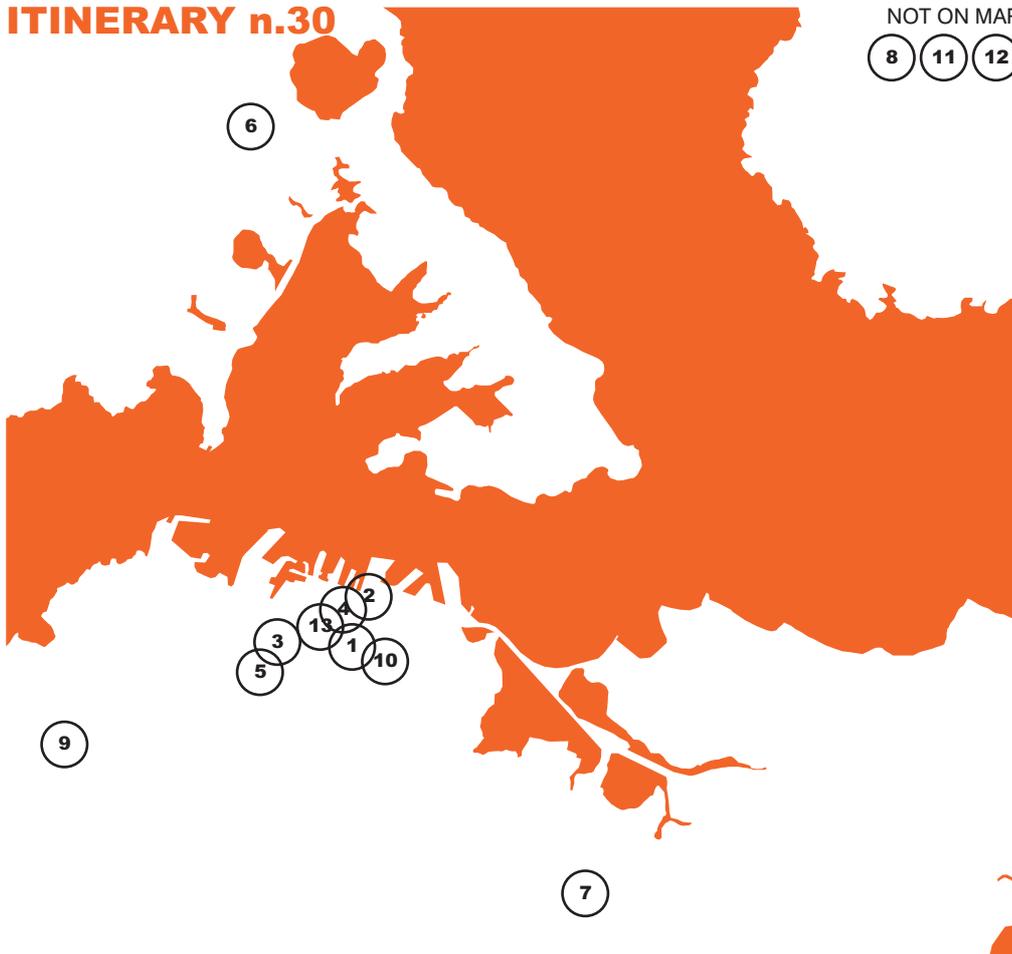


ITINERARY n.30



UoA Student's Union

Undoubtedly the best ever exhibition of NZ architecture, *Miles: A Life in Architecture*, runs at the Gus Fisher Gallery from April 23rd – May 29th. Among the public events is a chance to tour Nathan House (1981) on May 15th. See www.gusfishergallery.auckland.ac.nz for more info.

Warren & Mahoney in Auckland

The New Zealand architectural scene has played host to a number of firms with long lives. In 1871, William Mason, a mayor, Member of Parliament, and colonial architect, established the Dunedin firm of Mason and Wales that is still running under the same name today. Three generations of Natusch architects – Edwardian Charles Tilleard through to modernist Guy – led a practice in the Hawkes Bay. These firms have their roots in the nineteenth century era of eclecticism, when the ability to shift effortlessly between styles was evidence of architectural skill.

Warren & Mahoney has now been operating for more than 50 years, but those years span the era of modernism, an approach that made questions of style problematic. This time span sets two of modernism's central characteristics in conflict – the desire to avoid style and the need for newness. The early moderns, seeking to jettison the wilful eclecticism of the previous generations, sought to set style aside, replacing it with the functional logic and aesthetic of the engineered object. Logically, this might have led to the “end” of architecture – the International Style sought universal solutions that could be applied always and everywhere. However, the desire to capture the zeitgeist and continually stay ahead of the mainstream created what style-ographer Charles Jencks called the “continual revolution” – the need to continually be different to what came just before. This left us in the contradictory position of always wanting to change, but being troubled by any evidence that we have.

Looking back across the years, W&M's body of work has passed through a number of stages. The most famous is the Brutalist work of the 1950s and 1960s, when W&M moulded a modest vocabulary of concrete block, in-situ concrete, and timber roofs into some of our nation's finest buildings. The firm's residential, civic, and commercial output of these early days was produced largely for owner-clients. But in the 1970s the firm began to take on increasing amounts of work for developers, including many commissions for large office buildings. These were at first handled with developments of the firm's constructivist approach, both heavier (Waiouru Army Museum, Timaru Library) and lighter (Oaks Shopping Mall in Wellington, or Union House and the Waitemata City Council Offices in Auckland).

These directions were soon overtaken by the firm's adoption of postmodern classicism. Contrary to Auckland's reputation for excess, the firm's two key Auckland buildings - TVNZ and Citibank Building - are among W&M's most restrained projects of the era. The PoMo-ness of TVNZ is indeed rather subtle – seen largely in the banding of the stone and glass, and the acropolis-like composition of the towers on a stone base. Looking back, the building's expressed structure and slick glass façade can equally be read as neo-modern, evidence that a strand of modernism has remained a constant in W&M's oeuvre.

W&M's two founders retired in the early 1990s, and it was about this time the firm returned wholeheartedly to modernism. By then, however, the hope that modernism transcended style had faded, and the approach picked up its own “neo”. W&M's long trajectory through Brutalism, late-modernism, neo-classicism and neo-modernism raises a question as to what comes next. The key theme in the firm's new projects is sustainability. This can be seen in both the work produced – buildings produced as a “direct translation of environmental systems” – and in the way the firm operates – W&M became NZ's first carbon-neutral architectural practice.

But sustainability doesn't answer the question of style, or help us accept our desire for change. Reading the firm's recent *New Territory* monograph, the current directors understand their work to a large degree as a response to our New Zealand context. If their attention is focused on our ever-evolving society rather than our slow-to-change landscape, we can look forward to exciting new chapters in the firm's long and illustrious history. *Andrew Barrie*

Biography:

Warren & Mahoney was established by Miles Warren and Maurice Mahoney in 1958 in Christchurch. Despite commissions as far away as the New Hebrides, Christchurch was the firm's main base of operations until the late-1970s. The commission for the Michael Fowler Centre in 1979 saw the firm open a Wellington office, with a director in residence there from 1980. Under the stimulus of the technically demanding commission for the Television New Zealand network centre, the Auckland office opened in 1985, with Bren Morrison appointed as Auckland-based director in 1986. Steve McCracken became the second Auckland-based director the following year. In the mid-1980s one of the firm's key developer clients, Cromwell Corporation (which later became Brierley Cromwell), began operating extensively in Auckland and provided some of the Auckland office's projects during its early years. Mahoney retired in 1992, and Warren followed him (officially at least) two years later. The Auckland office, now one of four W&M branches, now has a staff of 35 working on corporate, educational and civic projects.

1

1965-73

University of Auckland
Student's Union
Princes Street, Auckland City



This complex is one of three student union buildings W&M built as part of the nationwide university building boom generated by the then rising generation of baby boomers. Sited between two large buildings – the science block and library – this relatively low-rise set of buildings was arranged around an east-west “street” spanned by free-standing stair towers. The building has taken a beating, its structural and compositional clarity taking a big hit when the bridge over Alfred Street was removed and the courtyards glassed in. See *Home & Building* Nov. 1963 and *Designscape* 87 (Dec./Jan. 1976/77).

2

1980-84

Union House
Quay Street
Auckland City



The site of this building has historic associations - the Union Company had occupied the site since the 1920s – but the design focussed on developing new models. The external precast concrete bracing to absorb earthquake loads was a first for high-rise buildings in NZ; the piles-in-tubes base-isolation system was a global first. The original layout had an open plaza on the eastern side that allowed glazed facades on all four sides, but this was later built over in rather dreary fashion. The project received an NZIA Regional Award and an NZ Concrete Society Award in 1984. See *Home & Building* Dec./Jan. 1984/85 and *NZ Conc. Construction* May 1984.

3

1985-1989
Television New Zealand
Network Centre
Cnr Victoria & Hobson Sts
Auckland City



This building dates from the peak of W&M's postmodern arc, but smoothly integrates the PoMo (banded stone and glass) with the firm's earlier “constructivism” (expressed structural frames) and later neo-modernism (slick glass skin). The building housed state-of-the-art news facilities (anyone remember the “Top Half” regional news show?) that made it W&M's most technically demanding project. As one newsroom staffer described it at the time, “Coming here is like stepping out of a DC3 and into a jumbo jet”. The complex received NZIA Regional and National Awards in 1990. See *Arch. NZ* Nov./Dec. 1989 and May/June 1990.

4

1987-89

Citibank Centre
23 Customs Street
Auckland City



The uppermost six floors of this building were originally occupied by Citibank, and it's up top that we see W&M's PoMo at its most charming – airy colonnades and balconies rather than heavy pediments and arches. The building was developed by Brierley Cromwell Property, for whom W&M designed numerous other towers in central Auckland in the late eighties, although many of these projects went unrealised in the wake of the '87 stock market crash. Also check out neo-mod stylings of W&M's twelve-storey Sofrana House (1986-89), another Brierley Cromwell project, a few blocks away at 101 Customs Street.

5

1995

St. John's Ambulance Station
Pitt Street
Auckland City



Produced by a team led by Steve McCracken, this building received an NZIA-Resene Regional Award in 1996. The jury citation read “A careful analysis of a complex brief has generated a dynamically balanced composition that houses a vital city institution, while creating strong urban presence.” Be sure to stroll around the block to check out the rear of the building. See *Architecture NZ* May/June 1996. While you're in the neighbourhood, check out W&M's Salvation Army Citadel and Tower at 369 Queen Street, winner of an NZIA Regional Award in 1991. See *Architecture NZ* Sept./Oct. 1990.

6

1999

Clear Centre
66 Tarahoto Road
Takapuna



Built for telecom company Clear (now Telstra-Clear) this project stands on a prominent corner site; one of W&M's best design decisions was to wrap it around the site's street edge, avoiding the adrift-in-a-sea-of-parking arrangement typical of suburban office buildings. Within the building's third-of-a-donut form, two six-storey office blocks are smoothly connected by a full-height glazed atrium that forms the main entry. The office spaces are jammed with technical and sustainability features, including raised cabling floors, sensors that turn off lights on sunny days, and motion-activated lighting in services areas. See *Architecture NZ* Dec./Jan. 1997/98 and Sept./Oct. 1999.

7

2000

Somervell Presbyterian Church
497 Remuera Road
Remuera



Standing on a highly visible corner site, this crisp composition of white planes encloses a church, hall, meeting rooms, offices, kindergarten and an opportunity shop. The light, bright worship space allows flexible configuration within and views out to the sky and greenery beyond. Deidre Brown wrote that “Somervell is different because its architectural philosophy is based on an entire theology of simplicity in faith and worship, and it is this concept, rather than the surface aesthetic, which has been a guiding principle in the building's design.” See *Architecture NZ* July/Aug. 2000.

8

2001

St. Kentigern College Arts & Technology Building and Girls College Classrooms
130 Pakuranga Rd., Pakuranga



Standing on the edge of the built-up part of the School campus, this building looks out across the playing fields to the Tamaki River. The design reflects this edge condition, being composed as a brick-faced wing relating to the existing buildings and a slick modern block oriented to the fields. The subtext seems to be “sports are the future!” The Girls College Classrooms are a set of crisply detailed volumes built out of an adjacent hillside. See *Architecture NZ* July/Aug. 2004.

9

2003

TAPAC
100-102 Motions Road
Western Springs



Built on the grounds of Western Springs College, The Auckland Performing Arts Centre is a teaching, rehearsal and performance venue that is home to the Performing Arts School of NZ and a number of dance, drama, and creative arts companies. The complex includes a 144-seat flexible studio theatre as well as dance and drama studios that can be opened up to the adjacent college grounds. Fans of both W&M and the performing arts might take in a show – check www.tapac.org.nz for information. The project received an NZIA Local Award in 2004. See *Architecture NZ* May/June 2005.

10

2003

UoA Kate Edgar
Information Commons
Cnr Symonds & Alfred Streets
Auckland City



Built alongside W&M's 1960s Students' Union building, this complex includes a bookshop, café, shops, health and counselling services and a large information commons and study facilities. When the project won an NZIA-Resene New Zealand Award in 2005, the citation read: "A bravura collision of sophisticated forms create an innovative new form of student support facility. The resultant assemblage organises a complex built context and takes advantage of existing topography and streetscape to form a variety of social and study spaces." The project also received an NZIA-Resene Local Award in 2003, and a Property Council Merit Award in 2004. See *Architecture NZ* July/Aug. 2003 and Nov./Dec. 2007.

11

2004

Trusts Stadium
65-67 Central Park Drive
Henderson



This indoor sports stadium is best known as the home of the Northern Mystics netball team and the venue of choice for concerts by bogon-oriented rock bands. It also houses an array of other sports and community facilities including a commercial gym, rugby club, and conference centre and facilities for the adjacent rugby ground and athletic track. All of this amenity is packaged up in a tube form that gives the building presence among its industrial neighbours and relates to the scale of the adjacent park. The project won an NZIA Local Award in 2005 and NZIA NZ Award in 2006. See *Architecture NZ* July/Aug. 2005.

12

2004

Alfriston College
550 Porchester Road,
Manurewa



This secondary school is structured as a collection of "whanau" clusters that group together students at various year levels to form schools-within-a-school. Within each whanau building, classrooms are arranged double-height common spaces. These two-storied buildings are, in turn, arranged around a large landscaped courtyard and interconnected by elevated walkways. As you wander around, you'll notice numerous geometric teaching aids - a cube of stone 1m to each side, heights marked on a building facade, and geometries marked on the ground. The project, built in stages starting in 2004, received an NZIA Local Award in 2007 and an NZIA NZ Award in 2008. See *Architecture NZ* Mar./Apr. 2009.

13

2010

Deloitte Centre
80 Queen Street
Auckland City



Designed by W&M in association with Woods Bagot, this building incorporates the façade of the 1937 Jean Batten Building into a crisp composition of suspended stone fins, polished steel and slick black glass. Bill McKay recently wrote of it: "Up close the building remarkably resembles the artists impression of it: a great, dark, translucent couple of ice cubes, with a thousand fluorescent tubes dimly visible within." The project is five Green Star-rated. See *Architecture NZ* Jan./Feb. 2010.

Other Addresses:

O C Nathan House (1979-81)
49 Combes Rd, Remuera
Described as W&M's "first postmodern neoclassic form." See *Home & Bldg* Oct/Nov 1983.

Feltex Centre (1978)
**Symonds Street
Auckland City**
An Auckland example of W&M 1970s-style pre-cast façade unit office building. See *Home & Building* no. 5, 1978.

**Waitemata City Council
Offices** (1981-84)
**6 Waipareira Avenue,
Henderson**
The complex, now a private school, won a NZIA Regional Award in 1984.

Royal Oak Mall (1984-88)
**691 Manukau Road
Royal Oak**

Brierley Cromwell House
**8-10 Whitaker Place
Auckland City** (1985-88)
Earlier schemes for this restrained office and apartment tower melded Union House-type structural expression with pedimented PoMo.

**University of Auckland Law
School** (1994)
**Emily Place
Auckland City**

McCraken House (1997)
27a Prospect Terrace, Milford
This project won an NZIA-

Resene Regional Award in 1997. See *Architecture NZ* July/Aug. 1998.

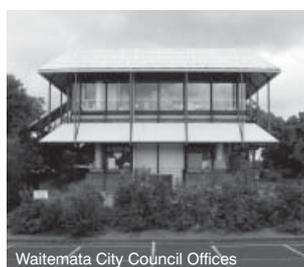
Browns Bay House (2001)
4 Sharon Road, Torbay

**Kristin School Library &
Senior Study Centre** (2004)
360 Albany Highway, Albany
Winner of an NZIA Local Award in 2004. Just 500m from AJHS - see below."

**Whangaparaoa Library &
Civic Centre** (2005)
9 Main Street, Whangaparaoa
See *Architecture NZ* Sept./Oct. 2006.

Albany Junior High School
Appleby Road, Albany (2005)

**St Patrick's Cathedral
Restoration** (2007)
**43 Wyndham Street
Auckland City**
This project received an NZIA New Zealand Award in 2009. See *Architecture NZ* Mar./Apr. 2008 and May/June 2009.



Waitemata City Council Offices

Sources:

The photographs are by Andrew Barrie. Many thanks to Sir Miles Warren and Bren Morrison for their generous help in preparing this itinerary.

The best sources on W&M's output are the three excellent books published on the firm: *Warren & Mahoney Architects 1958-1989* (Christchurch; W&M, 1989), *New Territory—Warren and Mahoney—50 Years of New Zealand Architecture* (Auckland; Balasoglou Books, 2005), and *Miles Warren: An Autobiography* (Christchurch; Canterbury University Press, 2008). The firm's work has always been very extensively featured in the local periodicals, and was often included in high-profile overseas journals - see "The Work of Warren & Mahoney, New Zealand" in *Architectural Design* August 1966. There is an informative interview with Warren in *Home & Building* Oct./Nov. 1983 in which he speaks extensively about W&M's development. See also Warren's interesting text on the role of the architect (*Home & Building* April 1973), and his often-quoted essay on "Style in NZ Architecture" (*NZ Arch.* 3/78). Ian Lochhead's review of the 1994 W&M retrospective exhibition covers the development of the firm from its early days (*Arch. NZ* Nov/Dec 1994).