



11 2013

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

**BLOCK**

## It Goes without Saying

What's the Story with All This Water?



Auction  
ABSOLUTE WATERFRONT



Left: Absolute waterfront for sale. Right: Holl's Autonomous Artisan Housing

Absolute waterfront. Ultimate waterfront. Worldclass waterfront - just a few of the phrases Bayley's use in their annual 'Waterfront' real estate book. "Valuable properties around the world are inevitably associated with water" we are told. Water holds a special place in the national psyche. Given our island geography, Bayleys say it stands to reason that we have a deep connection with the sea. And this connection is reinforced in all manner of ways, from Lotto's Big Wednesday with its prize of the bach and the boat, to Toyota's flying-fox ad with dad building a zip-line over the neighbours to calm a son's anxieties over being too far from the sea. Every house and home magazine reserves a special place for coastal architecture. Our love of the water and living near it, we are told and we tell ourselves, inevitable. Its value goes without saying. To be a Kiwi is to want to be near the water. It is part of the story of who we are.

Philosopher Richard Kearney believes that communities are constituted by "the stories they recount to themselves and to others." Even a nation can be understood as a narrative construction, a collective narrated remembering that is, in an ideal world, reinvented, reconstructed, and retold again and again. This on-going reinvention is vital so that a group remains aware of the fundamental place of storytelling to its constitution. History tells us that problems arise when groups forget their narrative origins, when a nation "constructs itself as a story, but forgets it has done so." Ongoing reinvention seeks to address this forgetting, for in forgetting lies the risk of groups mistakenly thinking themselves and their powers to be an inevitability. "Self-oblivion," says Kearney, "is the disease of a community that takes itself for granted - or like an overgrown narcissistic infant presumes that it is the centre of the world, entitled to assert itself to the detriment of others." Fanaticism can follow. Kearney suggests that a key symptom of forgetting is the belief that something "goes without saying." That is, that something is so inevitable that its narrative origins need no longer be told. It needs no story.

With a recent run of blue skies, the mercury rising and summer holidays beckoning, it's interesting to entertain Kearney's line of thought with respect to our relationships with water. If the place of water in our national psyche verges on going without saying and if the waterfront as a place is thought to be an inevitable craving, can we say that part of our national story - a part that affects architecture in no small way - is a fanaticism for being near the water, a single-minded liquid zeal? From the Latin fanaticus, ('of a temple' or 'inspired by God'), the fanatic behaves as if possessed by God. Is this how we are when we speak of being near the water? Is this how the celebration of coastal architecture looks? Does the fanaticism flow from a forgetting of the narrative side of coastal relations or indeed a forgetting of the narrative that underwrites any kind of place or landscape relationship? And in forgetting that narrative, do we risk forgetting that architecture can be narrated in a number of ways aside from those concerned with water, or landscape, or place?

The appeal of a place like 'absolute waterfront' is in part a narrative thing. This is made clear when one comes across a story that goes against seaside desires, when one crosses paths with someone not so keen on the water. Ralph Stone, from Michael Crummy's novel Galore, is one such character and a challenging individual to contend with as an architect. For many years, Stone worked the tall ships plying trade between the Old World and the Americas but suffered a terrible fate when a storm wrecked a trans-Atlantic crossing. Adrift in a lifeboat, Stone watched his shipmates die one-by-one. "For days he had only corpses for company, facing them from the bow while they stared at him like an expectant congregation."

Continued next page...

## It Goes without Saying *Continued from previous page...*

Rescued, Stone was forever changed - "He lost his nerve for the ocean after the rescue, refusing to leave the shore and going so far as to build on a piece of land out of sight of the sea altogether." Whether it was world class or not, there was absolutely no desire for the waterfront here. In this case, the value of being near the water is not something that goes without saying. So, what can we say about it?

In this year's Block lecture, David Mitchell observed that architects get ideas from other architects and other architectures. Despite the pleasant simplicity of the idea that we like being near the water on account of being an island nation, it is possible to discuss waterfront building in terms of other architectures enamored with water. Writing in *Interstices* some 20 years ago, John Dickson alluded to the influence of water-fond Ottoman architecture on Neil Kirkland and Kim Sinclair's designs for their own houses in Eden Terrace. Dickson alluded to the siting of the houses being as if they were overlooking the sea, sharing a spatial arrangement akin to Ottoman architecture overlooking the Bosphorus. He also mentions the more general "Ottoman susceptibility" of the Modern Movement, a theme developed years later by Adolf Vogt researching the influence of Ottoman architecture and other water-borne cultures on Le Corbusier's pilotis system. Vogt describes Corbusier as 'zealous appropriator' of architecture, an attitude wholly consistent with the archaeological fever gripping Europe at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Excited by the writings of Rousseau, absorbed with the building traditions of the Ottoman Empire and fascinated by archaeological finds elsewhere in Europe, Corbusier reportedly developed the pilotis system of elevated construction as a kind of conversation with ancient and primitive ways of building that had typically occurred close to water. Building as if one was near water initiated an architectural conversation with the ancients and drew upon the elegance and beauty of the 'noble savage.' That is, building like primitive people, as if near the water's edge, architecturally bound one to a primitive condition of humankind. And this primitive condition was thought to be a morally good condition, one favoured as a rebuke to the corrupt society that dragged the world into war.

A relationship between water, liquid architecture, and an idea of primitive nobility is only one way to account for the waterfront as a place to be, but it hints at the importance of the account and suggests there is much that can be said about something that, on the face of it, seems to go without saying.

Aside from raising questions about the waterfront, Ralph Stone also questions accounting for architecture more generally and the types of stories we tell about where we want to be and how we build there. Stone, one imagines, would be a tricky patron - someone with a life defining experience beyond the reach of most and one that dramatically shapes the range of tolerable relationships with nature effected through building design. Stone wants to be out of sight of the sea altogether. In this case, the relationships with nature that architecture can orchestrate would need to be handled carefully.

So, what is good architecture for Ralph Stone? Or perhaps more interestingly, what is an architecture of Ralph Stone, an architecture that has some of the complexities of his life at the heart of its account? These are questions of the patron, of the place of architecture's supporters in the story of its making.

In the early 1980s, American architect Steven Holl produced a number of paper-projects that placed the patron at the heart of the story. Bridge of Houses, Metz House, Autonomous Artisans Housing and a number of others strategically deployed aspects of the patron's character as design-drivers and as a way of introducing idiosyncrasies into building typologies. With the Artisan Housing, the 'shotgun' house common to New Orleans was rendered strange by making each of the houses in a row express something of a particular artisanal craft - the papermaker's house had a roof terrace shaped especially for drying paper, the woodworker's house displayed the skills of a boat builder and so forth. From a contemporary stand point, these projects may appear formally unsophisticated but, as Kenneth Frampton recognized, the project's complexity lay in the resistance of the patron and their craft to any direct geometric, structural or material representation. The architecture recorded a resistance and in this resistance lay the opportunity for making strange buildings.

Projects like the Artisan Housing remind us of the narrative origins of architecture and show the possibilities that reside in shaping an account. While it may go without saying that architecture is indebted to its patrons, Holl shows how there is much that can be said about the people for whom (or about whom) a building is designed. And he draws upon the reinvention and retelling of the story of architecture as a way to stir creativity. In some projects he brings the patron to the fore, in others a myth about the site shapes the story, but always he reminds us that architectural design turns around a narration of some kind - the construction of a narrative alongside the construction of a building.

The story of Ralph Stone explored through architecture could arguably lead to a work that carefully crafts relationships between inside and outside, perhaps through screening and veiling, to help Stone work through his nervousness with nature. At times, the architecture may open up to foster interaction with the outside world and at other times it may close down to offer sanctuary and seclusion. Such an approach however would still to hold nature to the fore, with architecture understood as some kind of mediating device or machine. For the story to turn more fully around Ralph Stone, for the patron to be a key narrative component, we may need to consider an architecture for someone who has faced death and been significantly affected by it. This could focus architecture for a time upon things other than the waterfront, nature, and the landscape we are so fanatical about. In a similar vein, it seems there is a book to be written about NZ architecture that takes patrons as its concern. Such a book would need to take a wide view of the patron and would address both the remarkable core-group of people behind a number of the country's significant works and also those less conspicuous characters who, through their bravery, have played a vital part in making works great. The book would foster the idea of the 'patron' in its widest sense as a supporter of architecture. And like George Perec's novel "A Void," written entirely without using the letter e, it would ideally be written without using words like 'waterfront', 'nature' and 'landscape' so as to, for a moment, steer clear of fanatical interests and offer space for other things to come to the fore, things that so often go without saying. SF

## The Fine Print: November

### COUNCILLORS' REPORT: Christina van Bohemen.

*Strategic Planning Day and Organisational Review:* Following the Council meeting in September Council had a strategic planning day. This was facilitated by Geoff Henley from Network Communications, who has also been appointed to undertake the Organisational Review. This was an opportunity to consider the high-level direction of the Council in respect of the forthcoming Organisational Review, and to consider the need or otherwise for a strategic plan. It is anticipated that the Organisational Review will highlight members' ambitions for the NZIA but the planning day discussion highlighted key issues including public issues relating to architecture, advocating for the value of architectural services to government, developing collaborative relationships within the industry, supporting and educating members and promoting professionalism and innovation within the profession. The Organisational Review is underway and a draft report will be presented to Council at the December meeting. Following this the Council will report to the membership and provide recommendations for consideration at the AGM.

*Government Engagement:* The CE reported on engagement with Government agencies, specifically MBIE, in relation to work streams resulting from the Christchurch earthquakes and in particular the Engineering Reference Group. There is on-going discussion between NZIA, IPENZ, NZRAB, Society for Earthquake Engineers and Structural Engineering Society in response to the Royal Commission recommendation for architects and engineers to work more closely together. Follow up for NZIA members will include practice notes and CPD events.

*Producer Statements:* There was discussion about Producer Statements given the Government's interest, particularly in relation to the engineering profession, in professional accountability. Councillors reiterated concern about the TA demands for indemnity given the lack of any contractual relationship between architects and TAs and the lack of progress on proportional liability which underlies the value of self certification processes.

**ADNZ:** The CE and President have met with ADNZ to discuss relevant issues for the design community and opportunities to share submissions and communications on events of mutual interest. There has been no formal commitment made by NZIA.

**Archives Management:** This is something that Southern Branch has been concerned about for some time and the CE has recently been in discussion with VUW about a plan to develop a method of recording existing and future documents.

**Website Refresh:** Members will recall a recent survey. Work is underway with a web design company to work out the best fit for the available budget. Amongst changes being considered will be the ability of Branches to upload information and to bring together under one website the current numerous websites so as to ensure greater consistency of message, appearance and simplicity of approach – ie NZIA site for everything related to architecture.

**NZIA Representatives on NZRAB:** The NZIA's nomination of Euan McKellar to replace Marshall Cook has been approved by the Minister, as has Christina van Bohemen's reappointment.

**NZIA Finances:** The draft budget was discussed and was subsequently circulated to members for review. The budget round is based on an increase in subscriptions in line with the CPI (0.7%). Council believes that minor increases in accordance with the CPI on annual basis is prudent financial planning and avoids major but infrequent increases. It is worth noting that changes to the arrangement with NZRAB in respect of the CPD management contract has resulted in an overall reduction in the CPD surplus compared to other years.

**Students:** Council supported a zero subscription rate for students which has resulted in the recent canvassing of members in accordance with NZIA rules. There were no objections to this proposal and will take effect for the forthcoming financial year.

**Interest Allocation Fund (Squirrel Fund):** It was proposed that applications for spending of these sums under \$2500 (which probably only applies to Auckland Branch) could be approved at Branch level. Also discussed was that the total interest allocated fund (about \$13k) becomes a contestable fund for which applications by Branches would be approved by Council. The Branch is to discuss this at the November meeting for reporting back to Council at the December Council meeting.

**Venice Biennale:** In May Council agreed that New Zealand should be represented at the Architecture Biennale and that NZIA should lead that representation. As reported in the Bulletin this now has some momentum and organisation is underway. It is possible that the NZIA contribution to this event could be in the order of \$50k, depending on sponsorship interest.

#### **COMMITTEE FOR AUCKLAND: Alexandra Lee**

**Guerrilla Playspaces (GPS) in Action:** Following the successful launch at the Architecture Week, GPS has since made appearances at Coyle park, the corporate boardroom of Simpson and Griersons, and most recently at AK Splash – Water Safety Family Fun Day event which was hosted by another group of CFA teams. GPS has been invited on to other family events around Auckland in the coming summer. Installation locations and dates: Flower Petal Seats at Silo Park / AAW A+W (Sept 17 – 20); Guerrilla Lounge at Silo Park / AAW A+W (Sept 17 – 20); Popup Play at Coyle Park (Oct 10); FPS & Popup Play at Simpson Grierson (Oct 10); AK Splash (Nov 9); Mangere Bridge Trolley Derby (Nov 17).

**Future Auckland Leaders Graduation:** The 2012/2013 cohort of the Future Auckland Leaders will be graduating at the Auckland War Memorial Museum in a 15-minute grand finale showcasing our journey, overall process and the way forward. Six of the eight members of the GPS team will be taking part in a choreographed performance with a guerrilla suit [gorilla suit? – Ed.], with an Attenborough-style narrating our story from how it all began a year ago today. Alex has put together the slides and is happy to share this with the NZIA branch or to a wider group at a later date. Connect with us at: <https://www.facebook.com/GuerrillaPlayspaces> or <http://www.guerrillaplayspaces.co.nz/>.

#### **EVENTS REPORT: Andrew Barrie**

The big event this month is a lecture by blobmeister Kas Oosterhuis, of Rotterdam-based firm ONL [Oosterhuis\_Lénárd]. In this multidisciplinary practice, architects, artists and programmers collaborate on the construction of large-scale sculptural buildings. Established as a global leader in the use of digital design technology, Kas lectures around the world and has taught at numerous universities.

The lecture will be held on the evening of Wednesday November 13<sup>th</sup>

in the Design Theatre at the University of Auckland. Kas' visit follows on from a teaching session at the University of Technology, Sydney, so he comes to us at minimal cost. We have shared Oosterhuis with the Wellington Branch – he'll lecture there on November 12<sup>th</sup> – and they are contributing to the costs. This is the first time in a number of years that the Branches have shared a speaker, and we hope it will re-establish that pattern. The Waikato Branch has also recently been in touch about sharing speakers with them.

#### **URBAN ISSUES GROUP: Barry Copeland**

**Unitary Plan:** The Unitary Plan has now been formally notified and public submissions are due by 28 February 2014. We need to mobilize our team over the next 2-3 weeks. Graeme Scott and David Gibbs have stepped forward to lead the two strands of the effort – Maps (DG) and Text (GS). All interested in contributing are welcome! We could consider collaboration or even joint submission with UDF and/or NZ Property Council?

**Housing Design Competition:** A panel discussion at the last UIG meeting led to an initiative between Mark Todd (Developer, Director of Ockham Developments) and the NZIA – a developer-sponsored competition run by the Institute for high-density housing on a brownfield site. MT currently acquiring site. The prize is to get the commission. Auckland Council is invited to provide one of the judges (from the Mayor's office), with other judges being Maggie Carroll, Richard Goldie, Mark Todd. Meeting with Mayor about this on 19 November.

#### **UNITEC STUDENT REPORT: Stu Penno**

Over Labour weekend a group of Unitec students took part in FESTA, the 2013 Festival of Transitional Architecture in Christchurch. Creating installations along with students from UoA, Lincoln, CPIT and Sydney's University of Technology, the event saw central Christchurch filled with thousands of people over its four days.

Another Unitec Real Build studio project has been recognised at the local NZIA Branch awards. The 2012 social housing project run by Dave Strachan and Pat de Pont of SGA, with Vision West as the client, won an award in the housing and sustainability category at the 2013 NZIA Auckland awards. Meanwhile construction of the 2013 project is progressing well, with Vision West returning as the client for the build. This week is the final week of the year for Unitec students. Exams for BAS and First Year Masters students began on Monday. Around three-quarters of Second Year Masters are also examining this week, completing their final year research project. The completion of the year also brings with it the Unitec Grad Fest and prize giving. Opening on November 28<sup>th</sup> the exhibition will showcase student's work across the year with prize giving beginning at 6.30pm. The annual publication *Asylum* will also be on sale.

This has been the first year under the new student allowance scheme - Master of Architecture students are no longer eligible for allowances. As the year has progressed some students have faced some difficult decisions relating to employment and internships. While the full repercussion of the new scheme is still unclear, it will be interesting to see how students are affected in 2014.

#### **UOA STUDENT REPORT: Adam Hunt**

The University of Auckland is winding down; students are in preparation for their exams and completing any remaining assignments. Studio is a quiet place at the moment, very different to two weeks ago as many were in a panic regarding their final critiques. The Auckland Heritage Festival *Here Now, Re-imagining New Lynn* was incredibly successful. Students occupied vacant spaces in New Lynn, constructing installations that remained on site for a short period of time. The MArch (Prof) students have completed their final presentations, which were on public display at the Geyser Building in Parnell between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of November. Now all that remains is the completion of their documentation and finding a job.

Each Block is laid by a dedicated editorial team:

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## NZIA Fellows

### Congratulations to This Year's Auckland Recipients

**Ron Esveld** Prior to establishing his own practice in Whangarei, Ron worked for the Whangarei City Council and the Ministry of Works and Development. Engaged in civic, educational and residential projects, Ron's practice was awarded NZIA Local Awards in 2005 and 2008, and he has taken a lead in representing the profession in Whangarei. He is a member of the Society of Construction Law.

**Kevin Brewer** Of Nga Puhī descent, Kevin has over 30 years' industry experience having worked for Sinclair Group Architects, Hames Sharley International and William Simpson & Associates in the US, before establishing Architecture Brewer Davidson with Peter Davidson in 1993. The practice has received numerous architectural and urban design awards, and Kevin has been a member of the Auckland Urban Design Panel since 2004.

**Frans Kamermans** Frans is a principal at Kamermans & Co Architects, and has won national international design awards including a nomination for the WAN International House of the Year Award in 2009. Frans is a Certified Homestar Practitioner, and for several years Frans taught in the studio program at the University of Auckland.

**Barry Copeland** Barry is a director (?) of award-winning firm Copeland Associates Architects. Barry is a long-serving member of the Branch Committee, is currently Chair of the Urban Issues Group, and is the Institutes representative juror on Property Council Awards.

**Lance Herbst & Nicki Herbst** Founded by Lance and Nicola Herbst in 2000, Herbst Architects has been recipients of multiple NZIA awards and the practice is being increasingly acknowledged internationally - the Piha beach house, 'Under Pohutukawa', won the NZ House of the Year and narrowly missed out on the WAN House of the Year Award.

**Davor Popadich** Davor is a director at internationally acknowledged firm, Pattersons. His work for the firm includes competition winning schemes and numerous NZIA National and Supreme Award-winning projects. Davor has served as external assessor at the University of Auckland.

**Shannon Joe** Shannon joined Warren and Mahoney in 2002 as a Design Architect and was made a Principal in 2010. Shannon served for many years as a member of the Urban Design Forum, on the Auckland Branch Committee and as Chair of the NZIA Urban Issues Group.

**John Coop** John became a Principal at Warren & Mahoney Auckland in 2001 after spending three years working in London with Wilkinson Eyre Architects. He was appointed a Director of Warren and Mahoney in 2002. He has lectured throughout the country as a core member of the NZIA APL Graduate Development Programme.

**Diane Brand** Diane was recently appointed Dean of the National Institute for Creative Industries and Arts at the University of Auckland. Diane holds a PhD from Auckland and a Master of Architecture in Urban Design from Harvard. She was a practicing architect and then held academic positions at the University of Adelaide and University of Auckland. In 2008 she became Head of the School of Architecture and then Dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Design Victoria University of Wellington.

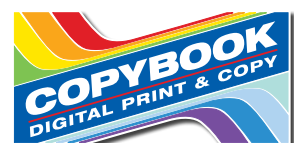
**Briar Green** Practicing for 25 years, Briar is a director at Pearson & Associates, having previously been a principal of award-winning practice, Stanish & Green Architects. Briar has taught at The University of Auckland and Unitec, and has sat on professional advisory committees for Unitec and the AUT Bachelor of Spatial Design.

**Lynda Simmons** Lynda is an award-winning architect who is also engaged in architectural education. She has taught in various capacities at the University of Auckland, AUT, and Unitec, and was an external monitor for the development of AUT's Bachelor of Spatial Design course. Along with Megan Rule (FNZIA), Sarah Treadwell, and Julie Wilson, Lynda established Architecture+Women in 2011, and she is a prime mover behind the forthcoming exhibition and symposium.

## Start with the envelope

### A handy tip when designing Christmas cards . . .

If you are planning on designing your own Christmas cards this year, here's a little tip - choose the envelope first and then design your card to fit. We often print cards, invitations and special mail pieces for customers who then ask, "Where can I get an envelope to put this in?" Whitcoulls and Gordon Harris both have good selections, but envelopes come in limited sizes so, don't be like the blind man in a dark room looking for the black cat that isn't there. Save yourself a heap of trouble and start with the end in mind.



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