



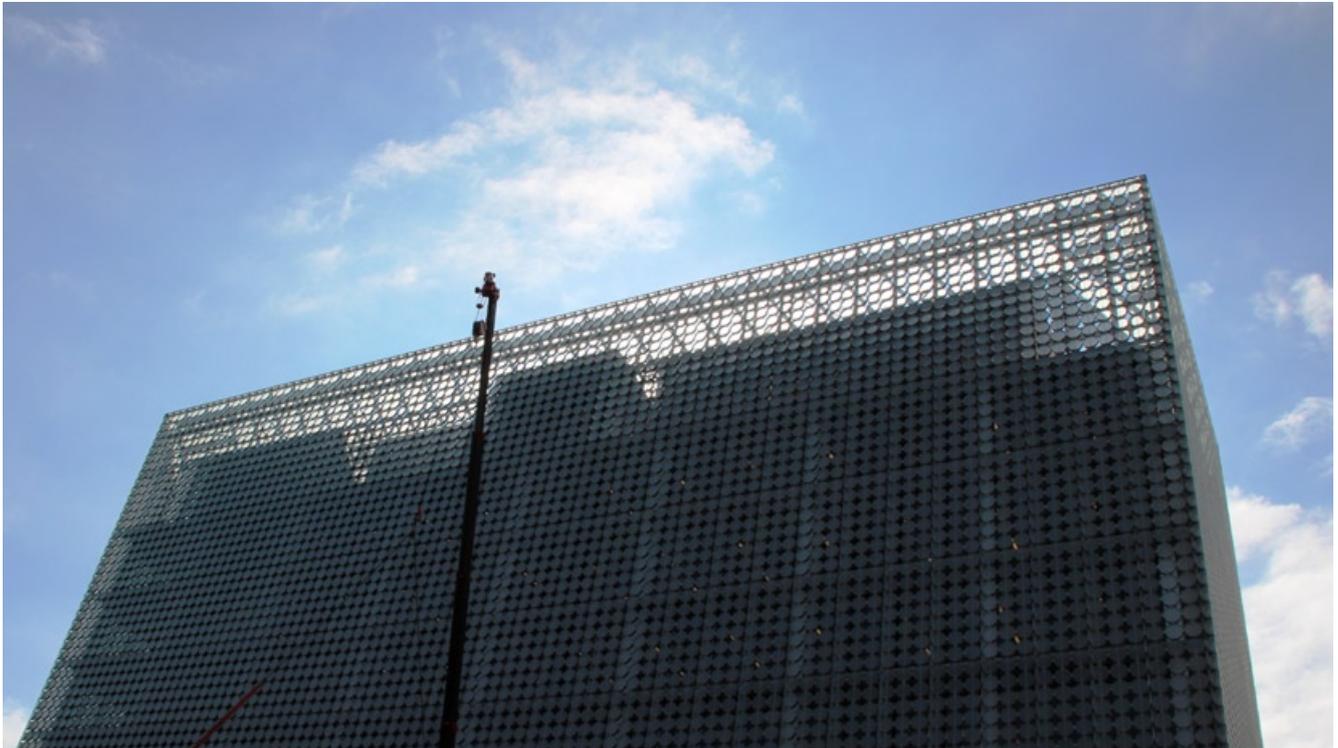
10 2011

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

**BLOCK**

## **A Refined Art**

**Jack McKinney Reviews Sean Godsell's Recent Auckland Lecture**



*Light and shadow reveals function behind the abstract facade of the RMIT Design Hub building*

I was once told that if you rang Sean Godsell's office he would answer the phone himself. That seemed implausible; surely there were better things for an architect of international repute to be doing with his time?

It turns out that not only does he answer the phone, he suffers many of the same ailments as the common architect; vicious clients, lack of work, frustration. Speaking at 4pm Melbourne time (all calls going to voicemail presumably), in a rather candid mood, he enlightened us on his approach to his work.

Half of an office of two, draughting all the details by hand, Sean has produced some immaculate residential projects. These tend to be deceptively simplistic looking boxes within boxes; glass vitrines shrouded in hardwood slats or rusty webforge mesh. If this diffusing skin can wrap all walls, the underside of the floor and the glass roof, all the better. Closer inspection reveals hidden circulation routes, transformative flaps, secret compartments – houses like wire frame portmanteaus, transparency cloaked in obfuscation, a bit like the lecture itself.

After an obligatory opening reference to wearing black during the Rugby World Cup the screen filled with a panorama of projects. 'What do you want me to talk about?' Sean enquired, rhetorically as it turns out. He wanted to talk about his latest and largest project and to get there reeled through all the images of his prior work at breakneck speed, halting at views of the near-completed RMIT Design Hub building. This is the first big building for the practice, commissioned within weeks of the office having to close due to lack of work. Reminiscent of fellow Melbournian John Wardle's revelation that his first tall building was merely a stack of all his houses, the Design Hub shares all of its DNA with the residential work.

The building is a tall glass tower, with a long low slatted pavilion adjacent. All the complicated programmatic stuff is buried in the ground, keeping the composition clean. The tower is screened in a fabric of pivoting glass discs, forming a textured but scaleless monolith that light washes through. All the signature moves are present; a uniform glass enclosure, in this case sliced into a series of floors; circulation at the edges of the building;

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## **A Refined Art** *Continued from p.1...*

webforge walls and ceilings to the corridors; webforge floors between the glazing and the cellular skin of the building; repetition taken to the point of abstraction.

The façade treatment was a development that had emerged in two earlier designs, the first in China, where sliced bamboo was to be used as a cladding. This motif was translated into a chain mail coat on a residential project and reappeared at RMIT scaled up, and with the addition of waxy glass discs within each loop. The shift in scale was also shown to work in reverse; a competition entry for the National Portrait Gallery was reworked into a house, planned as a barcode in a box.

Projects were discussed with disregard for the order of the slides, some ignored completely, some spontaneously revisited later. The clamour of images meshing together emphasised a continual exploration of a defined set of themes. This repetition was acknowledged, and identified as a deliberate and incisive practice. The individuality of each of the projects within these parameters was impressive. What remains unclear however, is why Sean is still under-employed and on reception duty. *JM*



*Webforge screens and external circulation in St. Andrews Beach House*

## **The Fine Print: October**

### **CHAIR'S REPORT: Harry Street**

*Auckland Plan:* The Draft Auckland Plan along with the Draft Waterfront Plan and the City Centre Masterplan were released for public comment on the 20<sup>th</sup> September. The closing date for submissions is 4.00pm, 25<sup>th</sup> October. Whilst there appears to be a lot more to comment on than the Auckland Unleashed document, I think our submissions can be simpler in many respects. A meeting is proposed for 10<sup>th</sup> October to commence preparing our response.

*Fellows:* To date four nominations have been received. I will compile list and circulate.

*Future Auckland Leaders:* Six applications have been received. Marianne has agreed to give a presentation on her involvement in FAL but would prefer to wait until after she has graduated which will mean sometime next year.

*Auckland Architecture Week:* Congratulations to all involved for a successful week.

*Christchurch Fund Raiser:* The Gibbs Farm Sculpture Walk was very successful in raising a significant sum for the benevolent fund. Thanks to Ross and the sponsors.

*Auckland City Sub-committee:* Geoff Richards is maintaining contact with Auckland Council regarding professional services procurement processes.

*Committee for Auckland Maori Graduate Placement Program:* At present Sarah Lang has four architect/spatial design graduates looking for employment/work experience/internship positions. Sarah is seeking advice as to how the profession may be able to help.

### **HERITAGE PORTFOLIO: Adam Wild**

*Auckland Council Proposed Heritage Advisory Panel:* Council is establishing a heritage design panel, much like the existing urban design panel, however the intention is not to compose the panel from experts but from a broader range of interested parties on a pro bono basis. The selection process for the Heritage Advisory Panel is moving considerably slower than originally planned. It was hoped that letters would have been sent out last month.

*Auckland Council – Auckland Plan:* Our Heritage interest remains connected to those other disciplines and skills promoted through the Branch liaison with the Mayor's office. The recent UDF seminar on the Auckland Plan provided helpful multidisciplinary insight into responses to the latest draft plans. Contributions to the NZIA position will be prepared in accordance with the Branch's special committee.

*John Scott's Te Urewera National Park Visitor Centre & Headquarters at Aniwanuiwa:* Graham Linwood (NZIA Gisborne) advises that Chris Finlayson was introduced to the building by DOC who made an impression on him that is taking some moving. He made this point very strongly to Historic Places at a meeting. It seems he has little interest in the cost of remediation or any aspect of the building. This is not dissuading NZHPT in their endeavour to proceed with listing, but DOC say they can't find funding to carry out the measured survey of the building. The NZHPT consider that the best use of the building lies in a different ownership or lease arrangement and they have had discussions with an interested party. The Gisborne Branch of the NZIA in considering adaptive reuse options wonder if North Island universities may be interested in joint control as a research or education centre. Any help towards advancing this thought would be appreciated.

*Environmental alert - Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Bill:* The Government today introduced the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Bill to Parliament. This Bill is intended to replace the Historic Places Act 1993, which established the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (Pouhere Taonga) in its current form. The Bill seeks to resolve tensions in the Trust's governance structure and better equip the Trust to fulfil its statutory functions. The overall intention of the Bill is to re-balance heritage values against values associated with private ownership, and clarify the provisions of the 1993 Act.

The Bill also introduces emergency provisions to future-proof archaeological consenting in the event of natural disasters, along with new archaeological provisions which seek to achieve efficiency gains and improve alignment with the Resource Management Act 1991.

The full text of the Bill can be found online by Googling: 327-1 bill govt.

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## HEAT in Auckland

Ross Brown Reports on the Initiative to Promote Auckland Architecture to the World



*The HEAT program used adventurous projects like the Kuripa Bridge to promote Queensland design services as an international export*

The HEAT Program is an initiative by the Queensland Government to assist – in what seemed whatever way possible – the architecture and design sectors in gaining access to more work. There is a particular focus on off-shore work giving rise to increased exports in the form of fees for consulting services exported abroad. Essentially, it is aimed at increasing employment opportunities amongst the Creative Industries.

Auckland Council – with Ludo Campbell-Reid to the fore – and the Designer's Institute under its CEO Cathy Veninga (with assistance from the NZIA & NZILA) organized a workshop and presentation on the program in Auckland on August 18<sup>th</sup>. The NZIA at a national level was represented by Patrick Clifford, with representation from Harry Street and Ross Brown from the local branch. The AAA was represented by Andrew Mitchell (on behalf of Andrew Patterson), and the UDP by Brian Aitken and Shannon Joe. Nat Cheshire, Blair Johnston, Tim Hoosen, Tim Hay and Jeff Fearon were the other architects in attendance.

The two presenters from Queensland were Lindy Johnstone, Director (Creative Industries) within the Department of Employment from the Queensland Government, and Shane Thomson, an architect now in private practice under his own name but previously a director with BVN. He has been hugely instrumental in developing the program with Lindy, who has clearly been a powerhouse lifting the profile of the Queensland creative sectors internationally.

They were able to cite some examples of how successful this has been although for the purposes of this forum the examples were confined to the architectural milieu. We were told the profiles of the other sectors (fashion, etc) have been lifted equally successfully. The main endeavors of this two year-old agency has been to get widespread attention abroad for Queensland's unique and indigenous architectural style – getting publicity and exposure in as many reputable "organs" as possible.

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## HEAT in Auckland Continued from p.3...

Interestingly, the thrust has been to attract notice in the Northern Hemisphere as a first imperative, which is where, according to Lindy, "it matters". No notice will be taken of you, to speak of, if you only rely on publicity and exposure on your own turf, that is, your own hemisphere. It is what is published in the North that will inevitably get noticed in the South – China, India, the rest of Asia, and beyond.

Towards this end, initial overtures have been made to many magazines and newspapers – *Architectural Review*, *The Financial Times*, etc. – and the editors of these along with other luminaries in the architectural publishing sector (Rob Gregory of AR, Paul Finch of WAM, et al.) have all come on board to the extent that they now constantly ask for new material on the Queensland "brand"; more examples of it please. This, of course, raises the big question: what is the Queensland brand exactly and how is it different from, say, the rest of Australian architecture? The workshop did not address – or pretend it was there to address – these rather big questions.

One particular additional initiative is now to ensure – with the Government's complete assistance – that there is an exhibition of recent built work from Queensland at the Venice Biennale. In addition they instigated the now famous "Queensland Lunch" at this event, from which no important architectural personage would be absent. A long lunch, in that it is around a (very) long table, with the Queensland message being got out there, loud and clear.

In addition, the Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane were prevailed upon to mount a successful exhibition, "Place Makers – Contemporary Queensland Architects" (Aug-Nov 2008). If you weren't lucky enough to get to it, you might have obtained a copy of the sell-out eponymously titled catalogue. This lavishly illustrated volume gives lots of information about what it is that's special and unique about this region's architecture. And what is it? Well, there's lots of north-facing glass, lots of overhangs, lots of screens and slats (veils, even), lots of layers, lots of finely crafted detail, extensive use of timber, etc, etc. Sound at all familiar? Just look around you! Perhaps they might be doing it just a bit better though...

All in all however, it's a magnificent achievement, and massively good publicity, to have accomplished the mounting of the exhibition and the publishing of this catalogue, showing off local Architects at their best.

The presentations, while they touched on and re-stated the success of almost all the initiatives for what they thought was a modest expenditure (no actual figures available), also did not touch on how the successes were actually being measured and by what "yardsticks". It may be too early to tell in actual dollar terms, what architectural services (and exports) have increased by, as a result of these initiatives.

Andrew Mitchell gave a short presentation in which he managed to get across clearly, two important points, which he thought were essential to local architects making a success of expanding their horizons (and work-load): (1) That somehow we persuade the authorities to make Architect's involvement mandatory on more (preferably all!) buildings, and (2) that there has to be considerably more collaboration between local Architects to realize our collective goals.

For us, Auckland Architects, and I think all of the other Design disciplines represented there, some things appeared to be points of agreement:

1. That it would, more than likely, have to be a local (Auckland Council) initiative in the first place. It is unlikely that Central Government will see this as priority at this stage and they already have "Better by Design" by NZTE (which is not quite the same sort of program, although much admired by the Queensland Team), and there is not much likelihood of any of the other NZ Councils (all much smaller than the Super-City) taking this up in the first place.

2. That the Auckland Council are very keen on this as an idea – both Roger Blakely (Chief Planning Officer) & David McConnell (Chair- ATEED) said so – although it was also made clear that at this stage at least, there is no specific budget line-item set aside for the establishment of a similar agency here within Auckland Council.
3. They were enthusiastic about the potential of the Auckland Region to retain its high ranking as one of the world's most livable cities (4th) but also concerned that it would have to improve its GDP ranking per capita (68th) if this was to succeed. The Mayor's vision is to lift the increase in GDP p.a. from the current low position of 2% to something around 5% by 2030.
4. In order to do this, as the Queenslanders have already surmised, we will have to find a bigger market for our 'goods and services' – particularly services. Currently there is an over-supply of talent and an under-demand for these services. Even when Auckland's population reaches 2.5 million (predicted by 2040) we will still be too small, and we, also, will have to go 'International'.
5. The fact that everybody there representing Council seemed to be unanimous about the usefulness of such an 'establishment', gave rise to the general consensus that the next steps should be taken towards the firming up of a proposal to achieve this, with the logical conclusion that Council will in due course make the funds available. (What we were able to learn about 'costs' is that Queensland is doing what it does with Lindy plus six other young staffers – some part-time; it seemed that Shane's input was probably pro-bono although I think he got to the 'long-lunches' in Venice!).
6. The next immediate task, it was decided, is to set up a 'Task-force' to pursue this whole possible future direction. The Council (in the form of Ludo Campbell-Reid) have volunteered to establish a time-line and any likely tasks or future requirements towards the establishment of this sub-committee; supposedly to be drawn, at least partly, from amongst those attending the Workshop.
7. If any of this seems a trifle unfair, and unduly slanted towards Auckland, we were re-assured that the rest of Australia – where they think it important – is catching up fast. There are numerous similar initiatives being currently mooted in other States.

The biggest question of all however – and it has to be answered here as well – is, do we as Architects (and indeed all of the other Design-disciplines) have a sufficiently developed level of excellence in our work and do we possess something here in Auckland (and ultimately New Zealand) that is uniquely our own' and is it of enough interest to attract the attention of the rest of the world? And as a consequence, can we then exponentially increase our workload, the employment opportunities in this sector and provide a boost to exports to the overall benefit of the country? There is no doubt that those attending were optimistic that the answer to both of these could be yes. *RB*



## **The Fine Print** *Continued from p.2...*

### **GRADUATE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION: Sarah MacKenzie & Sandy Hayward**

*Costs Associated with Architectural Practice 1:* Our first event in this series explored the costs associated with running both a practice and an individual project, corresponding with Experience Areas A and F. Speakers Lindley Naismith (Scarlet Architects), Richard Goldie (Peddle Thorp), and Tim Melville (RTA) provided an invaluable insight into the financial side of setting up and running a successful architectural practice across a range of scales.

*Costs Associated with Architectural Practice 2:* We are looking to host the second event in this series, focusing on the costs associated with running a project. This session is intended to correspond with Experience Areas B through E. Speakers are to be confirmed. Venue: NZIA, D72, Suite 1.5, 72 Dominion Road, Mt Eden. Time: 5:45pm for 6:00pm start. Date: TBC

### **URBAN ISSUES GROUP: Shannon Joe**

The UIG had Ludo and his team discuss the latest city centre plan prior to its release. The UIG generally supports the city centre and waterfront masterplans. The Auckland Plan lacks cohesion and excitement. The UIG will prepare submissions on Auckland plan, city centre, and waterfront. The UIG Subcommittee met tonight. Shannon met the UDF committee to discuss sharing workload on submissions on all Auckland plans.

An informal get-together with Auckland Council's new BEU members has been set, hosted at Architectus' office. An invite will go out to selected Auckland Branch architects shortly.

### **EVENTS PORTFOLIO: Andrea Bell**

**Auckland Architecture Week 2011:** Architecture Week went well with a good turn out to most events. The opening night function, the presentation of the Auckland Waterfront Hotel finalists and winning scheme and the official launch of the Women in Architecture website was well attended with about 120-150 people. The Sean Godsell Lecture was also well attended with \$4219.78 worth of tickets being sold through Ticketek and on the door. The Gibbs Farm Sculpture Walk was a sell out and we raised a total of \$29,543.40 for the ChCh Architects' Benevolent Fund. We need to have a formal announcement of this probably through Cross Section and we also need to formally thank our sponsors Structurflex and also the team at the Gibbs Farm. Once the final invoices are received the Architecture Week Budget Spreadsheet will be updated and issued.

### **UNITEC REPORT: Tony van Raat**

At a recent meeting with Cameron Sinclair plans were finalized to send a group of students to Haiti over the summer to work with Architecture for Humanity. Discussions are being held to see if University of Auckland students want to join the trip.

Initial applications for admission in 2012 are running ahead of last year.

Groups of four first year masters students working in selected local offices are progressing their work. The group working with PTA is having the images associated with their project in the Wynyard Quarter used by Waterfront Auckland to whom they recently made a successful presentation and another group in Jasmex are working on projects to revitalize and rehabilitate Christchurch.

Professor Peggy Deamer has agreed to become a Visiting Professor at Unitec for the next three years. This will bring her to Auckland for about three weeks in July/August starting from 2012.

A piece is being placed in the next issue of *Cross Section* to advertise a two-week course on architectural conservation to be offered in Tuscany to New Zealand architects as part of this Branch's relationship with the Ordine degli Architetti in Prato. The course will run in late-June/early-July next year.

### **REGULATORY ISSUES PORTFOLIO: Dr David Gatley**

*Review of Joint and Several Liability:* The Government has just announced that it has asked the Law Commission to review how joint and several liability for defective building work is currently managed. This issue was identified by the Institute as being the major item to be considered in any review of the Building Act. [Refer Regulatory Issues report dated 14 September 2010].

### **TECHNICAL ISSUES GROUP: Nicole Tarlton & Mark Mismash**

Attendance at the last seminar on Light Gauge Steel Framing was low due to timetable clashes with other events. As a result we have invited Todd Forsythe of RFS and Christine Wilkinson of AXXIS to present again. The seminar this time will be altered slightly from the September seminar. It will take place during the middle of the day.

### **UoA STUDENT REPORT: Jordon Saunders & Mikhail Rodricks**

As part of the Second Year studio focusing on 1:1 construction, NICAL has teamed up with Auckland Council to erect a series of interactive follies in Myers Park that form part of the RWC Fan Trail. From all reports, this has generated considerable enjoyment.

Cameron Sinclair of Architecture for Humanity fame, the School's International Architect in Residence for this year, is currently running a design paper with Alex Lee and Deidre Brown. Camia Young, formerly of Herzog & de Meuron and OMA is also busy in the School teaching an intensive design studio based around Christchurch. All work produced will be collated and published at the conclusion of the design paper.

The school has run a series of successful exhibitions of recent design work, the first of which was a showcase of twenty design projects produced under Momoyo Kaijima of Toyko-based firm Atelier Bow-Wow, who was last year's International Architect in Residence. Ultra Local, produced in collaboration with AUT and the Kaipatiki Project, is currently on show at St Pauls Gallery no. 3 and will run till the 20th of October.

### **AUCKLAND CITY LIAISON: Andrew Patterson**

*Unitary Plan Working Party:* I attended last week's meeting. The items discussed were: growth issues and options; sustainable design and development; infrastructure work streams; transport, particularly parking; and network utilities. The next meeting discusses design.

*AC and Mayoral Liaison:* Draft Auckland Plan, City Master Plan and Waterfront plan were discussed with Council staff and Councilor's informally. Primary concern for Architects might be that architectural quality seems to offer nothing new to actually define what a design-led city is about.

Chapter 8 seems to, among other things attempt to produce an "Urban Environment as beautiful as its natural environment" in the form of Directive 8.3. It says to use Urban Design Principles. Urban Design principles by themselves may not produce creativity and innovation. Architects can design an ugly and bland city that conforms to Urban Design principles.

On page 230, Priority 3 'Demand good Design' and Directives 8.5-8.8 are also concerning. These simply offer up what we do now – an Urban Design Panel, design guidelines and a surfeit of awards and competitions. We have design statements.

Architecture is a creative industry and innovation and creativity can't be produced through 'design manuals' or sideline support. The idea that directives need to be changed to provide a way of identifying talent and supporting that talent received support. We support the idea of incentives to recognize design excellence, the responsibility to identify and increase design excellence should be by the profession.