

NZIA GOLD
MEDAL WINNER



PIP CHESHIRE

CITATION

Pip Cheshire's architectural career, which spans three and half decades and which promises yet further development, has been propelled by a confluence of admirable personal and professional qualities: courage, adventurousness, curiosity, enthusiasm and persistence. Pip's intellectual honesty and integrity have directed him away from paths of least resistance, and self-belief and a necessary stubbornness have enabled him to follow a course of his own making. At key points in his career, he has rejected safe choices in favour of riskier but potentially more fulfilling options. There was nothing capricious about such decisions: one of the abiding and fascinating characteristics of Pip's career is his determination to reconcile his ambition with his desire to pursue meaningful work consistent with his personal principles. Pip's courtesy and collegiality co-exists with a driven nature. He was a relatively late starter in architecture – he was 26 when he enrolled in The University of Auckland School of Architecture in 1976 – and has often said he feels compelled to make up for lost time. However, his earlier studies, business ventures and social activism gave him valuable insights into the political and commercial contexts in which architects operate, and have provided him with experiences that have informed the urbanity of his personality and his practice.

Eager to get his career going, Pip was fast out of the blocks. While still at Architecture School, he designed The Melba (1979–80), a city restaurant that anticipated Auckland's awakening appetite for more-sophisticated social environments. On the back of this commission, and as soon as he graduated, Pip, with some fellow students, set up Artifice Studios, an of-its-time architects' collective. If the genesis of Artifice revealed anti-establishment inclinations, the brevity of its lifespan signalled Pip's serious intentions. With Pete Bossley, Pip soon set up Bossley Cheshire and the new firm quickly won a reputation for, in architectural historian Peter Shaw's phrase, "contriving to shock the bourgeoisie while housing them".

Through the 1980s, in a series of houses including the Turner House (1981), Vernon Townhouses (1985) and Markus House (1988), Pip expressed his impatience with the neo-vernacular style that had dominated New Zealand architecture in the previous decade. Pip has always been skeptical of orthodoxies and, while he has progressively moved in the direction of clarity of expression, he has never been afraid of complexity. Thus his architecture has never become frozen in a moment, and resists facile taxonomy.

Pip's ambition and restlessness, and that of Pete Bossley, explains the merging, in 1989, of their practice with JASMaD to form JASMAX. For Pip larger-scale work was the lure of the alliance; JASMAX became New Zealand's largest practice and Pip, who was a founding director of the new practice, became heavily involved in its administration, serving as managing director from 1999 until 2003, the year in which he departed JASMAX to form his own practice, Cheshire Architects. An important project Pip completed while at JASMAX was the Congreve House (1987–92), a resolutely solid and substantial house on Auckland's North Shore. This house and others designed for the Congreves, and for artists Stephen Bambury (Bambury House, 1995–96) and Terry Stringer (1995–2000), and for Peter Cooper (Cooper House, 1998–2004) testify to the importance of strong client relationships throughout Pip's career.

Pip has always thrived when his forthrightness has been reciprocated, his interest in ideas shared and his commitment matched. Projects such as Q theatre, Auckland (2002–10), Britomart (2003–), The University of Auckland Leigh Marine Laboratory (2004–11), and Marsden Cross Heritage Park, Bay of Islands (2004–), are a credit not just to Pip's design skills but also his steadfastness and mature engagement with challenging propositions. There is so much else to Pip's career: his heritage work in Antarctica and his pro-bono work much closer to home; his teaching and his mentoring of generations of young architects; his writing and publishing and lecturing and presenting. His is a rich architectural career, one in which breadth of reach is equalled by quality of achievement, and one that fully deserves the award of the New Zealand Institute of Architects' Gold Medal.

New Zealand Institute of Architects

PORTRAIT
Jane Ussher

BORN

1950, Christchurch

EDUCATION

1980 The University of Auckland, Bachelor of Architecture

1973 University of Canterbury, Bachelor of Arts

1968 Christchurch Christ's College, Christchurch

QUALIFICATIONS

BArch (Hons); Fellow NZIA

PROFESSIONAL CAREER

2004–ONWARDS Cheshire Architects

1989–2003 JASMAX

1984–1989 Bossley Cheshire Architects

1983–1985 Pip Cheshire Architects

1980–1983 Artifice Studios

SIGNIFICANT PROJECTS

ONGOING Private houses in New Zealand, the Pacific and South-East Asia, including award-winning Congreve and Bambury Houses

2013 Britomart Precinct masterplan and adaptive reuse of heritage buildings, Auckland

2012 Mountain Landing, Bay of Islands

2011 The University of Auckland Leigh Marine Laboratory

2011 Q theatre, Auckland

1997 Bruce Mason Theatre, Takapuna

1995 The University of Auckland masterplan, Tamaki campus, Tamaki

1993 Te Papa Tongarewa winning competition, Wellington (while at JASMAX)

1984 Rainbows End masterplan, Manukau City

1984 Commonwealth Games village masterplan, Tamaki

1980 The Melba restaurant, Courthouse Lane, Auckland

SELECTED AWARDS

NZIA Awards x 8 (7 Local, 1 New Zealand)

AAA Cavalier Bremworth Design Awards x 2

BEST Award, 2012

NZ Wood Timber Design Award, 2009

The National Business Review NZ Top Home, 2001

NZIA Ten Best Buildings, 1990

SELECTED HONOURS AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Competition Judge: ACC Waitemata Plaza, 1998

Auckland City Mission Competition, 2007

Royal Society HQ, 2011

Member Auckland Council Urban Design Panel, 2010–2012

Convenor NZIA National Awards programme, 2007–2008

Distinguished Alumni Honour, The University of Auckland, 2003

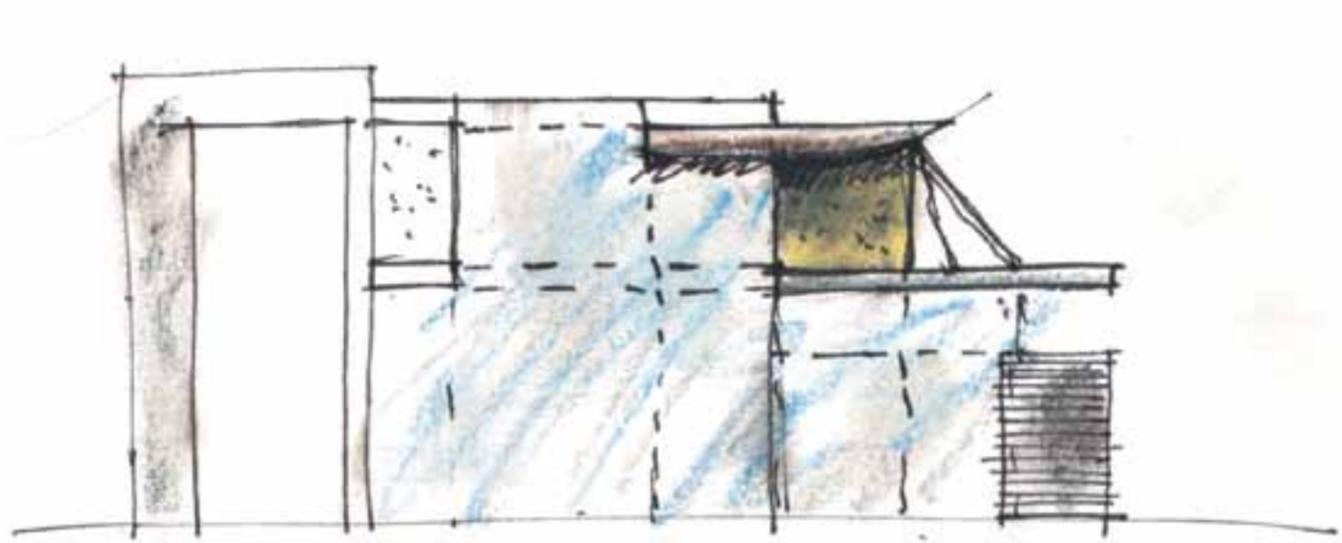
Adjunct Professor of Architecture University of Auckland, 2000–2004

Member Committee for Auckland, 2003–2004

Chair Auckland Branch NZ Institute of Architects, 1998, 1999 and 2000; Committee Member, 1989, 1990 and 1991

President of Auckland Architectural Association, 1983

Writer and publisher: *BLOCK* Magazine, NZIA Auckland branch newsletter; *Big Issues*, NZIA Auckland Branch Newsletter; *Architecture Uncooked*, Random House, 2008



CONGREVE HOUSE, AUCKLAND. SKETCH BY CHESHIRE ARCHITECTS

TRIBUTES

On a tin shed off Jervois Road, three architectural graduates hung their shingle. "Artifice" it stated with enigma and pride. Pip Cheshire, Pete Bossley, Amanda Reynolds and Mal Bartleet had no experience but a conviction that optimism, energy and talent would see them through. Who would have imagined then, that Pip would one day be a principal at JASMAX? Or that, in time, he'd leave that and start a new kind of architecture shop. Pip is tough, thoughtful and resilient enough to tackle the confounding demands of architecture at many levels. He is an intellectual who can draw – a designer who can write.

Without Pip, *BLOCK – The Broadsheet of the Auckland Branch of the NZIA* would have lacked the vigorous, witty edge that he and the chaps at Cheshire Architects have brought to it. Just a month ago, he put out two thoughtful pages on "The Architects' Role in Transforming Public Space" – a reflection on the forces that have transformed Auckland public life and urban spaces, rich with asides on architectural language, the weekend behaviour of Aucklanders, and the importance of Venturi's messy view against Jenks' style mastery. How does he find time for this?

Nearly every day, I turn the corner of Winscombe Street and see Pip's Congreve House – the block massif behind a cypress hedge, the sculpted concrete, the flash of red and the Hotere/Culbert disc of black trimmed at night with light. What a terrific house it is. I always get a charge from it and sometimes I stop the car and just look for a bit.

Thank you, Pip.

David Mitchell, Mitchell & Stout Architects

For many yews, Pip and I worked together as colleagues running virtually parallel practices, first at Artifice Studios (with Mal Bartleet and Amanda Reynolds), later as partners at Bossley Cheshire, and as fellow directors at JASMAX. They were times of great fun, pressure-cooker work practices and late-night grinds followed by heroic battles over pinball or space invaders. The early terrors of dealing with clients/council/consultants/contractors countered the ever-present desire to do good work. Endless villa alterations led to real houses, restaurants and night clubs. Pip did The Melba, one of Auckland's breakthrough restaurants of style and class. Typical of Pip, the client was a friend. Symptomatic of his approach, friends became clients, clients became friends. Usually long-term friends. His great enthusiasm for people, their stories and histories, anticipates his architectural process. Nothing comes without debate, dialogue, even argument. He wrestles ideas out of the complexities.

He draws and talks, talks and draws. And writes. Thoughts are worked and reworked, challenged and, if found wanting, reworked. The beast is beaten, maybe into submission. Maybe not. The Congreve House, one of Auckland's greats, was the subject of intense debate with articulate clients, prepared to challenge their architect and be challenged. Many other clients enjoyed similar tussles: Stringer, Banbury, Cooper, the late Leigh Davis. All in their own way relishing the intensity of Pip's submersion in the issues at hand. There have been boil-overs, the architect laid off, the client fired: rarely for long.

The larger commissions go through similar machinations, as Pip dances with all-comers, listens intently, makes room for more. The long hauls of Britomart and Q theatre demanded mighty endurance, and have already made great contributions to the city. He brings to projects of any scale a desire to understand and accept differences. Not for him the easier route of a repetitive and recognisable style. Rather, each project is mined for those unique possibilities, and leads are followed in a number of directions before resolution.

We no longer work together but keep in touch with regular catch-ups. I suspect nothing has changed; the intensity remains, maybe the fist flails the air in (mock?) frustration slightly less often as the benefits of longevity allow greater certainty and awareness that things will be resolved at the appropriate moment. But the wide smile and deep humour are constants, as is the commitment to keep looking for a better way.

A worthy Gold Medallist indeed. Keep wrestling, Pip! And thanks.

Pete Bossley, Bossley Architects



UNTITLED BY JOHN STONE; NORTHERN ADVOCATE, 27.12.85

I still recall one of my first client meetings with Pip in Portland Road. Pip bounded down a couple of dozen hair-raising stairs with absolute ease. I found this Qantas NZ Press Awards photo taken in 1985, showing how amazingly fit and active he was and probably still is.

Pip was also very quick to sum up a situation. At my wedding, Pip made a comment that marrying the daughter of his client formally completed the project.

Pip has an insatiable appetite for learning and, I think, his insomnia enabled him to champion computer modelling at a stage when the computer was still adjacent the drawing board. I recall a lyrical image of the floating Mobile Pump station set in an Arabian desert. The project was to be placed at Westhaven Marina as a floating dock. Pip has a great wit.

Along with Pete Bossley's, Pip's sketchbooks and diaries have had a lasting impression on me and were part of the reason I made these my thesis topic at The University of Auckland's School of Architecture. He continues to draw with a very masculine, 'lionesque' manner, akin to Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn.

My favourite memory of Pip came from Christina van Bohemen, who was telling me of the story he was going to share with the JASMAX office when I departed but chose not to as my wife was present. That would have been embarrassing.

Pip has a heart of gold and an absolute passion for the art, science, social and political realms of architecture – ideals which we all should strive to maintain.

Malcolm Taylor, Xsite Architects

In the post '87 recession, I managed to nag my way into a job with Jasmax. Amongst a select few architects on my nag list were Pip and Pete who had recently merged practices with JASMaD. I'd call Pip and then, five minutes later, I'd call Pete to enquire if there were any jobs going. Eventually, after close on a year, they felt sorry for me and offered me a job making a working model of Te Papa.

It was then that I first came across Pip's infectious enthusiasm for architecture and all things architectural. While I was working for Pete by day, I was learning AutoCAD by night with Pip. His generosity of spirit was exactly what I needed after a year of darts and Scrabble, waiting to start my career. I had landed on my feet! My eagerness to pick up some valuable CAD skills was surpassed only by Pip's natural generosity to impart anything and everything he knew about CAD, Le Corbusier and the Fibonacci Series. Before I knew it, I was assembling a complex, twisted geometric telecommunications tower for Singapore in 3D AutoCAD (R12!). Here began my apprenticeship in architecture.

I worked with Pip, on and off, over the next six or seven years, during which I visited his home, stayed with him and his family 'up norf' and debated the meaning of life, music and architecture at the tail end of JASMAX's Christmas parties. But, crucially, Pip set me up with a unique and unexpected postgraduate diploma in a kind of architecture that I love practising. It is based on a rigorous intellectual approach to everything architectural – embellished with life's experiences, humour, passion and, most importantly, people.

Richard Naish, RTA Studio

Pip will always hold a special place in my heart, not least because, many years ago, he took a substantial punt and gave me my first job. Working for Pip was not without its challenges – for both of us. However, despite my sometimes less-than-immediate uptake, he was always generous in his instruction, from raw principles to the finer points of essential disciplines such as weathertightness, design processes, context and relations with 'the customer'. He always encouraged engagement with architecture as a humane and a civic art.

I suspect it is the breadth of Pip's engagement brought to bear on his projects that sometimes makes it difficult to categorise him and his work and, for me at least, that makes him something of an enigma. There is no doubt that he is a reflective practitioner of the best sort – he thinks deeply about stuff. He is also a mixture of renegade and establishment and, in this, I think he sits slightly aside from conventional practice in New Zealand. Most impressively, he values ideas in both the abstract and the concrete.

Pip loves a good discussion and he crafts beautiful writing about architecture and the city. That writing and talking demonstrates both a generosity of spirit and a belief in the role that architects have to play in shaping our cities.

Another example of Pip's broad engagement is that, under Pip's leadership, when he was Chair of the Auckland Branch, the Winter Series transformed from informal in-house discussions into lectures on the city, open to all its citizens. He continues the discussion with thoughtful writing in *BLOCK*, in this journal, and in letters to the editor.

I often walk from Karangahape Road down through Myers Park and it is always a delight to come across the elegant rear wall of Q theatre, faceted like an Escher wallpaper. This theatre is a typical Pip project: a long gestation; much engagement with the characters involved; and a design that is not too high-brow but which is engaged and engaging and beautiful in parts, and functional where required. It, like Pip himself, makes a hugely positive contribution to both the form and the life of the city and, I'm sure, will continue to do so for years to come.

Christina van Bohemen, Sills van Bohemen Architects



STRINGER HOUSE, MAHURANGI. PHOTO: SIMON DEVITT



Q THEATRE, AUCKLAND. PHOTO: SIMON DEVITT



LEIGH MARINE LABORATORY, GOAT ISLAND. PHOTO: JEREMY TOTH



ROUKAI LANE, BRITOMART, AUCKLAND.



MARITIME BUILDING, BRITOMART, AUCKLAND. PHOTO: CHESHIRE ARCHITECTS



HILLTOP HOUSE, PURERUA PENINSULA. PHOTO: AARON LEITZ



GOLD MEDAL WINNER PIP CHESHIRE DISCUSSES HIS CAREER WITH JUSTINE HARVEY AT HIS HOBSON STREET STUDIO IN AUCKLAND.

Shall we talk about where you came from and the early influences that led you along the architectural path? I was born in 1950 in the beach suburb of Sumner in Christchurch. My parents were very friendly with Paul Pascoe, and Peter Beaven lived down the road when I was about nine or 10.

Did you know Peter Beaven then? My father did. Peter was a bit younger than my dad and was involved in establishing the Akaroa Heritage Trust, an organisation to protect the character of Akaroa; we had a house there, so my father got caught up in that. My father commissioned Peter to make a building in Sumner that gave rise to a public protest meeting which vilified both Peter and my father.

So it wasn't built? No. It was a high-rise, about four stories in the middle of Sumner, and it wasn't built, largely due to the outcry. Back then, I didn't know much about architecture at all. I went to high school in the city and had to commute there from Sumner. Christ's College was probably my first engagement with architecture; it's so full of very serious buildings, including Cecil Woods, early Warren and Mahoney, Speechly, Pascoe and others. Then, I went over the road to the Arts Centre, which

used to be the town site of Canterbury University with its very strong buildings by Mountfort and others, and studied political science. I had long hair, played in a band, worked on the student newspaper, surfed and spent a lot of time chasing girls. I also worked part time labouring in a plastics factory, so I scrambled out of university with a very poor Bachelor's degree. It was the '60s and it felt like I was there forever.

Did you have an interest in making things at that time? I was more politicised than anything because I'd been involved in various groups at the university. During one of the proposed All Black tours to South Africa, around 1971, I invited HART people to speak to the factory, so the management shifted me into a tiny little perspex factory to get me out of the way. I was floundering around anyway so I left. I finally graduated and my father had a factory making industrial safety equipment and I worked there. But I couldn't work for him because we had argued all the way through the Vietnam War, so I set up a little fibreglass factory of my own with about 10 or 12 people working for me and supplying him with components.

You would have been quite young. I was probably 24. One day, I was playing

chess with someone I flattered with and we saw a television news report about a building that had received a national award for architecture. My friend taught in the building and told me he thought it was a terrible building. I said, "Well, that's ridiculous; we should be able to do better buildings than that," and he replied, "Well, why don't you go to architecture school?" Pretty much the next day, I flew up to Auckland and met the dean at architecture school. I sold up the factory, got married, drove north, stopped on the Canterbury Plains, wiped the dust off my hands, shook my fist at Christchurch and said, "I'm not going back there". It seemed too small. I was going to a new life, it was like being reborn.

My first year at architecture school was in 1976. I cross-credited some papers, so I didn't have to do an intermediate year, and I had a great reference from Paul Pascoe that said, "I've known Pip since he was born; he should be allowed to do anything he wants to do". That was it.

Do you still have the letter? No I haven't, I gave it to the school in the days before copiers and I didn't really know how special that letter was. When I went back to Christchurch to see my grandmother, she hauled out a newspaper interview with me from when I was 15: a brave

one-legged-surfer kind of story. It said that when I left school I wanted to be an architect.

You didn't remember the interview?

Well, not the statement; it took me 12 years to realise the intention.

Did the journey between those points help you?

It just made me impatient. I felt I had to catch up and I was terribly excited and eager. I turned up at university on the first day and the students had called a strike. I thought, "This is great", because Canterbury was really exciting like that for a while. We'd had a clandestine printing press and, in the middle of the night, we'd churn out mimeograph documents. At the student paper, you could get on the phone at night and ring up Muldoon and say, "Look, *Canta* the student paper here, what do you think is happening about so and so?" Everything was really tense; I remember interviewing the head of police down there and he looked at me and said, "Cheshire, you're studying political science, sociology and economics", and I said, "How do you know that?" He took me into a room and showed me a wall full of photographs with names that had been taken from an upstairs room looking over at the hotel we used to drink at.

Was he trying to spook you? Yeah, I guess so; it was that time towards the end of the Vietnam War when the anti-apartheid movement was strong.

So, being at architecture school, what inspired you? Did your thinking change?

Well, I was an older student which made a difference but I think it was a very indifferent time at the school while I was there. It was not very academic. I was impatient and wanted to get working. So, during my last year at school, I designed a restaurant in the city and it took up a lot of my time. I probably shouldn't have done that because it was at the sacrifice of doing a good final year.

But, you probably learnt more from doing the restaurant.

Yeah, but not intellectually. Universities offer the pursuit of architecture as an intellectual discipline and that is the single most important thing. It's not a craft or trade skill. Walking the colonnades and discussing the meaning of life and architecture is a fine thing to do for four or five years. It's a fine preparation for a profession. Anyway, I didn't do that. Instead I designed a restaurant called

The Melba in Courthouse Lane, which was very fashionable. It opened about the time that *Metro* magazine started and it was always in the gossip columns. It was called the 'grey watering hole' and was one of the first bars in Auckland. The licensing laws were such that you still had to serve food but it had a huge, great bar running through it and the food was a secondary thing. It was always the scene of extraordinary things, like somebody riding a horse into the bar with a sword and lopping the top off a bottle of champagne. The country was awash with cheap champagne at that stage around 1981/'82.

When I left architecture school, I handed in my thesis and an hour later I'd moved into a tin shed on Jervis Road in Ponsonby that students had set up as a studio. By then, it was just Amanda Reynolds, Mal Bartleet and then me; then Pete Bossley arrived three months later. He was an escapee from the Ministry of Works and operated under the *nom de plume* of Roy L Dalton. So that lasted for a year or two, then Bossley and I got together and formed a practice. A couple of years later, some guys from JASMaD rang up and said, "How about we get together?" and, after about a year of talking, we formed JASMAX and I was there for 15 years.

And how was that time? It was alright. It was interesting because it drew on my management experience as much as anything. I went from fibreglassing to, eventually, in the last couple of years at JASMAX, running a practice of 150 or so very skilled people and I had never done an apprenticeship in architecture.

Obviously you must have people and leadership skills to naturally manage people.

Well, I don't know. I often think that I have an ego bigger than my ability.

Architects have to have an ego though.

You wouldn't survive otherwise. I guess that's right. I think that I promote people a lot, take young graduates, or anybody really, and support them, push them and give them opportunities. A cynic would say that I have gained success on the coat-tails of very able people around me. I say: surround yourself with people who are better at doing things than you are and empower them.

So, at what point did you decide to go out on your own? Well, I was managing JASMAX and finding it increasingly challenging, I suppose. It was a big, flat structure that had grown quickly and required complex management that took up too much of my architecting time.

It's a big responsibility. Oh yeah, I enjoyed all of that but I felt I should be committing more to the intellectual art of architecture. When Britomart came along, I introduced Peter Cooper, whom I'd designed houses for, to Greg Boyden, who'd done the underground rail station, and the City put the above-ground element out to bid. Cooper said, "Look, you're my architect", pointing to me. I was happy to be his architect, because Cooper and I had become quite close, but the City said, "You are nominated project architect for Britomart but you're also managing director of JASMAX and an adjunct professor at the architecture school; you can't do all those things, so we'll be back in half an hour to find out what you're going to do about it." I thought, "Oh, that's pretty interesting." But everything just fell into place after that. I said to Peter, "Well, I'll resign from the practice but, if I do that, will you commission me to design the masterplan if the bid is successful?" He said, "Yeah." So I resigned and that actually all happened within 10 minutes or so.

A life-changing decision in half an hour.

Yes, a bit like going to architecture school, sometimes the stars align and you have to be ready to seize the day.

I thought that I would sit in a room, with an old table and a leather chair, with my feet on the desk doing the masterplanning of Britomart and others would make the buildings. But the first client I told said, "You're leaving? I'll carry your bags, I'm coming with you". And I thought, that means I'm starting a new practice. It was good and bad, but it wasn't what I planned at all. So I had to form a practice and then I was inundated with people wanting work.

They must have enjoyed working with you.

I think that, for better or worse, I represented a commitment to architecture, rather than the business of architecture. I've always said, "If you are concerned about money then you can't be taken seriously because, if money is your prime motivation and you chose architecture, your decision-making is deeply suspect from day one."

So, the contract was won by Cooper and Co and they said, "You can occupy any building you like in Britomart". I was given a big bundle of keys and I went around all the buildings and found the beautiful Maritime Building on Quay Street, where Cooper & Co is now. It had power and phone but I didn't know where they came from. We squatted there for a year or so. Then we flashed the neighbourhood up too much



MARSDEN CROSS HERITAGE PARK, BAY OF ISLANDS. RENDERING AND SKETCH (BELOW RIGHT) BY CHESHIRE ARCHITECTS

and Cooper & Co started getting serious about rents. I was able to buy this office on Hobson Street for the same cost as the rent. I was pleased with the shift because when we came here people realised that we were serious about the practice.

So what are the key projects that have meant a lot to you? Well, the first project was The Melba restaurant and the next one would be Congreve House. That's a big leap; there's a whole bunch of projects in between which are close to the heart, but those are ones which probably made the greatest leap for me.

I designed some townhouses in Arthur Street, which are full-tilt, postmodern – little white boxes with Corbusian references on the inside and, on the outside, they have an overlay of pipes, tubes, tiles, colours and wonky shapes. I was thinking about a discourse, a sense of the European heritage and an engagement in Māori and Pacific heritage. Colliding things offered the opportunity of bringing ideas together and somehow you might get an architecture that was an Auckland one – whimsical, as you might say Ath and Walker's more flamboyant buildings were. Although, in a way, it was a really trivial way of handling things: it was all to do with pattern and colour. You see that in every bloody competition scheme that's done; people make a paving pattern saying, "Oh, the paving pattern is reflective of the tukutuku panels" – spare me.

It becomes cheesy, as opposed to a concept being intrinsic to a scheme – a surface element rather than an intellectual element.

Yes, I think the elements which can be drawn from Pacific architecture are actually spatial organisations and sequencing: so the way in which a marae is very informal, all very relaxed with balls being kicked about then, all of a sudden, someone will straighten their tie, clear their throat and instantly it becomes a highly formalised space. I think it's very interesting the way a 'welcome' is dealt with spatially and the Māori protocol is supported by or facilitated by certain arrangements of people and space. The entry is not immediate; you don't just charge up to the front door, so there's a reticence about approaching space until you're invited on, or called on, if it's a marae. That's not just a Māori but a Pacific phenomenon. I think our culture is slowly absorbing that. It's a slow process of osmosis but there is an opportunity to bring together cultures and the architectural implications of those cultures are somewhat more profound than the pattern-making on which much of it relies at the moment.

So you worked on Te Papa? While at JASMAX, I was on the periphery of Te Papa; I helped win the competition, did some midnight hours and made the final presentations to the judges. The Congreve House was built then, it was designed at Bossley Cheshire but documented and built while I was at JASMAX. I also designed



the Bruce Mason Theatre and the JASMAX building at the top of Upper Queen Street. That was a semi-deconstructed postmodern thing I really liked and I designed Peter Cooper's house at Clifton Road, which is a really good house. I designed houses for Stephen Bambury and Terry Stringer while at JASMAX too.

And there were some projects in Antarctica as well, but that was later wasn't it? It started about 2002 or 2003. It is the conservation of Scott's and Shackleton's huts. It's an ongoing project I'm still involved in.

After leaving JASMAX, I immediately started work on Q theatre and the Goat Island Marine Centre at Leigh. They were really good jobs because they were bigger and more complicated and it took a fair bit of blood on the floor to get them done. Neither are big-budget jobs and there was a commitment on our part to doing them well, but most projects have that level of sacrifice.

Q's interesting because it opened at almost exactly the same time as the Auckland Art Gallery and, whereas the Art Gallery is very beautiful, highly crafted architecture at a decorative level, Q is much more robust and raw. Q looks like it's a hard-working place – people bang into

it, screw things into it – and I think it’s a really lovely difference really. There’s been an easy acceptance by the theatre community which has made it a source of satisfaction for the whole team.

What is it like working with your son Nat? It’s not uncommon in architecture but it’s a unique relationship. He’s very able and has revved up the practice a great deal.

He always gets involved, contributes and is engaged. Yeah he’s ambitious, he’s on fire. It’s lovely. He very graciously accommodates me and I very graciously accommodate him. I have a remarkable family: three very close sons and their extraordinary mother.

She obviously trained them well. Yes, she has had a big influence.

What projects are on the boards at the moment? Well I’m doing some work on the St James – trying to unravel that. I’ve just completed a very big house up north; Mountain Landing is a farm that we’ve done a number of projects on and this house is the most recent one. I’m also working on buildings associated with a golf course in Te Arai. And we are working on the City Works Depot. That’s pretty exciting. There are a lot of houses too. Nat’s driving a whole raft of projects: three storeys of fit-outs for Genesis’ headquarters and there are the beautiful bars and cafés down at Britomart.

How would you like to see things develop in Auckland, having worked in the city for how many years? Thirty years. Auckland feels pretty good at the moment, like it’s got a head of steam. But I am bothered by the way that the city procures things. There’s a record of competitions like Queens Wharf which are awful and...

I have this conversation, virtually, every day. I bet you do.

But I want to hear what you think. We stretch a dollar really thin, here in New Zealand. We’re in a hurry. Sometimes I wish that we would think more and do less. It is incredibly easy to make a building here compared with Britain, for example, and we’ve got quite a small gene pool so we need to think very carefully before we build. How would I like it to be? I’d like better public transport. I’d like more trees – that must be the easiest and cheapest way of transforming a city. And there are streets like Customs Street

which I think are really crucial. That is a moat with mechanical alligators at present...

And Quay Street? Yeah, although I must admit that I don’t feel quite the same desperate need to cross Quay Street as Customs.

No, because there’s not much to cross for. Not at the moment. There will be eventually. I suppose, because I’ve done all that work in Britomart, the intention has been to try and spread the density of the High Street/Lorne Street experience down to the water’s edge. Britomart has done that really well but it is ring-fenced by some pretty tough roads and Customs Street is the one that shuts it from the rest of the city. At the very least, I just think they’ve got to put a great row of trees down the middle of Customs and I know that the traffic engineers are a bit...

Well they need to slow things down. Council probably needs to be quite radical. They need to put more public transport in, bring in congestion charging if people then won’t get out of their cars, and encourage people to be more active. It’s not just about traffic; it’s about the social exercise of engaging with the city when you bike and walk. We become part of the city and not just part of a machine. Also, what would that mean for the health of the population because most people sit in front of computers all day and then the rest of their time is spent in the car and in front of the TV. Yeah, all good reasons.

Talking about the Auckland waterfront. Where is the stunning architecture that is emblematic of Auckland, that draws people into a bigger story about what Auckland represents? Someone from overseas might ask, what is Auckland in terms of its architecture? The Sky Tower? Auckland is an international city but it needs to have defining moments in terms of the development of New Zealand architecture as a discourse. I think we’re very strong at designing houses but I don’t think we design enough larger buildings. There are very few big buildings and most of them are designed by Australians, often very derivative or not their best work. The ASB is, most of Queen Street is, the Art Gallery was, so Kiwis don’t get much practice at it. There is also very little discourse about city buildings. The popular press doesn’t engage itself in that. There are also people making big buildings who shouldn’t be. I see it

in the Urban Design Panel: buildings that are just terrible. So you can get as far as saying, “I think we’ve got the wrong architect here; you need to re-think the project” because they’re essentially trying to make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear and, sometimes, at a bureaucratic level, the mechanisms aren’t strong enough to say, “This building should not go ahead as it is”. Buildings are invariably driven by next year’s balance sheet. In the past, you would have companies that would make a building with their name on it and the quality of the architecture said something about the company.

It’s disturbing that so few grasp that. We have a whole economy which is built upon dollar efficiency and you have our great helmsman saying he’s quite relaxed about everything. So I have a very uncomfortable feeling about...

Yet politicians are often made ‘great’ through the legacy of improved built environments. Or through some kind of social change.

Yeah, well, what is this government going to bequeath the country? We have a whole cadre of property managers and developers who manage projects, not just at a bricks-and-mortar level but at the conceptual level, that are very concerned with the first cost of the building or next year’s balance sheet. It’s very rare that buildings are built by ‘patient capital’, those who will take a 100-year-long view of it. If you look at the Royal Guardian Assurance building: when they built that, they would have been thinking, “We want this building to stand firm and very clearly say something about the robustness of the company”. That’s absolutely not the case now.

Do you think that can change? I imagine that buildings will inevitably follow the Christchurch model, where buildings are de-risked as much as possible. They will become tilt-slabbed concrete with big overhanging roofs made out of metal because the technology is totally known. There are no risks associated with that.

The decorated shed intellectually facilitates that progression. I don’t think that’s what David Mitchell anticipated when he talked about ‘the elegant shed’ but I sense that the lesser project managers will inevitably veer projects towards that. They step into the middle and separate out the component parts: the architect from the engineer, and from the cost planner and everybody else, so only the managers speak to everybody. They’re the holders of the budget and the vision which is driven by maximising short-



MOUNTAIN LANDING BOATHOUSE, PURERUA PENNINSULA. PHOTO: BLACK BOX

term profit. It’s not a great recipe for making a building.

You can say that architects have a terrible reputation around dollars but I don’t think that’s particularly fair or accurate. What architects are bringing to a project is invariably a wider sense of responsibility, to those people who pass by, to those who use it, those who aren’t at the decision-making table. The demise of the architect’s role impoverishes society considerably and Christchurch is just positive proof of that because architects have been taken out of play down there.

I fear we are going to end up with a tilt-slab kind of town. I was down there during the first of the earthquakes and I have a sense of unfinished business because I’m not doing anything down there but I am reluctant to be a carpetbagger and would rather support the locals if required.

So you asked me about my architecture, what is it driven by? How could Auckland be better? Simple answer: more trees; a more complex answer: I think it will inevitably get better, though perhaps not as a singular coherent bit of design. We live in a large pluralist city and it will inevitably reflect that diversity and ambiguity. Cities reach a critical mass and I believe that Auckland has reached that trigger of population numbers, it’s now a self-sustaining economy.

Do we need a city architect or a city architectural team? Yeah, well certainly a city architect. There used to be one and they did some fine buildings. I don’t think that a city

architecture team is necessary but I do think a city architect and a government architect are absolutely critical. The challenge is whether architects are seen to be capable of doing that anymore.

There seems to be a separation between architects and urban designers. I don’t think that’s true in private practice but it’s certainly true in the city because there are no architects employed by the city. I think the ease with which architects were swept aside in Christchurch was a rather sobering moment and I think the same thing is happening up here.

So do you think architects need to be more politicised and to push themselves out there? Oh, definitely. I think it’s surprising that architects haven’t; if you’re really serious about manipulating a city you need to be involved in politics. If you’re serious about transforming the city, you inevitably enter the political realm because so many of the decisions are made at that level. In many ways architecture is becoming increasingly disempowered so, yes, I would say politicking is very important. Politicking, writing, having more public debate. And popularising architecture and making it more intelligible, because architects do speak in tongues. At various times I have gone and harassed the editor of *The Herald* saying, “You know you’ve got to talk about architecture, all the great newspapers in the world have architecture critics or columnists”.

Occasionally a piece stands up but to find architecture on *The Herald* website, I think you go into the ‘Life & Style’ section, under ‘Design & Garden’, or somewhere in ‘Property’, and then you’ll be lucky if you find something. I suppose that navigation pretty much sums up the general understanding of architecture. Often buildings are mentioned but not the architect and yet the good should be recognised, the poor should be damned and the work examined and critiqued; that’s how cities are made. I think the popular press has a responsibility to do this. I think the great trick is to make complex ideas clearly intelligible; architectural writing employs a great deal of jargon and shorthand to compensate for not-too-thorough thinking.

I agree. Since we’re on the subject of writing, the *BLOCK* publication for the NZIA Auckland Branch has been your baby for a long time. Yes, though it’s a collaboration with Nat, Sean Flanagan, Andrew Barrie and Ian Scott. Before that I used to do a newsletter by myself, which was much more strident and noisy and I used to be harassed by the Institute because I was a bit fast and loose with who said what. I’ve always enjoyed writing.

And what about your plans for the future? Well I’ve got a lovely range of projects, from domestic to really complex urban projects. So it feels pretty good at the moment.

2013 PRESIDENT'S AWARDS

DARYNE BEGBIE

Daryne Begbie has brought responsibility, commitment and integrity to her role as administrator of the Institute's Awards programme and its attendant events, and also to other Institute occasions she has helped organise. She has dealt with a myriad of details and a plethora of requests with fairness, good grace and patience, and has taken the Institute's many changes to its Awards programmes in her stride. Her calm and efficient organisation of jury tours at local and national levels has been appreciated by all jury members, and has made the tasks of Institute office-holders and staff that much easier. The type of work Daryne does can be thankless, but the Institute wishes her to know she is much valued.

ANDY BUCHANAN

Andy Buchanan, professor of Timber Design at the University of Canterbury, is at the international forefront of research into new methods of constructing multi-storeyed timber buildings. In the course of his distinguished career, Andy has undertaken work in the fields of structural, earthquake and environmental engineering, as well as fire safety and, in his current research, he is drawing upon his experience in all of these disciplines to develop new timber technologies. Andy's work is particularly relevant to the future of his city, but his design leadership is also of national importance at a time when the country is increasingly aware of the need for resilient buildings and environmentally conscious construction.

SIMON DEVITT

Energetic, committed and enterprising, architectural photographer Simon Devitt has proved himself to be a very able chronicler of the work of New Zealand's architects. By dint of his skill, application and determination, Simon has carved out a significant and still-developing career in a challenging field in a challenging market. Courteous and properly assertive, he has pursued his career with ambition and imagination, and his drive to master his craft has brought significant benefits to many practitioners. His instigation and execution of demanding publishing projects is testament to the impressive seriousness with which he approaches his craft.

STEPHEN GOODENOUGH

Through his architectural photography, Stephen Goodenough has performed valuable service to the architects of Canterbury, in particular, and the South Island in general. Stephen is always gracious and willing to go the extra mile – and there are many extra miles in the territory he covers – for his clients. Away from the major centres of New Zealand periodical publishing, it can be difficult to build and maintain a career in a specialist field such as architectural photography. Architects are grateful to Stephen for the fortitude and determination with which he has pursued his skilful craft.

NICOLA LEGAT

In her roles as publishing director of Random House New Zealand and, latterly, as a member of the New Zealand Architectural Publications Trust, Nicola Legat is a highly significant patron of architectural publishing in New Zealand. Anywhere in the world, publishing high-quality books in a niche field such as architecture is challenging; it is especially so in a small country like ours. Nicola's leadership and enthusiastic promotion of

architectural publishing projects have been instrumental in raising the bar for architectural publishing in New Zealand. The books she has commissioned and properly resourced present architecture to a wide audience in a very appealing light. New Zealand architects are fortunate to have such a sympathetic, and graceful, publishing champion.

PAUL MCCREDIE

Over the course of a substantial career, Wellington architectural photographer Paul McCredie has built up a reputation as a talented and accomplished chronicler of the work of New Zealand architects. His work has appeared in a wide variety of publications and he has promoted the careers of many architects, both in Wellington and around the country. Paul brings a high standard of commitment and professional ability to his architectural photography and he has made a significant contribution to New Zealand's architectural publishing history. Without his long commitment to his craft, much local architecture would have languished in obscurity or vanished from the record.

PATRICK REYNOLDS

New Zealand's architects have good reason to acknowledge the work of architectural photographer Patrick Reynolds who, for more than 20 years, has recorded their work with skill, sympathy and verve. The son and brother of architects, Patrick brings to his craft a highly informed architectural sensibility. He has sought, maintained and set high professional standards. Energetic and never lost for an opinion, Patrick has performed invaluable service to architects in presenting their work, in a very good light, to a public audience in a wide variety of media, including in five substantial books. Always generous with his time and professional advice, Patrick latterly has been teaching at The University of Auckland and has also become a highly engaged and knowledgeable participant in the debates around Auckland's urban issues.

GRAHAM STREZ

As a board member of the New Zealand Architects Co-operative Society and an expert in the crucial professional areas of insurance and liability, Graham Strez has long given valuable service to the Institute. Graham is often the first port of call for colleagues confronting difficult practice conditions and he is as generous with his time as he is helpful with his advice. He is also reliably helpful to the Institute's office and willingly undertakes, to the benefit of the Institute, tasks such as preparing official submissions and presenting at CPD events. Graeme's collegial inclinations and efforts are much appreciated.

SARAH TREADWELL

Sarah Treadwell was the first woman to be appointed to the staff of the School of Architecture and Planning at The University of Auckland and, since her appointment in 1981, she has performed invaluable service as a teacher, researcher, supervisor and mentor. Sarah's courtesy, collegiality, diligence and leadership have been a hugely positive influence on the School and she is fondly regarded by generations of the school's students. Her interest in gender issues in architecture remains as strong and as relevant as ever, as does her scholarly work in the field of architectural drawing, a discipline which complements her own artistic practice.

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