stephen Martin

A letter was sent last month to the NZIA Chief Executive requesting a copy of the NZIA Strategic Communications document for review by the NZIA Auckland Branch Committee.

## COUNCILORS' REPORT: Lindley Naismith

Summary of items taken by LN to Council from Auckland Branch and Northern Region over the last 12 months

### Funding for Trenta Case:

Successful applications for Ak Branch "squirrel" fund interest for Trenta Case exhibition in Florence and Rome. Meeting 28 February 2008. Subsequent agreement with CEO to discuss funding to take to Venice and beyond at 4 December Council meeting.

### NZIA Heritage Guidelines:

Progress made on work to be carried out on a philosophical statement and practice note. Draft documents tabled for discussion at meeting 4 December.

## Graduate Development:

Confirmation of integration of graduates' feedback into the national and branch based programme. Meeting 28 February.

## New Look NZIA Awards:

Representing the Branch's support for review without too much change, including enthusiasm for 'local' awards and getting rid of the word 'supreme' and retaining the Awards book. Awards Advisory group asked to consider the issue of publication of the Awards programme at the meeting 28 August. They're reporting back 4 December.

## Dulux Student Design Awards Event and NZIA Student Prizes:

Successful support for the Schools of Architecture re changes to hosting of Dulux Student Design Awards and the structure of NZIA prizes so now awarded across all 3 schools. Meeting 28 August.

## NZIA Communications Strategy:

Representing the members' interest in the work being done. Work by strategist Geoff Henly presented to meeting on 21 May, was presented to AGM 24 May. Planning Day 15 August. Update presented 28 August. Watching brief.

## Ctrl Shift Disgruntlement:

Participation in discussions re course of action to allow disaffected to be heard, and around more involvement of NZIA within the schools. Meeting 21 May 2008. SONANZ subsequently established with the status of a branch. Also improved NZIA student profile via the new prize structure.

## Student Access to Conferences & International Speakers:

Speaking in support of this at Meeting 21 May 2008 and whenever opportune.

## Dissemination of 'Issues Groups' Good Work:

Discussed at meeting of 28 August which included the Branch Chairs.

## GIB Architects' Regatta

The annual GIB Architects' Regatta to be held on Monday 16 February 2009 and **entries close on the 4th of February**. The race is followed by a function including dinner, prize-giving and entertainment. Registrations are invited from all architects, their consultants, clients and guests.

Updated details and entry form can be downloaded from [www.gib.co.nz](http://www.gib.co.nz) or the NZIA website.

## A Pessimist on Optimism

*Continued from back cover...*

This analysis allowed for the complexity of the situation to be viewed so that each building could address its site specifically. In addition to this the building was designed to converge the 2000-year old tradition of earth building with modern technologies, such as the folded steel roof: designed as light weight, modular, prefabricated pieces that could be assembled using simple hand tools. These constructional techniques were then analysed through 1:1 test models.

The construction methodology and the environmental technology were not, however, the aim. Instead they were the tools of a pessimist, testing whether or not architecture could actually deliver on its often lofty optimistic dreams. The project left me convinced that it can. That in itself is something to be happy about. Optimism it seems, unlike pessimism, pays off in the end. Perhaps we could all use a little more of it in these trying times. *SM*

# A Pessimist on Optimism

Sarosh Mulla reports on the Gaphisoft Student Design Competition

Today I have completed the final act of my University education; I have paid my outstanding library fines. This final payment of \$9.00 marks the end of five years of architecture school. Amidst all of the doom and gloom of the global financial meltdown I find myself still optimistic about the next few years, as I think all students should be.

Optimism and pessimism, dialectic as they are, both have a time and a place. It's just that pessimism is much easier to sustain, especially when you are an architecture student. For the last few years as the building industry and the economy at large have enjoyed prosperity, I have been waiting. Waiting firstly to finish my degree and secondly for the bubble to burst.

It seems to me that when times are good it's easy to be a pessimist. After all, the ultimate upside of being a pessimist is that you are never disappointed. Indeed in good times pessimists such as me are often pleasantly surprised that things have not yet turned to custard. However it is far harder to be an optimist in hard times. These periods offer far less in the way of pleasant surprises. Although they still do occur. For example there are a handful of jobs still out there for the latest batch of us graduates. I know of four or five of us that have managed to snag them. There are also still out there practices "fighting the good fight" as one of my colleagues once put it.

It was also recently pointed out to me that there is plenty of time for the world and the economy to make architecture students cynical about what can actually be achieved through their work. As such, perhaps one should cling to the optimism that resides in the studios of the country's three architecture schools. As such I draw attention to the recent NZIA Gaphisoft Student Design competition. Here these three schools sent four students to represent the school and compete for the country's top prize for student work. This event was a showcase of architectural optimism. Not in the naïve sense of fanciful student projects, but instead 12 projects were shown that sought to find strategies of thinking about and deploying architecture for the good of its occupants and the wider community.

Along with my own project for healthcare and education distribution in the Rice Terraces of the Philippines, places were presented for neuro-

rehabilitation, theatrical performance, occupation by DoC rangers, the parking of bicycles and the meeting of scrabble clubs. These and the other diverse projects were tied together by two strands. Each was the result of five years of figuring out what architecture might be (or could be) and each either presented a problem within a socio-cultural community, or presented a problem within our own architectural community. Perfect solutions were not necessarily found, but questions beyond the surface were raised with rigour and enthusiasm.

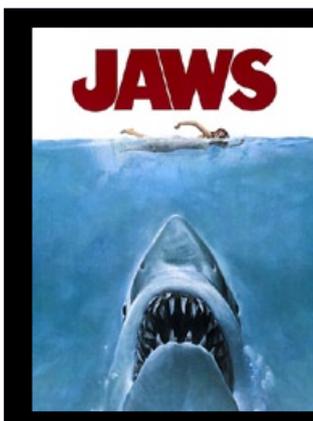
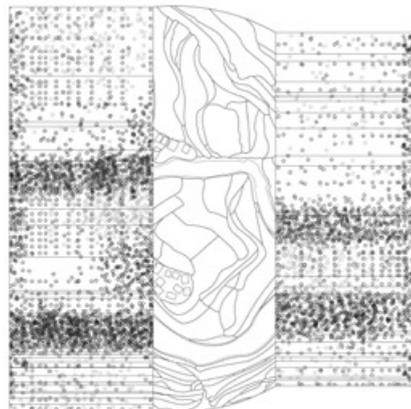
The mood behind the scenes was, as could be expected, nervous. Not only about the impending forty minute critique that each of us would receive, but in a wider sense about what the next few years might hold for the twelve of us. Stories of practices axing their graduate staff added to the stress on an already edgy group. After two days of crits I was fortunate enough to be chosen as the winner. I would like to think that this was at least in part due to the optimism of a project that aimed to view architecture as an armature for creating social sustainability past the traditional notions of green building.

The project valued site and vernacular building technology as sources of solutions to the problems faced in the World Heritage-listed Rice Terraces. This vast area of terraced mountains on the island of Luzon is slowly degrading due to the accelerating depopulation of the area. The local people - those who have the ancestral knowledge to maintain the complex irrigation and earth-building systems of the terraces - are moving to the lowland cities in search of government-supplied social services such as healthcare and education. The suggested solution was a series of autonomous satellite buildings dispersed through the region, to act as stations where these services could be accessed and those providing the services could be accommodated.

The distribution of these buildings and the specific function of each were determined through mapping concurrent trends relating to the land and people. For instance, the density of rice cultivation was mapped over population density, which was in turn mapped over water supply, which was in turn mapped over pest infiltration, and so on.

*Continued on inside back cover...*

*Mulla's parametric mapping (L) and an autonomous folded cell as response (r)*



*Jaws movie poster painting, Roger Kastel, 1975.*

## PRINT DESIGN CLASSICS #9

One of the most memorable movie posters of all time was comprised of just a few simple elements arranged in a classic composition.

Approximately two thirds of the space is taken by water and rising fast from this concealed world is the bullet-shaped head of a grossly oversized shark – its menacingly dark mouth open, revealing a voracious set of razor-sharp teeth. On the surface an unsuspecting, defenceless young female skinny-dipper splashes, referencing the opening scene of the movie. Above this hangs the weighty title, forebodingly coloured blood red.

"JAWS" was the last minute decision for the title

of the earlier novel by Peter Benchley – thankfully shorter and with greater impact than other ideas he'd had like "The Jaws Of Death" or "The Stillness In The Water" – a word that director Steven Spielberg later described as "not in the national consciousness at the time. It was just a word. It was kind of an unusual word."

Painted by illustrator Roger Kastel, who later painted a poster for The Empire Strikes Back, it was the first time a poster image became a merchandising product in itself and with the help of the movie put the fear of the unknown into the minds of many beachgoers even to this day.



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