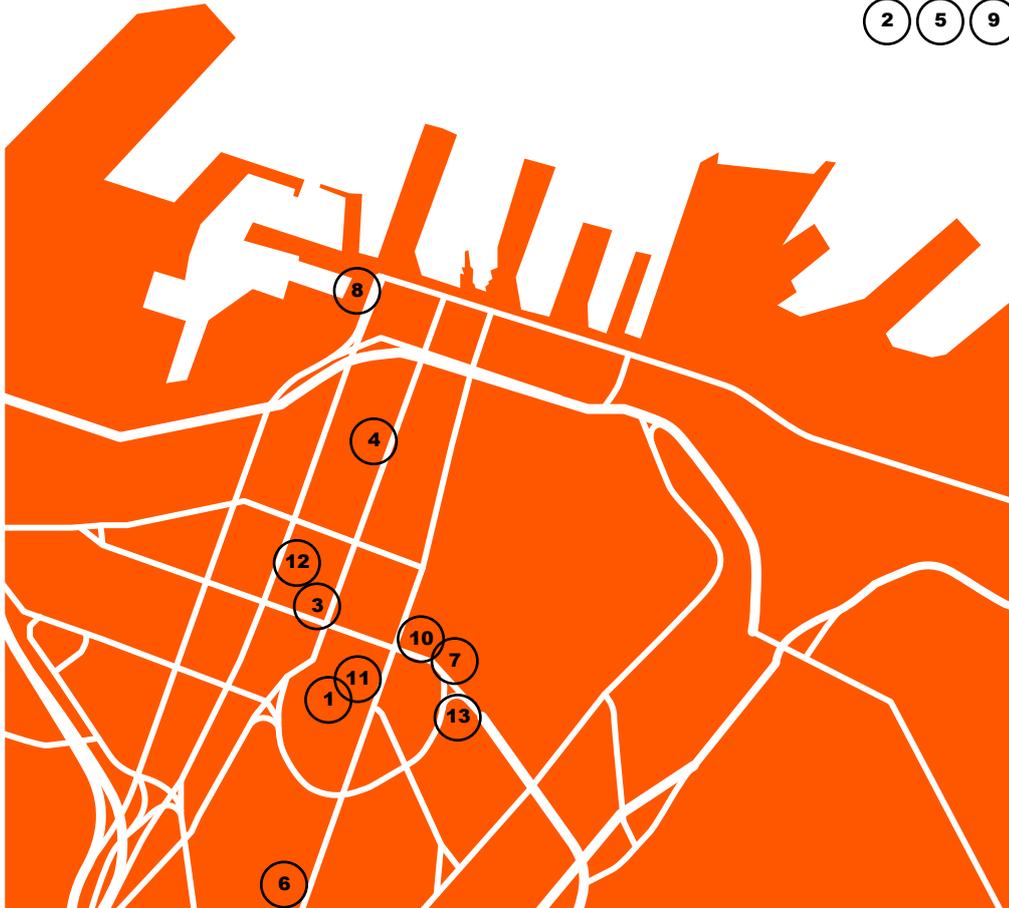


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NOT ON MAP

2 5 9



Force Entertainment Center

Auckland City in the 1990s

If the 1980s were a decade in which, as Gordon Gekko said, “greed is good”, the 1990s were a time in which the traditional disposition of virtues and vices re-emerged. In reading through the books and journals published in the 90s, a sense of remorse for the excesses of the previous years is palpable.

At the beginning of the decade the building industry was moribund in the wake of the 1987 stock market crash, but economic recessions provide fertile ground for the growth of architectural ideas, and the early 1990s were a moment when many architects sought to re-think or re-theorise their work. The expansion of digital technology into architectural practice opened up new possibilities that, though much discussed, had little discernable influence on design here. Two streams of thinking that were prominent internationally – deconstruction, with its desire to challenge or subvert established notions, and critical regionalism, with its concern for the geographical and cultural context of the building – came together in New Zealand in an unusual way. These streams were connected by notions of “fault” that saw the literal and metaphorical ground for architecture in NZ being unstable and fissured; such notions produced much discussion and underlay The University of Auckland School of Architecture’s Venice Prize-winning installation at the 1991 Venice Biennale, the Architetti scheme for the Museum of New Zealand competition, and John McCulloch’s 1992 visitor centre at Milford Sound.

Postmodern classicism drew its last breaths in the early 1990s, but those years saw another move to recover history. The 1970s had seen both renewed appreciation for our built heritage and the absorption of colonial forms into the work of architects such as Ian Athfield and Roger Walker, and the 80s saw interest in drawing from a wider range of sources (especially classical architecture), but the 1990s innovation was the recognition of modern architecture as worthy of appreciation and preservation. This was most visibly expressed in the Auckland City Art Gallery’s *The 50s Show* in 1992-93. Modernism became the concern not just of historians and heritage campaigners, but also reappeared as a conservative neo-modern strain in contemporary design. A seemingly endless series of schemes was produced in the 1990s for the Auckland waterfront. The opening of the Maritime Museum and the old Harbour Board Workshops on the Viaduct Basin in 1993 were a step forward, but it was Team New Zealand’s winning of the America’s Cup in 1995 and the need to host the 1999-2000 challenge that finally provided the impetus for a major reworking of the Viaduct Harbour.

Another of the important development in downtown Auckland was the rise of inner city dwelling. The first wave of apartments involved the conversion of older buildings – such as the St James on Kitchener Street by Richard Priest – although these were soon joined by many larger and often rather downmarket new apartment complexes. These buildings might be criticised for their small apartments and substandard design, but by repopulating the central city they have served a valuable role in urban regeneration.

The 1990s were a decade when Wellington, in terms of both architecture and urban design, seemed to get ahead of Auckland. While our most talented designers did much of their best work elsewhere, the burghers of the capital built well, including a Civic Square ringed by an inventive Athfield library, a brilliantly adapted art gallery, and two concert halls, creating a civic architecture with a grace and generosity that has eluded us here – and to a large extent still does. *Andrew Barrie*

1

1974-1990

Aotea Center
Aotea Square, Queen Street
Auckland City Council Works
Department



Described by Peter Shaw as “the predictable result of a series of unresolved crises, delays, and panics”, this project opened in 1990 but really dates from the mid-1970s. The design, described by Joseph Esherick as one of “abject neutrality”, was greeted by a series of objections from the architectural community, culminating in students and staff at Auckland University proposing an alternative scheme. The building holds an extensive art collection, including a water feature by Architectus. That was later demolished but Architectus recently remodelled both square and building, stretching a slinky Hadid-meets-Kuma louvered canopy across the previously un-sexy façade.

See *NZ Architect* no. 6, 1985, *Architecture NZ* Sept./Oct. 1990, and *Home & Bldg* Feb/Mar 1990.

2

1983-1991

Starship Hospital
Park Road
Stephenson & Turner



The brief for this building required that it have "character and personality" and "should be clearly for children". Designed to cast off institutional scale and appeal to the sick kids, the project exaggerated some of the more cartoonish aspects of Po-Mo form-making to create a playful and colorful environment. To further humanise the building, it was planned around a striking 33m-high atrium configured to maximise natural lighting and ventilation. The colors on the exterior have been altered, but the atrium is still original – a pastel Piranesi.

See *Architecture New Zealand* Sept./Oct. 1988 and Jan./Feb. 1992 and *Home & Bldg* Feb./Mar. 1992.

3

1987-1991

ASB Bank Centre
135 Albert Street
Peddle Thorp & Aitken



Designed before the late-80s financial crash but completed in less confident times, the sea of imported granite, huge water feature, and \$1.3 million dollar sculpture in the forecourt of this building were seen by some as extravagant for a building housing a community bank. The frenzy of 60 and 120-degree angles rather reinforce the impression that the complex composition wriggled free of its architects' control. The handsome 31-storey tower was fitted with the latest communications and maintenance services and "future proofed" to meet international standards.

See *Architecture New Zealand* May/June and Sept./Oct. 1991, and *Home & Building* June/July, 1992.

4

1991

Coopers & Lybrand Tower
23 Albert Street
Hassell Architects



With 41 levels, this building was at the time of its completion the country's tallest building. Prior to that, the project had made headlines when Robert Jones Investments pulled out of buying the building from developer McConnell Dowell Corporation when pre-completion leasing targets were not met. A bitter legal dispute ensued. The completion of this building and the nearby ASB Bank Centre marked the end of an era – none like them would be built for years. The building won an NZIA-Resene National Award in 1992.

See *Architecture NZ* May/June 1990, and May/June 1992.

5

1992-93

The 50s Show
Auckland City Art Gallery
McKay Pearson Architects



Not an architecture design per se, but this exhibition marked the start of a new era in New Zealand architecture. Fifteen years we can both applaud the way it prompted appreciation and preservation of our modern heritage, and be chagrined at the way it heralded the substitution of neo-classical pastiche in the 1980s for a pastiche of neo-modern styles in subsequent years. It also marked the start of Rick Pearson's career as a gifted exhibition designer and Bill McKay's emergence as a leading historian.

See *Home & Building Souvenir Edition The Newstalk 1ZB 1950s Show* (1992).

6

1993

National Bank
122-130 Karangahape Road
Andrews Scott Cotton



This building was the first to be built following the implementation of the K' Road façade design guidelines which govern ratios of solid to void, verandahs, heights, and so on. This didn't stifle the design, which became one of New Zealand's most credible expressions of deconstruction beyond the domestic scale. Dense with references to fine art, architecture and the history of the site, the building is a fractured composition in which layered solid and glazed facades and floating canopies slide past each other. The project won an NZIA Branch Award in 1993.

See *Architecture NZ* May/June and Nov./Dec. 1993, as well as *Constructional Review* Feb. 1995. ASC employed a similar fractured aesthetic on the now expanded Ronald McDonald House (1994), located nearby at Auckland Hospital. See *Architecture NZ* Sept./Oct. 1993 and Jan/Feb 1995.

7

1993

St James Apartments
28-36 Wellesley Street East
Richard Priest Architects



This building was originally built for the YMCA in 1913 by G.W. Alsop (who is also thought to have designed parts of Greenlane Hospital) and building was later offices for the Auckland District Health Board. Priest added a floor and converted the building into 32 apartments and a swanky art space now occupied by John Leech Gallery. According to the real estate listings, the building includes a sauna and roof terrace for the use of residents. See *Arch. NZ* July/Aug. 1993. A few years earlier Lane Priest Architects had completed a high-profile warehouse conversion at 123-125 The Strand. See *Home & Bldg* Oct./Nov. 1990.

8

1994

Kermadec Ocean Fresh
Restaurant
Cnr Quay and Hobson Sts.
Noel Lane Architects



This waterfront eatery received an NZIA-Resene National Award in 1995. The judges citation read: "An ambitious project which serves to interpret the South Pacific theme in a fresh, stimulating way, reflecting the collaborative efforts of the architect and a diverse group of artists and craftspeople. Sensory and visual elements are interwoven using the Kermadec Trench as the 'umbilical cord' of the South Pacific Ocean to create a sophisticated and highly successful blend of art and architecture as a point of interface between contemporary New Zealand and the vast Pacific Ocean."

See *Home & Building* Apr./May, 1994, June/July 1995 and *Architecture New Zealand* May/June 1995.

9

1958-1995

Cathedral of the Holy Trinity
Parnell Rd, Parnell
Charles Towle, Richard Toy



Holy Trinity demonstrates the huge shifts that took place in NZ architecture during the time of its construction. Following a huge bequest in 1935, plans began for the construction of a cathedral to replace the 'temporary' St. Mary's. A neo-Gothic design by Charles Towle won a subsequent design competition, but with the outbreak of war in 1939 both fundraising and construction were suspended. Due to inflation, the over-ambitious competition design was scaled down, only a first stage eventually being constructed between 1958 and 1973. Toy's wide-span nave was built between 1990 and 1995. See *Church Building* Mar./Apr and May/June 1997, and *Architecture NZ* Sept./Oct. 1995.

10

1995

New Gallery Building
Cnr Wellesley & Lorne Sts, City
Mitchell and Stout



The old Telephone Exchange building was bought by a group of art patrons headed by Jenny Gibbs, refurbished and then gifted to the city as a venue for contemporary art. The running costs of the gallery were provided for by the rentals on the shops on the ground floor. The most dramatic element of the design is the light well which brings light into the center of the building; it also allowed for the insertion of a stair and escalator that establishes an urban path through the building. Mitchell and Stout redesigned Khartoum Place to better link Lorne Street with Kitchener Street and the City Gallery, but the scheme wasn't realized. The building received a NZIA National Award in 2001. See *Home & Building* Oct/Nov 1995 and *Arch. NZ* Jan/ Feb 1995.

Other Addresses:

Kitchener Street Building (1990)
36 Kitchener Street
Mainzeal with Structon Group
Winner of an NZIA Auckland Branch Award 1990. See *Architecture NZ* Nov./Dec. 1990

Auckland High Court (1991)
Cnr Waterloo Quadrant and Parliament Street
Works Consultancy Services Ltd
This adaption of Edward Rumsey's 1868 Supreme Court building won a CHH Award in 1991. See *Arch. NZ* July/Aug. and Nov./Dec. 1991.

St. John's Ambulance Station
47-49 Pitt Street (1995)
Warren & Mahoney
Winner of an NZIA-Resene Regional Award in 1996.

**Viaduct Basin Urban Design
Customs Street West (1998)**
Architectus
See *Arch. NZ* Nov./Dec 1998



Auckland High Court

11

1996

Force Entertainment Centre
Queen Street
Walker Co-Partnership



With its long frontage to Aotea Square and diagonal through-site link from Queen Street to the Bledisloe walkway, this building makes some helpful urban design moves. Incorporating parts of existing buildings and combining myriad imagery – airplane engines, spacecraft, nautical bits, alien civilizations – the often disorienting complex is organized around a incredibly tall space brimful of bridges, platforms, escalators and stairs – another post modern Piranesi. The project won a Colour Award in the NZIA-Resene Branch Award in 1999. See *Architecture New Zealand* Nov./Dec. 1999.

Beyond the Inner City:

Puukenga, UNITEC (1991)
Carrington Rd, Mt. Albert
Rewi Thompson
The building won an NZIA Branch Award in 1995. See *Architecture NZ* May/June 1992 and Mar/Apr 1994.

**Auckland Trotting Club
Stables Complex** (1991)
400 Manukau Road, Epsom
Adams Langley Architects
This project won an NZIA-Resene National Award in 1991. See *Architecture NZ* Mar./Apr. and May/June 1991.

Axis (1991-92)
91 St Georges Bay Rd, Parnell
Patterson Co-Partners
See *Architecture New Zealand* July/Aug. 1993.

**Hitchcock Photography
Studio**
35 Virginia Ave West, Newton
David Howell Architects (1993)
The project won an NZIA-Resene National Award in 1994. See *Architecture NZ* May/June 1994.

D-72 (1994-96)
72 Dominion Road, Kingsland
Patterson Co-Partners
See *Architecture New Zealand* May/June 1997.

12

1996 & 1997

Sky City & Sky Tower
Cnr Federal and Victoria Sts
Craig, Craig & Moller

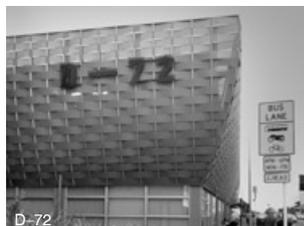


This design emerged from a battle between consortiums for Auckland's casino license. Other contenders included proposals to adaptively reuse the Railway Station and the Central Post Office, both then derelict. The CPO eventually found a great use, but its interesting to ponder what how the shape of the city might have changed had the Railway Station been selected. Some superlatives: the complex was one of the largest commercial building projects ever undertaken in New Zealand, and at 328 meters high the Sky Tower is the tallest structure in the country. The Sky Tower won an NZIA-Resene National Award in 1998. See *Arch. NZ* Mar./Apr. 1996, May/June 1996, Sept./Oct. 1997, May/June 1998, and Nov./Dec. 2007.

Site 3 (1998)
30 St Benedicts St., Newton
Architects Patterson
The building received an NZIA New Zealand Award in 2002. See *Urbis* Autumn 2002, *Monument Commercial* Special 2002.

**Treasure & Tales Human
Discovery Ctr** (1997)
Auckland Museum, The Domain
Pearson & Associates
Winner of many awards, including an NZIA-Resene National Award 1999. See *Arch. NZ* May/June 1999. While you are looking around, take note of Noel Lane Architects' refurbishment of the Museum (1998), the first stage of which won an NZIA-Resene Branch Award in 1999. See *Arch. NZ* Sept./Oct. 1998.

Cumulus (1999)
8a Cleveland Road, Parnell
Architects Patterson
The project received an NZIA Supreme Award 2003. See *Monument* Oct/Nov 2003



D-72

13

1997

School of Hotel &
Restaurant Studies
Cnr Mayoral Dr & Wellesley St
Jasmax



Built for what was then AIT, this building brought a touch of Richard Meier down under. Closely following the curve of Mayoral Drive, the building was intended as both a "gateway" to and a "shopfront" for the campus. Indeed, JASMaD had been masterplanning what was then the AIT campus since 1989, and Jasmax have gone on to complete a number of other buildings around the campus, including the Science & Technology Building (1997) on St Paul Street and the NZIA National Award-winning Business School (2005) on Governor Fitzroy Place. The SoHRS won a NZIA Branch Award in 1997. See *Architecture NZ* Mar./Apr. and May/June 1997.

Sources:

All photos are by Andrew Barrie. Looking through the 1990s issues of our local architecture mags – *Architecture New Zealand* and *NZ Home & Building* – it is intriguing to see an increasing international consciousness, both in the discussion and use of ideas then circulating globally and in reports on important buildings overseas. The journals also present evidence of local lecture tours and exhibitions by international big shots – Fumihiko Maki, Jean Nouvel, and Brodsky & Utkin. The second edition of Peter Shaw's history, *A History of New Zealand Architecture* (Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 1997) – gives an account of the key moments in Auckland's 1990s transformation, as does Errol Haarhoff's *Guide to the Architecture of Central Auckland* (Balasoglou Books, 2nd ed. 2006). For an indication of the mood of the times, check out essays published by David Mitchell and journalist Alice Shopland in *Architecture New Zealand* Jan./Feb. 1995. For the key texts telling the "architecture to a fault" story, see the issues of *Architecture New Zealand* dated July/Aug. 1990, Nov./Dec. 1991, and Sept./Oct. 1992, as well as *Interstices 2* (1992).