

ITINERARY n.39

NOT ON MAP

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Housing Corp. Bldg., Manukau City

Auckland City in the 1970s

Architecture changed a great deal in the seventies. Mirroring the social and economic shifts that restructured New Zealand society, our architecture underwent a major transition. Internationally, Charles Jencks identified the demolition of Pruitt Igoe in 1972 as the death of modernism, but here in New Zealand modernism's expiry date occurred later and was much less defined – ignoring Neil Young's 1979 advice, Kiwi modernism didn't burn out, but faded away. Central Auckland, however, didn't play much of a role; few buildings that appeared in Auckland's CBD during the 1970s have entered the architectural canon. Attention was elsewhere. Wellington-based Ian Athfield and Roger Walker were at the height of their house-making powers, their stylistic mash-ups matched by Peter Beaven's Christchurch neo-vernacularism and Claude Megson's suburban abstractions. Despite these provocations, larger-scale work such as McCoy & Wixon's Otago University Hocken Building (1972), Warren & Mahoney's Christchurch Town Hall (1973), and the 1974 Commonwealth Games facilities adhered to modernist principles. What occurred was in many ways a generational split, with older or more established architects (JASMaD excepted) tending to realize their large commissions in a concrete brutalist idiom, while younger designers cranked out houses in a hippy-fied neo-colonial style.

The clash of values is perfectly captured in Miles Warren's much-quoted 1978 essay, "Style in New Zealand Architecture", in which (with characteristic wit) he decries the frivolous "Noddyism" of the young Athfield and Walker. In contrast to the functionalism that guided the work of his generation in the 1950s and 1960s, he describes the work of these comparatively junior designers as having "all the hallmarks of decadent extremism. The shock tactics have become a bore and even the wit wears thin." Part of the offensiveness of the A&W style was no doubt the "cheapness" of its references. Drawing aspects of the heritage movement into his critique, Warren declared that there "is only one thing stupider than restoring crummy old buildings and that is designing new buildings in imitation of crummy old buildings." Warren asked for "a return to those former architectural virtues, quiet logical order and simplicity", but ironically he himself would soon head down the decorative path. Like many of his international contemporaries – figures such as James Stirling and Arata Isozaki – he soon became an early adopter of PoMo. These postmodernists would no doubt regard their classical references as more serious and their wit as more knowing than A&W's colonial (and pop culture) sources. A flick through the architecture journals of the 1970s reveals the steady absorption of counterculture values, with editorial photos featuring increasingly heavily bearded men and advertising images of progressively more scantily clad women – the cover of the August 1973 issue of *Home & Building* boldly featured a bare breasted woman. New (or old?) materials and technologies also began to appear – *Home & Building* articles explained pole building, log construction, and hessian's merits as a wall covering.

The seventies also saw the emergence on the Auckland scene of a new generation of firms, including Darcy Glossop, Pepper and Dixon, Cook Hitchcock & Sargisson, and Hill Manning & Mitchell. As the decade came to an end many of these architects would (like Warren's generation) change their approach, adopting a range of positions from PoMo Pop-ism to mirror-glass corporatism. By the end of the 1970s, high-modernism had run its course, but it was not clear what would take its place. *Andrew Barrie*

1

ca.1970

The Pines
75 Owens Road, Mt Eden
Welton Becket & Assocs



Designed by the Los Angeles-based architects of the Beverly Hilton Hotel and the famous Capital Records Building this apartment tower was the height of glamour. (The local architects were Beatson Rix-Trott Carter & Co). The residents of forty apartments laid out on ten floors have access to a swimming pool, tennis courts, a gym and spacious landscaped grounds. See *Home & Building* Oct. 1971, and *Home NZ* Aug./Sept. 2009.

This complex was one a number of high-rise, high-end apartment buildings that sprang up in the inner suburbs around that time. The others include Alleman Land Heaney & Assoc's Highpoint at 119 St Stephen's Ave, Parnell and Sargent & Smith's Eppinghurst Apartments at 416 Remuera Road (ca.1971).

2

1971

Auckland Public Library
64 Lorne Street
ACC Architects / Ewen Wainsott



Since 1888, the Public Library had shared facilities with the Art Gallery. During the 1960s it was resolved to construct of the Edmiston Wing at the Art Gallery and establish a purpose built library on an adjacent site, creating a cultural precinct linking the Civic centre with the University and what was then Auckland Technical Institute. Rather stoutly occupying its sloping, irregular-shaped site, the library was built in two stages, and has been altered several times since, including a 2004 makeover by Athfield Architects. See *Home & Building* Jan. 1972.

3

1971

International House
27 Whitaker Place
JASMaD



JASMaD's first project for the University of Auckland, this hall of residence for 150 students was built before the adjacent motorway. Stepping down the slope, residential and amenity blocks have been arranged to incorporate the surrounding native bush and form a series of courtyards. The interconnected blocks form a labyrinthine, constantly unfolding interior - breaking the building down into blocks and inserting lounges at their junctions was intended to foster a community formed from a network of smaller social groups. The building received an NZIA Silver Medal in 1971 and a 25 Year Award in 1996. See *Home & Building* Sept. 1970 and May 1971, and *Architecture NZ* May/June 1996.

4

1971

Edmiston Wing
Auckland City Art Gallery
Kitchener Street
ACC Architects / Ewen Wainsott



Funded by a charitable arts trust established by Philip Edmiston, a businessman prominent in the early part of last century, this addition to Grainger & D'Ebro's 1887 building included entry spaces, galleries, an administration block, and a sculpture court. As the *New Zealand Herald* noted at the time, "Now, with the addition of the Edmiston wing, the Auckland Art Gallery will have more space, better light and gallery area to promote further collections as the city and its art appreciation grows." The wing was demolished to make way for FJMT+Archimedia's 2011 gallery extension. See *Home & Building* Nov. 1971 and Dec. 1973 and *Journal (NZIA)* March 1974.

5

1972

CML Assurance Society Ltd
155 Queen Street
Stephenson & Turner



One of more the elegant of the central city office towers built in the 1970s, this one is notable for its use of a modular precast façade system much like those being used by Warren & Mahoney to similar ends at around the same time in Christchurch (and also at their Feltex Center, 145 Symonds St., 1978). The architects had some tricky planning problems to solve – a sloping site, two floors of parking tucked in above two floors or retail, and internal links to CML's adjacent building dating from 1928. The building was highly commended in the 1974 NZIA Branch Awards, but the exuberant street verandahs have been replaced with much tamer punched metal and the shopping arcade filled in. See *Home & Building* Jan./Feb. 1975.

6

1970s

Parnell Village
Parnell Rise, Parnell
Les Harvey



Buying up unloved old houses, local property developer Les Harvey restored and converted them to shops, boutiques and restaurants. He planted trees, laid an intricate network of brick paved walkways, inserted wooden overbridges, and built sunny courtyards, to create a precinct that had particular appeal for tourists. Harvey's efforts almost single-handedly transformed Parnell, and became a model adopted in other parts of the city, particularly in Harvey's own projects. The development was not without controversy – some felt it was not a "progressive" form of urban development, and Wellington architect and Mayor Michael Fowler labeled it "plastic".

7

1972

Air New Zealand House
1 Queen Street
Peddle Thorp & Walker



Executed by an international consortium including Fletcher Development, this building was part of a coordinated eight-year development of two whole city blocks. Occupying the area bounded by Queen, Customs, Hobson and Quay Streets, the project included office blocks, a shopping center and department store, Queen Elizabeth Square, an airline terminal, the Travelodge Hotel, and a 1,500-car parking building, all connected by a bridge over Albert Street. At the time of its completion, the 19-storey Air New Zealand House was one of Auckland's largest office buildings. See *Home & Building* August 1971, June 1973 and no. 5 1975.

8

1973

Northern Building Society
48 Greys Ave
Darcy Glossop/Davison
Architectural Group



Here's what historian Terrence Hodgson wrote of this building: "One of the first mirror glass compositions in the country, it is designed with a satisfying degree of attention to line, balance and site. Its corner elevated site demands a building of prominence, and the mirror glass reflects the surrounding busy streets and trees in a refreshing manner, although such an approach could be overdone." Indeed it could, as the 80s would teach us. Glossop fans might like to check out Lorne Towers, 10-14 Lorne Street, behind the 246 shopping complex. See *Home & Building* no. 5 1976.

9

1973

Newton Post Office
292-300 Karangahape Road
Mark-Brown, Fairhead & Sang



Peter Mark Brown and Alan Fairhead are best known as residential architects, producing Neutra, Breuer and Gropius-influenced houses throughout the 1950's and 1960's. Ron Sang joined the firm in 1969. This modernist gem, one of the firm's few commercial projects, replaced a row of 19th century wooden shops. The front façade features a bronze bas-relief by noted New Zealand Chinese painter and sculptor Guy Ngan. A guide to the work of Mark Brown & Fairhead will be featured in an upcoming issue of BLOCK.

10

1974

West Plaza Building
3 Albert Street
Price Adams & Dodd



Bill McKay has written that this and Neville Price's other "late international modern commercial buildings ... are slick and stylish, sometimes flashy. They do not reflect New Zealand's climate, materials or any sense of our national identity, but like West Plaza they brought a verve and sophistication to Auckland that helped turn it from bug town to international city." The building received an NZIA Resene Enduring Architecture Award in 2005. See *Home & Building* April 1974.

Other Addresses:

UoA School of Medicine
85 Park Road, Grafton
Stephenson & Turner (1970-74)

National Mutual Life Bldg (1972)
41 Shortland Street
Peddle Thorp & Horman
Has suffered an Alucobond makeover.
See *Home & Building* no.3 1978.

Samoa House / Maota Samoa
283 Karangahape Road, Newton
JASMaD (1978)
See *Home & Building* no. 1 1980
and *NZ Architect* no. 5 1980.

National Insurance Building
27-35 Victoria St West (ca.1976)
Rigby Mullan
Now the President Hotel.
See *Home & Building* no. 3 1976.

New National Bank (1979)
18 Shortland Street
Stephenson & Turner
See *Home & Building* no. 5 1979.



Johnson's Wax

11

1977

City Council Chambers
31-33 Wiri Station Road
Manukau City
Neville H Price & Associates



It's not in the central city, but the development of Manukau City Center was one of the biggest undertakings of the era. Laid out on what had previously been paddocks, Price's council building separated an administration block from a circular structure housing the council chamber and committee rooms. Other buildings to note in the complex are Structon Group's ziggurat-like Housing Corporation Building, 5 Osterley Way (1979), JASMaD's Friendship House, 20 Putney Way (ca.1980), and Stephenson & Turner's shopping complex (1976). See *Home & Building* no. 6 1977.

Beyond the Inner City:

St Lukes Square (1971)
80 St Lukes Road, Mt Albert
Walker Co-Partnership
This now vastly expanded shopping mall is one of a number Walker's built around the city. Others include LynnMall, 3058 Great North Road, New Lynn (1963), Henderson Square (now West City), 7 Catherine Street (1968) and Shore City, Cnr Lake Road & Como St, Takapuna (1974), all now much altered. See *Home & Building* Nov 1971 and Nov./Dec 1974.

Cocker Townhouses (1973)
57 Woods St. Freeman's Bay
Claude Megson
It's residential and not in the CBD, but a guide to 1970s Auckland architecture has to acknowledge a prodigious talent at the height of his powers. See *NZ Architect* no. 6 1977, and *Home & Entertaining* Aug/Sept, 2002.

North Shore Memorial Park Cemetery & Crematorium
235 Schnapper Rock Rd, Albany (1974)
KRTA

Office Building for Mason Mesco (ca.1974)

12

1977

UoA Recreation Centre
17 Symonds Street
JASMaD



This complex includes including a large gym, workout gym, squash courts, martial arts and dance studios, offices, and lounges. The gym is housed in a large box which was partially buried so as not to dominate the then adjacent student union and houses. Support spaces are housed in informal lean-to structures around two sides. The multi-storey structure negotiates a number of levels such that many of the facilities are located below ground level and the entrances are on the upper levels - the many sitting areas have dramatic views down into the gym. The building has won a host of awards, including an NZIA National Award and Gold Medal in 1979 and an Enduring Architecture Award in 2003. See *NZIA Journal* Oct 1973, *NZ Architect* no. 1, 1979, no. 3, 1979 and *Architecture NZ* Jan/Feb 1989.

17 Maurice Road, Penrose
E.G Moodie
See *Home & Building*, Jan./Feb. 1975.

Johnson's Wax Offices & Factory (ca.1974)
29 Mahunga Drive
Mangere Bridge
Adams Dodd Paterson Partnership
This unassuming industrial gem has prompted a future BLOCK guide to the work of its architects. See *Home & Building* Jan./Feb. 1975.

St Francis Catholic Church
8 Finchley Road, Browns Bay
James Hackshaw (1976)
The best of Hackshaw's '70s churches. See *Architecture NZ* May/Jun. '93.



New National Bank

13

1978

UoA School of Arch. & Planning
22 Symonds Street
KRTA



The School of Architecture was established in 1917, and the completion of this building ended 55 years of temporary accommodation. Despite this long lead time, the project was a slow one - getting the building (which initially housed town planning and part of the geography department) from commissioning to completion took almost 10 years. KRTA also designed the adjacent computer centre and an as-yet unbuilt tower on the site now occupied by the crèche. See *Home & Building* no. 4 1981 and no. 5 1982.

Sources:

All photos are by Andrew Barrie.

The output of this decade is well recorded in our local journals, particularly *NZ Home and Building*. The profession's official organ underwent a transformation during the decade, changing from the *NZIA Journal* to become *Journal (NZIA)* in 1973 and then *NZ Architect* in 1977, rapidly growing in size and confidence along the way. General texts to look at include Peter Shaw's *New Zealand Architecture* (Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), and Terrence Hodgson's *Looking at the Architecture of New Zealand* (Wellington: Grantham House Publishing, 1990). Useful references on the work of key firms active in the 1970s are Stephen Stratford's *Jasmax* (Auckland: NZ Architectural Publishing Trust, 2007) and John Balasoglou's *Stephenson & Turner* (Auckland: Balasoglou Books, 2006). A couple of famous essays give a taste of the times: Miles Warren's "Style in New Zealand Architecture" (1978) and David Mitchell's "The Slob City Impulse" (1979). Both are included in Douglas Lloyd Jenkins' *New Dreamland: Writing New Zealand Architecture* (Auckland: Godwit, 2005).