

November is New Zealand Architecture Awards time – the annual occasion for the announcement of what the Institute of Architects considers to be the best buildings in the country (or, at least, the best of the buildings submitted for peer review). The Awards are a cause for celebration, of course, but they also provide an opportunity for reflection, a chance to look for patterns in the programme.

One notable trait of the Architecture Awards occurs in the programme's public architecture category. A striking characteristic of the public category is the paucity of projects commissioned by the nation's biggest public entity, the New Zealand Government. It's true that some of the education projects that have received New Zealand Architecture Awards have been buildings for state schools, but these are rather special cases in which local school boards have expended enormous effort to produce a good result from the notoriously tight budgets of the Ministry of Education. Take out schools and the only New Zealand Award-winning projects commissioned by the central government over the past decade have been a pavilion at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2014 and the restoration of Wellington's National War Memorial (Carillon and Hall of Memories) in 2016. Since the advent of Named Awards in 2015, the John Scott Award for Public Architecture has been won by two chapels, and a garden pavilion and cyclepath/walkway, both commissioned by city councils.

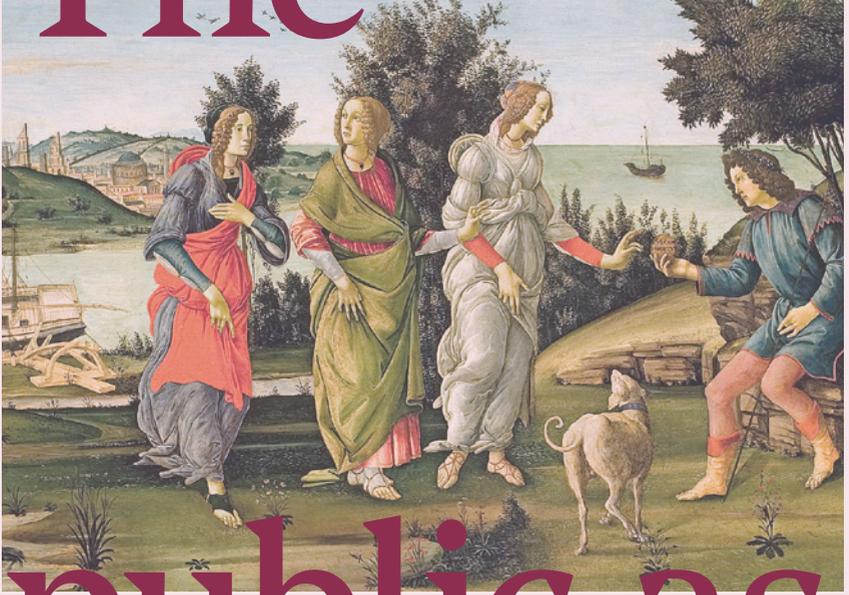
Various explanations may be offered for the lack of government-funded, award-winning projects. The most obvious reason is the withdrawal of the state from areas of economic and social activity that once produced significant public buildings. Post offices, for example, are no longer proud expressions of civic progress but nondescript and increasingly token premises in suburban malls, and train stations, formerly even grander symbols of national purpose, are now the responsibility of local government.

Another reason may be that some categories of state buildings – prisons, for instance – are regarded as purely functional facilities, and that the issue of public presence is irrelevant, even though buildings such as fire and police stations are usually located in sites of some local prominence. This leads to the related argument – uncomfortable for architects but perhaps widely shared – that awards, and the values they represent, just don't matter that much.

Yet this doesn't let the Government off the hook. The state's role as 'procurer' – to use the modern and

John Walsh

# The public as procurer



suggestively pragmatic term – may have shrunk in some areas, but the Government still commissions a lot of architecture. For one thing, it is determined to greatly increase the provision of public or social housing in New Zealand. It is surprising, given the level of effort and expenditure dedicated to public work, that the Government is not more demanding in its design expectations, and has such difficulty articulating or institutionalising the value of high-quality design in the public realm. Public architecture should be exemplary and, for the public's sake, should be winning awards for public architecture. ●

# Inscrutable process yields new embassy

**John Walsh**

Below New Zealand's new embassy in Beijing.

Above right **He Pakiaka (1986)**, the restored whare taonga installed in the new embassy. Master carver: Pakariki Harrison, with Cliff Whiting and Arnold Manaaki Wilson.

Far right **Reception area**, New Zealand Embassy, Beijing.

On 1 April 2019 Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern opened New Zealand's new embassy in Beijing. This is a significant project: a 5,000m<sup>2</sup>, \$50 million building in the capital of the country with which New Zealand has its second or third most important relationship. The Beijing embassy is probably the most significant official New Zealand building designed for an overseas site since Sir Miles Warren's Washington Embassy (1979).

And yet the news of the Embassy's opening came out of the blue. The building had been commissioned by the Key government in 2014, but with little publicity about its design then or in subsequent years. *Tāpoto* was curious. Who designed the building? Who chose the designer? What was the procurement process? What was the brief?

The answers weren't easy to find. The initial response from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) was not that forthcoming. It took a second request, treated by MFAT as a request under the Official Information Act, to uncover some more useful, if hardly definitive, information about the procurement process followed for commissions such as the Beijing embassy.

There is an answer to the first question – who designed the building? – on the MFAT website, where the architect is identified as Dominik Mazur, Design Manager at MFAT, a position he has held since 2016, before which he was employed





understanding of the design and security requirements crucial to the environment; understanding and ability to interact with local design institutes and municipalities in country; and skilled resource based both in New Zealand and offshore, able to demonstrate strong and stable work history.”

*Who decides who can join the Panel of Architectural Suppliers?*  
MFAT: “The Ministry undertook a

at Wellington practice HBO+EMBT. However, in its correspondence with *Tāpoto*, MFAT also gave design credit to architect Michael O’Brien of Wellington practice SD+A (formerly HBO+EMBT). It appears that HBO+EMBT was commissioned to design the embassy, and Mr Mazur then seems to have worked on the project in his capacity as an MFAT staffer.

And so to the other questions from *Tāpoto*, and the replies from MFAT.

*Was there a design competition [for the embassy]?*  
MFAT: “No.”

*How was the architect/practice selected?*

MFAT: “Architects [are] selected from the MFAT Panel of Suppliers for Architectural Services.”

*Who selected the architect(s) for the New Zealand Embassy in Beijing? [That is, names please.]*

MFAT: “The tender evaluation panel that evaluated the architects for the NZ Embassy in Beijing was made up of Ministry staff representing corporate services functions including asset management, security, and commercial procurement.”

*What selection process did the panel follow?*

MFAT: “The request was for all professional services required for the design team (architectural, quantity surveying, engineering, planning, and project management). A total of 16 submissions was received following a closed but contestable and competitive expressions-of-interest process. Each submission was evaluated against the criteria outlined in the request for expressions of interest including:

market review to identify those architectural suppliers that meet the Ministry’s general architectural needs. All architectural suppliers that were identified as meeting these needs were then invited to a closed competitive procurement (expression of interest). The tender evaluation panel for the expression of interest to set up the panel of suppliers included representatives from the Ministry’s Procurement, Finance, Asset Management and Foreign Policy divisions.



The panel of architectural suppliers was procured in 2016 and any assignment is awarded to the architect through a secondary procurement process.”

*What are MFAT’s evaluation criteria to make it onto the Pre-qualified Panel of Suppliers for Architectural Services?*

“Supplier panels that the Ministry establishes now are usually advertised and tendered on the Government Electronic Tender Service (GETS). Each panel has specific criteria that cover the particular scope of services, as outlined in the specific tender documentation.

Generally, the Ministry is looking for a mix of appropriate technical skills and the ability to operate offshore effectively. Suppliers can apply to be on a panel through the procurement process when it is advertised on the GETS.”

MFAT did not say whether the selection panel called upon architectural advice in making its decision. [This is not a judgement on the design merits of the Beijing embassy, merely observations about the procurement process that produced it.]

What, then, of the brief? In MFAT’s words, the Government wanted a building:

- “Having a New Zealand identity and reflecting our bicultural heritage
- [that is a] Suitable embodiment of our long-term commitment to the bilateral relationship
- Capable of being utilised in a way that accords with a NZ lifestyle, values and way of doing business
- Fit for purpose with planned flexibility and adaptability to support current and future needs
- Satisfying the business needs of NZ government agencies with representation in Beijing
- [that is] Environmentally friendly, energy efficient and sustainability driven
- [that is] Resilient to seismic events in accordance with the risks known to Beijing
- [that is] Durable and sustainable in operational ease and mindful of whole-cost-of-life impacts.”

*Tāpoto* asked whether the building is intended to be somehow expressive of New Zealand.

“Yes,” MFAT replied: “The architectural concept for the New Zealand Embassy in Beijing, China, is inspired by our mountainous high-country landscape.

The building rises above the landscape with dark schist-like stone cladding at the base and a lighter glazed façade emerging above. This aesthetic evokes the snowcapped mountains of the Southern Alps of New Zealand soaring above the valley floor. The ruggedness of the mountain terrain is represented in the stepped and irregular forms of the façade.

The planting and water features of the landscaping represent the valley floor.

Planter boxes containing grasses connect the building with the earth.

Additional elements of New Zealand culture are woven into the building and landscape. Wooden vertical fins on parts of the exterior reference our forests and the importance of timber in our traditional architecture.

The glazed façade has a ceramic pattern which references a customary Māori weaving

pattern – the poutama or “stairway to heaven” pattern. This replicates part of a tukutuku (woven) panel in the whare taonga (house of treasures) He Pakiaka, which is a welcoming space for all visitors. The poutama pattern signifies human growth, striving ever upwards, and is often associated with the quest for learning and achievement.

Landscape paving outside the main entrance and beneath the canopy leads to te whare awhina (the representation space), and features another pattern drawn from Māori weaving. This is the kaokao or chevron pattern, symbolising the outstretched arms of warriors performing a haka.

The main lobby is an atrium with suspended lights designed by David Trubridge. Wall and flooring materials link the interior of the building with the exterior. Blurring the line between interior and exterior is an important feature of New Zealand architecture, inspired by our love of nature and the outdoors.

The public areas of the building feature New Zealand artworks with a focus on work by Māori and Chinese New Zealanders and furniture and furnishings by New Zealand designers and suppliers.”

Readers can deconstruct this text, but back to one of the first questions: Why was the Beijing embassy commission subject to a “closed competitive procurement” rather than an open design competition? A quick search of recent international embassy buildings resulting from design competitions identifies the US Embassy in Britain, the Australian Embassy in Indonesia and the German Embassy in France. The Swiss have run competitions for their embassies in Kenya and Cameroon, the Czechs for their embassy in Ethiopia, and the Egyptians for their embassy in Portugal. The Irish have announced a competition for their new embassy in Japan, and the British, a competition for their ambassador’s residence in China.

Wouldn’t a prestigious commission such as New Zealand’s embassy in Beijing be an appropriate candidate for a design competition, judged not only by “Ministry staff representing corporate services functions including asset management, security, and commercial procurement” but also by people with a high level of architectural expertise and experience? Perhaps it’s not so different than expecting that a panel shortlisting designs for a new New Zealand flag would include a designer. Oh, but wait... ●



**FEATURE**  
**THE PATH OF PUBLIC  
PROCUREMENT**

John Walsh

In August this year, Internal Affairs Minister Tracey Martin announced plans for a new building to house National Archives. The 22,000m<sup>2</sup>, nine-storey building will be located in the Wellington government precinct on a Thorndon site previously occupied by Defence House, a 2006 building demolished after the 2016 Kaikōura earthquake revealed its seismic vulnerability. The site is near the existing

importance of preserving and making available New Zealand’s documentary heritage and expressing something about our national identity. It’s also an interesting case study of the current state of Government procurement of public architecture.

The National Archives building will not be owned by the Government, but leased, in the first instance for 25 years, with anticipated renewal to cover the 50-year life of the building, from Australian-owned AMP Capital Investors. This arrangement flows from the location decision made by the Government.

operational challenges, DIA looked for suitable sites for a new building. None in the preferred adjacency to the National Library was available for sale, even if the Government were to seriously consider buying central city land.

The lack of available land in the preferred position encouraged the Government’s adoption of a commissioning model dependent on developer participation. DIA asked for expressions of interest from parties that owned a site and had a development team that went with it. Six replies were received; four passed initial muster, two made it through a Request for Proposal process, but one subsequently withdrew. The result of a process that Stevens characterised as “competitive” was that a government panel (which he said included design representation) – responsible for selecting a proposal for the provision of an important public building – considered only one viable submission.

The Government has hitched the National Archives wagon to AMP Capital Investors and, as far as the design goes, to Warren and Mahoney, the architectural member of the successful consortium. The Government says the lease agreement for the National Archives building, which reportedly will cost in the region of \$200 million to \$225 million to construct, is “conditional only” and still to be negotiated. Stevens said that the design is not yet a completely done deal, but it is difficult to see the project not going ahead in its current format. Already, the Government, without a lease agreement, has committed to spending \$25 million over the next two years on design and consents. The Government will soon be a long way down the path towards the realisation of a building it wants to open in 2024, and AMP Capital would seem to be in a good negotiating position. National Archives will probably be a very good deal for the company.



Tapoto

Above Render of the proposed National Archives building, Thorndon, Wellington. The existing National Library is at the left. Image (and render on page 6) supplied by Te Tari Taiwhenua Department of Internal Affairs.

and now inadequate 50-year-old National Archives headquarters, and just across the road from the National Library – a proximity, Martin said, that provides “a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a national documentary heritage campus”.

The new National Archives building will be a significant public project that declares the

Rob Stevens, an architect employed by the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) as Portfolio Director of Preserving the Nation’s Memory – the new Archives building is one of the projects he is working on – said that once it was determined that the refurbishment of the existing National Archives building, or its replacement on its present site, would present daunting

Any verdict about whether it is also a good deal for the public will depend on the terms of the lease agreement and, of course, the quality of the building.

Stevens is sanguine about the procurement process for the new National Archives building. Regarding the design concept submitted by the last consortium standing, Stevens said: "We didn't have to take what we got". In the event, he said, "I think it is a great design." DIA received the design concept last year, and it then went back for further development. A further 18 months of working though the design with Warren and Mahoney lies ahead. This indicates, he said, DIA's assertiveness over the design. "We have had as much design control as we would have wanted," he said. When it comes to the building's design, "the developer has been hands off".

Although Stevens is confident about the design prospects for the new building, he is aware of the criticism of the sort of procurement process set up to produce National Archives' new home. Stevens has two decades' experience in advising government departments acting as clients for buildings, and he is thoroughly familiar with the workings of a procurement system that many architects, and other participants in the construction industry, believe has shortcomings. One criticism of the system, from an architectural perspective, is that it presents insurmountable barriers to younger or newer practices, or to experienced firms that might lack a track record in a particular project type. Even with a design weighting which, Stevens said, constituted 40% of the selection criteria for the National Archives building submissions, the government procurement system heavily favours precedence, which provides reassurance,

over promise, which raises the spectre of risk.

In principle, well-run design competitions are a means to produce high-quality architecture and uncover new design talent. They are common in Europe with public projects, and to some extent are used in Australia. There is not a strong competition tradition in New Zealand, although competitions of some rigour recently have resulted in such acclaimed buildings as Auckland Art Gallery

## COMMENT

### PUBLIC PROCUREMENT: The view from inside

Rob Stevens

The guidance and advice I would give to smaller, younger or even different architecture practices trying to break through is, first of all, that they need to look at projects of the right scale to cut their teeth on. (I expect the same can be said of any service industry.) To do that, they

It is a simple fact that clients in any business are going to favour those consultants with relevant experience. It's not the rules of procurement that drive such favouritism, but more the practical matter of clients wanting successful outcomes, with costs and risks well managed. I have learnt, too, that it is more likely that it is those with experience that can also demonstrate meaningful innovation for a client, as they have a better understanding



(FJMT and Archimedia), Bishop Selwyn Chapel at Auckland's Holy Trinity Cathedral (Fearon Hay Architects) and St Andrew's College Centennial Chapel in Christchurch (Architectus).

The DIA's Stevens understands the case for design competitions, and he noted there are more competitive processes the Government could adopt. For now, though, that is not how the public procurement system works; it is cautious and rather opaque. It's hard to know who is making procurement decisions, and how qualified they are to do so. It is a system that, as in the case of the new National Archives building, may yield a good building, even an outstanding one. But is it a system set up to promote a culture of design excellence? ♦

need to build relationships with clients they are interested in working with, get to know their business and show an interest in the projects they want to do. It does take time and a good degree of professionalism to gain the confidence of clients that then lead to opportunities, whether it's in the public or private sector.

Another piece of advice is to form a relationship with other practices that have the relevant experience, seeking to work in a collaborative manner to build the experience they need. My sense is there is, or at least has been, a reluctance in the architectural community to work in this way, but I'd encourage the Institute to promote this approach as there are benefits for all, and I see other professionals working in this way more frequently.

of the client's business and are more confident in exploiting opportunities for innovation.

I have had experience of proposals where offers of heavily discounted fees and an unrealistic approach to projects are made, and they fail any reasonable procurement criteria. Such behaviour often comes across as desperation, and that will turn clients off. There is no substitute for or shortcut to a well-researched, -detailed and -presented proposal.

I expect architecture practices are familiar with the Government Procurement Rules which set out good practice procurement, and which are mandatory for public agencies. These rules are designed to avoid discrimination. To the point about the consideration given to design in the procurement process, the 4th edition of the Rules,

which came into effect this October, has made some changes which may go some way to addressing this concern through the greater attention given to the public value, and a new requirement called Broader Outcomes. (This supports wider social, economic, cultural and environmental outcomes.) However, the quality of design outcome sought as well as the evaluation criteria are matters for each project to set as appropriate, and these must be clearly set out in the information provided to the market.

The range of public architecture is wide. Arguably, every building or piece of infrastructure delivered by the Government through its agencies is public, and the nuance of what good design quality looks like is variable. My approach to working for public agencies is to always include design quality as an important criterion. For example, the recently completed He Tohu document room and Taiwhanga Kauhua Auditorium in the National Library in Wellington have received numerous design awards, including from the NZIA.

Can Government do better? Well, yes, and I'd suggest the Institute continues to promote the importance of good design to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, influence policy and practice, and look at models in countries where design and design professionals are highly valued. It's worth considering that the Government does not stand alone – gone are the days when the Ministry of Works controlled all public works. My view is the partnership with the private sector is important; therefore, lifting the design quality bar must include working with the private sector. ♦

Above left Proposed National Archives building (centre), with National Library, St Paul's Cathedral and Parliament Buildings at rear.

# Drawing conclusions

Matthew Waterfall

Her apartment stood in a side street, rising abruptly from the sidewalk, its upper levels concealed from view by a canopy of trees whose thick straight trunks separated arrangements of cars jammed side to side like sleeping puppies. Down from the entrance, a café spilled across the sidewalk to an area, shaded by an awning, in which there would always be a few people sitting. The signage for the café included an oversize image of a luminous green palm tree that seemed to pop out of the desaturated street in such a way that every time you arrived or left the apartment it momentarily overwhelmed your sense of reality, so that for the briefest moment the pure intensity of it caused you to feel dislocated in space. Despite its abstraction, the image could suddenly feel terrifyingly, absurdly real.

The apartment was on the lowest floor of the building and was reached by a sagging marble staircase that wrapped around a prehistoric wire-cage lift. Three flights of stairs had to be climbed before the apartment entry was reached, so you approached her door from the same direction as you approached the lift and stair. At the bottom, the stairway was darker and cooler than the street, but as it rose it became lighter and warmer.

Outside her door, the air was still and quiet, hanging in the darkness. In the quiet, there was a sense that this was a place of privacy. On the landing, shared with one other apartment, there was a large bouquet of colourful silk flowers in a large glazed pot on the floor. Loosely arranged around this was a smaller series of pots with cactus plants in them, which may or may not have been real. On the door frame, there was a single dark bronze doorbell and on the double door itself a bronze knocker.

You passed through the heavy outer door bolted in cast iron, and then a second layer of interior double doors, lighter than the first, but pierced with a series of shiny brass locks and chains, clearly added recently. The space between the two doors served as a holding pen for a few umbrellas and coats of varying character. The sitting room beyond was furnished with a leather couch, a wide and generous single-person sofa chair, a few low tables and a set

of shelves neatly filled with books on a broad range of topics. Stacked around the furniture, in canvas boxes, was her collection of DVDs; the cheap plastic recordings numbered in the hundreds. Perhaps in her mind they represented hundreds of worlds to escape into, a form of forgetting oneself and entering into another space, a way to expand this space. Only a thin black screen on a dark oak side table provided any visible entrance to this other world.

On either side of the sitting room were the two bedrooms, one hers, and the other used as a study and guest room. The guest room contained a single bed with white linen, a white Formica table, a single glossy white filing cabinet with drawers and a free-standing mirrored wardrobe. A drawer contained all the stationery you could need, with only one of each item neatly arranged. Another drawer held computer and electronic equipment, and a third, papers and documents. The cupboard contained hanging clothes all in garment bags.

In her bedroom, the double bed was flanked by a small timber stool serving as a bedside table and a large mirror leaning against the wall. The stool had an empty glass inverted over the spout of a water-filled carafe. There was no wardrobe, only an open hanging rail with clothes in white garment bags, a simple white chest of drawers and neat towers of shoeboxes. Some black-and-white pictures in black timber frames and coloured vases sat atop the chest of drawers.

The apartment had a small terrace off the sitting room, accessed via two tall narrow doors that opened inwards and latched against the thickness of the wall. The terrace wasn't large enough to sit on but, due to the height of the apartment above the street, when you opened the doors up and slid the timber exterior shutters back into the stone façade, you were suspended in the canopy of the trees. This meant that the three rooms at the front of the house were lit in dappled and variegated sunlight that rippled across the surfaces, breaking the stillness in the gentlest way possible.

A wide corridor stretched between these front rooms and the kitchen. One dark, secluded wall was lined with hessian panels overlaid with drawings and sketches. The other wall was all panelled dark-timber cupboards extending the full and substantial height of the space. You wondered how the upper cupboards could ever be accessed. The room contained, as well as its many drawings, a small piano against one wall and a leather swivel chair, a stack of sheet music, some neatly arranged piles of fashion magazines on the tiled floor and a pivoting floor fan.

It was obvious that this corridor housed those items she held in the greatest trust and respect. The drawings on the wall were depictions of people, very intricately and beautifully rendered, down to the details of buttons and fabrics that covered them. Some of the older drawings had taken on the curved attitude of being in tension, so when the fan turned its gaze on them, they fluttered like

miniature sails blown across a hessian sea. I couldn't resist the delicacy of these drawings and although I suspected I wasn't meant to, I reached out to touch one of them, as one might reach out to confer some sort of benediction. It was dry and brittle and at the same time its linen was soft to the touch, reality and illusion not differentiated by all that much.

At first glance her kitchen was spare and functional. Down the end of the corridor, it was separated from the rest of the apartment. Its large single window, with sill low enough to sit on, opened to the building's terracotta courtyard. In the evenings, the room echoed with the clatter of children and mopeds arriving home. Once in a while, the couple across the courtyard could be heard bickering. Under the high ceilings, steel cabinets, an oven, and pine shelves stacked with packaged goods all sat on legs above the cool, patterned floor. A plain white fridge sat in a corner of the room on a slight angle, as if left there in a hurry. Against the farthest wall, a white Formica table was corralled by more folding chairs than it had sides; I imagined she and her friends would sit here during hot dark evenings, and not feel as if there was anything they needed except what was there.

I spent a bit of time wandering around the apartment. I had to unpack my own things, so I opened a few of the cupboards and drawers. Everything was highly orderly; nothing was out of place. There were no secrets, no locked cupboards and nothing was left incomplete. I was careful not to move anything, not to upset the tension that had been established. I suppose, at the time, I was looking for something, some sort of sign of chaos, or upset or hidden mystery, or even some sort of decay. But I didn't find it. I walked back down the corridor and gently ran my fingers across one of the delicate drawings. ●

*This essay was an entry in the 2018 Warren Trust Awards for Architectural Writing and was published in the anthology '10 stories: writing about architecture, Vol. 4'.*

Above In Tiramarama Way, Wynyard Quarter, looking east towards Viaduct Harbour and the Auckland CBD. The building housing the NZIA office is at the far left. Photograph: Patrick Reynolds.





## INTERVIEW

### OF PATHWAYS AND PURPOSEFUL PUDDLES

Nick Jones & Lisa Reihana

With John Walsh

Public space may once have been a matter-of-fact area for gathering or transiting, but now it's freighted with meaning and messages. Take Tiramarama Way in Auckland's Wynyard Quarter – what's it all about? *Tāpoto* asked landscape architect Nick Jones and artist Lisa Reihana, collaborators in the design of the high-concept laneway sited just behind the NZIA's Auckland office.

JW [Where did the commission for Tiramarama Way come from?](#)

LR Waterfront Auckland – in pre-Panuku days. Megan [Wraight] contacted me and I was invited in.

NJ They wanted a Māori artist within the team to help with mana whenua values within the project.

JW [The laneway was presumably included in Waterfront Auckland's existing masterplan for the Wynyard Quarter precinct.](#)

NJ The brief was for a pedestrian- and cycle-only street. There was some presence of water in the street.

LR Prior to Wā [Wraight + Associates] and my engagement, people were defaulting to the idea of a canal due to an earlier image that had been circulated.

NJ A canal had been visualised at some point and had got into the wider consciousness around the project, even though Waterfront Auckland never said, "We'd like a canal."

JW [Tiramarama Way is wide for a laneway – it has the scale of a street.](#)

NJ Everyone was aware from the beginning that, scale-wise, this isn't a lane – it's a street. You can have a pedestrian and cycle street – a street doesn't have to mean vehicular traffic. Tiramarama Way is about 15 metres wide, and pinches down to eight metres at both ends.

That's the scale of the buildings being built on both sides. The lane, or street, needed emergency vehicle access along it and had to be a space that could be used for events and markets, with a generous amount of spill out – for cafés and other kinds of activity.

JW [If those were the requirements for the lane, why put things down the middle of it?](#)

NJ It's about casual occupation, with room for fun and play. Tiramarama Way might not fit into easily recognisable typologies of laneways and streets, but we don't think that's a bad thing. It's good to be a bit experimental and push the ways people might understand space and occupy it.

LR Also, many people are going to live here, so we felt we should design a street that kids wanted to play in... We modelled how much light remains in the street and became interested in the notion of Māori pathways where shells were used to reflect light – at night you follow the path. The shoreline around Tiramarama Way was a place where food

was collected. We wanted to remind people about what happens beneath, and the original history of this area as a mahinga kai – a food-gathering place. The project had a working title of 'East West Street'. It was understood a Māori name would be proposed by mana whenua, which we strongly supported, and I was insistent that we bring a Māori personality into this area also.

Eventually Ngāti Whātua suggested Tiramarama Way – it references pathways and the crossings that happened down here.

LR We were trying to leave a very light footprint. For mana whenua, ecology was the main concern.

JW [How conscious do you think people will be of the allusions you've designed into Tiramarama Way?](#)

LR I prefer to be suggestive rather than explicit.

NJ Stories don't necessarily have to be told explicitly. You could put up an interpretation sign and describe the work, but another way is just to experience what might be quite subtle encounters.

JW [The 'purposeful puddles' in Tiramarama Way – were they your idea, Lisa?](#)

LR The idea was a collaborative evolution, I wanted to reference the water rising twice a day as an expression of the original tidal nature of the area. I photographed the seashore alongside the entrance to the Harbour Bridge. I was looking at the way sand holds water, the dots indicating where there are air-vents to represent the little white shells and the old oyster beds that used to be down here. I created an image that we overlaid onto the street, and the sandblasted dot pattern developed from this. The puddles are placed in the middle of the street because that's where the cleansing takes place. There's a lot of kit beneath Tiramarama Way

that purifies the water before it's distributed back into the harbour.

JW [Explain the fixed stools scattered along the street.](#)

LR I was working on *In Pursuit of Venus [infected]* and thinking about waka and how they convey communities of people. The stools are a reference to people rowing in unison, and we felt the stools encourage people to sit together.

JW [Is there a risk that such elements will be perceived as just decoration or furniture?](#)

LR Perhaps, but again, in some ways it's good not to be overt. Look at the palaver caused by the Māori Santa in Nelson's Christmas parade. Some people freak if they feel something is being pushed onto them. I like to beguile.

NJ Discovery is a nice aspect of the street. Take the little pumps that activate the jets of water in a few of the puddles – we don't have an explicit sign about them, but people find them and really enjoy them. You don't have to sledgehammer the point about what the story and the place are about.

JW [How do you perceive Tiramarama Way? As a public space pure and simple?](#)

NJ Absolutely, we see it as a true public space, and it was conceived of as a space for the Wynyard neighbourhood, as well as the adjacent users. In terms of its character, it's about being a part of the Wynyard neighbourhood and the city, rather than something that defers to the various high-end commercial and residential tenants on both sides of the street. It took a concerted effort to negotiate attaching the lights onto four different architects' buildings.

LR It was tricky to pull this element off, but the catenary lighting is my favourite component in the street. You can't really talk about the lighting

without talking about its reflection in the puddles.

JW [OK, back to the puddles.](#)

LR I had no idea that as the puddles dry, you get a strong reference to Māori patterns. As the water recedes a beautiful koru pattern appears.

NJ We designed it that way, Lisa.

JW [Auckland's often grey and windy and wet. Did you take that into account when inserting puddles in a big, open concrete space?](#)

NJ I'd say the way the water manifests on the street considers those sorts of things. The puddles create reflections that are moments along the street, rather than a big, cold body of water, which again was never part of an explicit brief. I'm sure you've seen the catenary lighting at night – it reads quite nicely in the evening.

LR When we talked about catenary lighting, I said I didn't want to have Christmas lights. We started looking at string game patterns – it provides another reason to look up. Some questioned the reference because the patterns couldn't be entirely symmetrical due to the fixings. We said, "Yes, but it's not always symmetrical while you're in the process of creating it."

JW [A good answer, Lisa.](#)

LR It's true, though. Some string games require five people to make them. And as it's being created a story is being told. Someone will select a string, pull it up and over; each line is part of the history. String games are active storytelling. So, no Christmas lights here.

JW [Unlike Britomart and its pop-up stores.](#)

LR Yes; they're very pretty and festive, but they're not cultural. We were trying to include design that talks to Tiramarama Way as a cultural space.

We knew there would be a lot of concrete, and people would likely be looking downwards at their phones. I wanted to include different colours – the water reflecting the sky, or the catenary lighting to signal looking up. It's up/down, east/west.

NJ Along Tiramarama Way you have quite sheer urban walls that are eventually going to enclose the space. I'm sure there'll be fantastic ground-floor occupation and activation spilling out, but we didn't want to lose sight of the sky above. The Ranginui and Papatūānuku narrative is in there as well.

JW [In New Zealand, when we've created public open spaces we seem to have had issues with scale and boundaries, with the relationship between space and frame.](#)

NJ It's also culturally not knowing quite how to use space – it's not in our tradition. We're beginning to know how to linger at cafés, but it's not embedded in our DNA. Tiramarama Way is a movement space: it has people crossing north and south; it has nice diagonals. Part of the configuration of the stools and puddles is about these meandering paths that people take when they move directly through the street.

JW [Lisa, do you want to add anything about the project from your perspective as a Māori artist?](#)

LR There are increasing opportunities for Māori artists because inclusion is written into policies. But being Māori doesn't automatically open doors – there can be battles. With public and cultural projects, it's better if you are brought in as early as possible so there's enough time to really get stuck into the fabric of the project. I've done several public projects now, most recently for Ellen Melville Hall in Auckland's Freyberg Place. I created a large

bronze sculpture for the outside wall. I'm thrilled as several people thought it had always been there. I wasn't imposing a style, it was about honouring the place and people like Tibor Donner and Ellen Melville – trying to find something that makes sense for Auckland and its history. ♦

## TĪRAMARAMA WAY

### CLIENT

**Panuku Development  
Auckland**

### DATE OF COMPLETION

**June 2018**

### LEAD CONSULTANT

**Landscape Architects  
Wā (Megan Wraight,  
Diccon Round, Nick Jones,  
Nathan Young)**

### COLLABORATING ARTIST

**Lisa Reihana**

### CIVIL & STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS

**Beca (James Ring)**

### ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS

**eCubed (Mark Kessner)**

### HYDRAULIC DESIGN

**H2O Consultants**

**(Matt Pickford)**

### PROJECT MANAGEMENT

**MPM (Monique Sullivan,  
Jamie Kaio)**

### LEAD CONTRACTOR

**Downer (Garvan  
O'Callaghan)**

# Happy burghers in car-free Ljubljana

Patrick Reynolds

At the beginning of this year, I had the good fortune to meet two of the speakers at the NZIA's in:situ 2019 conference in Auckland: Aljoša

Dekleva and Tina Gregorič, of the Slovenian practice dekleva gregorič arhitekti. Later in the year, I had the even better fortune to visit Aljoša and Tina in their country. A small nation, with beautiful landscapes, and somewhat peripheral – sound familiar? Well, yes, but not so fast. There's some pretty advanced urban design thinking going on in this corner of what is called – often pejoratively – the Balkans.

Slovenia is one of Europe's newest nations (b. 1991, after the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), although settlement here is ancient, as revealed by Roman remains found at city building sites in its charming capital, Ljubljana. More recently, Slovenia was an important cog in that most diverse and surprising of empires, Austria-Hungary, with plenty of examples of grand K.u.K. (Kaiserlich und Königlich – Imperial and Royal) buildings still confidently occupying prime positions and offering solid, if now somewhat melancholy, service. Europe's current organisational experiment, the European Union, works as advertised here, too, with seamless and peaceful border crossings with old enemies and rivals, and a thriving economy. And the Slovenians know it: Ljubljana city hall flies three flags, one for each of the city, the state and the EU.

Like many of the other statelets of the former Austro-Hungarian empire, Slovenia's heroes tend to be poets and artists. The arts do seem to be more valued here, perhaps because of the critical role they play in maintaining and reviving language and cultural identity. The most prominent statue in Ljubljana is of a poet – France Prešeren (1800–1849) – rather than, as in Vienna, some multi-plumed archduke. This cultural orientation also means there

are some truly eccentric buildings. Attempts at constructing a specifically Slovenian architecture are more about expressing – as seen in Prague and Catalonia, for example – a nationalist urge than realising a necessarily convincing outcome.

There is one area in which Ljubljana – Aljoša and Tina's home town – has made use of the design profession consistently well. The city has a long and successful history of improvement through smart urban planning, often in response to crises,

led by architect-planners. In this, it seems the desire both for fostering local identity and catching up with bigger siblings has served the city well. This civic success is attributable to not just the talent of individuals but also the wisdom in governance that has allowed these talents to reshape the city, often in difficult circumstances and with limited resources.

The long-lived Maximilian (Maks) Fabiani (1865–1962), an architect and urban planner from Slovenia's border region with Italy – he had a dodgily prominent later career in fascist Italy, although his son, Lorenzo, was jailed for anti-fascist activism – was chosen to lead the rebuild of Ljubljana after the 1895 earthquake. No natural disaster is good, but this one was at least well timed. The empire was still flourishing and able to furnish loans and was motivated to do so because Ljubljana now stood along the railway line to romantic and booming Trieste, central Europe's only seaport. Trieste was key to the empire's economy and its modernity, and, importantly, the port of entry for the coffee that fuelled Vienna's cafés.

Fabiani, having worked for the Austrian architect Otto Wagner (1841–1918), brought the latest style from the Vienna Secession, that proto-modern refining of historicism. He also brought a clear-eyed masterplan: main roads were to bypass the city of Ljubljana, which was to come up to, but not beyond, the Vienna-Trieste railway line and station. This ordering of the city remains extant and has enabled Ljubljana to maintain its human qualities more successfully than other cities pierced by major transport infrastructure.

The end of the First World War brought the end of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Slovenia now became the northern-most part of the new Yugoslavia. This encouraged further attempts at architectural nationalism, heavy with symbolism,



particularly strong in the work of the dominant architect of the period, Jože Plečnik (1872–1957), a sort of Slovenian Gaudí. The next war brought disaster; Slovenia was divided into oblivion by German, Italian and Hungarian invaders. To achieve Aryanisation, Ljubljana was surrounded by a ring of wire and turned into one big internment camp. (Captured New Zealand soldiers were interned there, too; some escaped and fought alongside the partisans.) After the war, this disaster was also turned into an urban form opportunity: the scorched earth of the fence line became the boundary for a city green belt.

More recently, Ljubljana (population 290,000; wider region circa 500,000, similar to Wellington or Christchurch) has revitalised its centre through an explicit policy of car removal in favour of cycling and walking. This mode shift, led by Janez Koželj, an architect in the elected position of deputy mayor, has seen a big change that has required clever strategies and perseverance. (Koželj himself was the subject of an assault by an angry motorist.) The principal

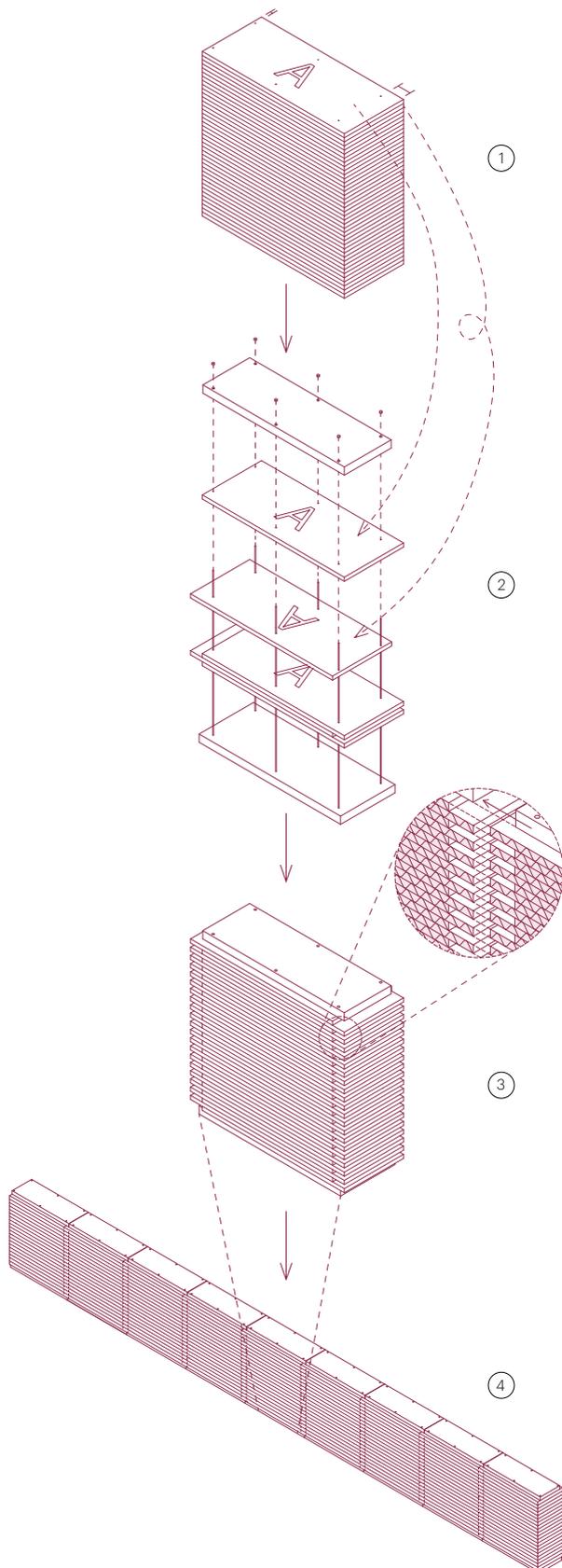
wider flush pavements enabling plenty of hospitality and loitering space, and buses travelling unimpeded by other traffic. This street is a real success, and in the busiest part of town with the tallest and newest buildings. An exemplary case of planning and design working together to achieve a transformational and enduring outcome, the reworked Slovenska Street was designed by a collaboration of local practices that included dekleva gregorič arhitekti.

This upgrade of the public realm has stimulated tourism growth and investment by building owners in what was fairly rundown and under-maintained building stock. Smart public realm investment and good design leading to a virtuous circle of civic quality and economic uplift – lucky Ljubljana. ●

Above Car-less street scene in the Slovenian capital of Ljubljana. Photograph: Patrick Reynolds.

tool in this urban revamp is a consistent perimeter of rising bollards. These allow access for service and delivery vehicles in the mornings but keep private cars out of the city centre. Inside this zone the city runs small, free, electric mini-cabs for use by the elderly or others needing extra mobility. No bigger than golf-carts, but fully covered, these vehicles travel at walking pace; they are attractive only to those really in need, and don't degrade the pedestrian quality of the area. Another key strategy has been the use of quick trials to introduce street-use change, only later following with a rebuild in permanent materials.

The big move, one that has spread the love beyond Ljubljana's old centre and improved access for suburban dwellers, has been the award-winning transformation of Slovenska Street, the city's main drag. Opened in 2015, the street has changed from a four-lane traffic-drenched arterial into a two-lane dedicated transit mall – buses, bikes, scooters and people only – with much



## EXHIBITION

**IN CONTEXT:  
RTA STUDIO**  
Objectspace, Auckland  
10 August – 7 September  
2019.

Andrew Barrie

Auckland practice RTA Studio turned 20 this year, and to mark the anniversary the firm commissioned me – and my students – to create an exhibition at Objectspace gallery. The work presented 35 RTA projects as cardboard models mounted on a long cardboard plinth.

A key feature of this project was that the models were inexpensive. We used the cheapest brown paper from the art supply store across the street, laser-printed on a standard copy machine. The models required a serious commitment of time from our student volunteers, but most of them each cost under a dollar for the materials.

The paper modelling technique is also quick and fairly easy to do well. Making an exhibition-quality model is hard; using normal techniques and materials, the accuracy and skill required are beyond all but expert model-makers. But the paper technique is iterative. First you figure out the geometry and how the parts will fold together, and then start adding in the textures and detail. If you get something wrong, you just tweak the drawing, print it out again, and fold up a new one.

The technique also has the important advantage that it generates no waste. Everything in the exhibition, including the paper ceiling, can go into the recycling, both through the preparation stages and once the show is over.

But even if we had a big pot of money and crew of modelling ninjas, I'd likely have still used the technique – it's not necessarily just about compensating for inadequacies. We decided the show would have no

photos or drawings, just paper models. Little things are charming. From puppies to postage stamps, we love tiny things. Their smallness and the humbleness of their material makes the models charming. And, of course, charm is a great way to compensate for a lack of resources.

But charm is also an alternative to slickness. It's something we tend to underestimate in the architecture world, where the default is sophisticated materials, sophisticated detailing, sophisticated construction, and so on. Charm puts that which is delightful and clever ahead of that which is merely impressive. It might be a bit of a stretch to extrapolate from exhibitions to buildings, but at a time when we have to drive down the amount of energy and stuff that we consume, charm might be part of a new set of values by which we can create architecture. ♦

For more information, go to [objectspace.org.nz](http://objectspace.org.nz)

Left The goal was to create from corrugated cardboard a model base that was 'monolithic' but could be rapidly and accurately assembled in the gallery.

(1) 2,700 sheets of 4mm cardboard were die-cut with a single pattern: six 5mm-diameter holes arranged in an off-centre domino.  
(2) Six stainless-steel rods were fitted into a milled sheet of 18mm MDF. Cardboard sheets were threaded over the rods in an alternating orientation. The tops of the steel rods were threaded to allow another sheet of milled MDF to be bolted on top of the cardboard, clamping the 300 layers together.  
(3) The off-centre domino created an interlocking joint along its short ends.  
(4) The blocks of cardboard were slid together, leaving the interlocking joints in the cardboard barely visible. After the exhibition, the stacks were pulled apart and the cardboard was either used by local primary schools or recycled. The MDF and steel rods will be reused for student projects at the University of Auckland. Nothing will enter the waste stream.

Diagram by Michelle Wang

# Drawing

*Te Waka Huia: The Treasure Box*, the winning entry in the Wellington Central Library Design Competition 2019 organised by the Wellington Branch of Te Kāhui Whaihanga New Zealand Institute of Architects. The entry was submitted by Jesse Ewart, Jason Tan, Tyler Harlen (architectural graduates) and Michele Curnow (writer).



## LIBRARY NEWS

John Walsh

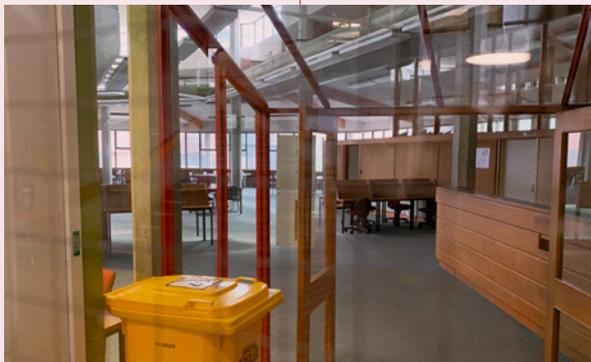
The first issue of *Tāpoto* (1, 2019) carried a review of a photographic exhibition at Auckland's Objectspace gallery over the summer of 2018/19 marking the controversial closure of three specialist libraries at the University of Auckland: Architecture, Fine Arts and Music. After decades of separate existence, located in the Schools they served, the libraries were disestablished and the collections, or portions of them, were amalgamated into the holdings of the University's General Library, a building that was uninspiring 30 years ago and is even more unprepossessing today.

Architecture and planning books and journals "in regular use" are now found in the depressing surrounds of level 4 in the General Library. "Low-use items" have been assigned to the On-Demand Collection "where they can be requested when needed". Theses and DVDs are available from the front desk in the General Library. The Architecture

Archive is still located in Building 423 on Symonds Street, which formerly housed the Architecture Library, but some architecture collections are now the responsibility of the Library's Special Collections. The architectural models and some furniture items that were features of the old Architecture Library have been returned to the School of Architecture and Planning.

As for the old library, it sits empty in Building 423, which at some stage will be pulled down and replaced. The School of Architecture doesn't seem to know what, if anything, should be done with the dead space in the meantime. Apparently, staff were canvassed for ideas; if any emerged, they haven't been realised. ♦

Below The architecture section of the General Library, University of Auckland (top), and the empty site at the School of Architecture that formerly housed the Architecture Library.



## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

### GILES REID New Zealand Architect in London

with John Walsh

JW [How long have you been in London, Giles, and why did you go there?](#)

GR I've lived in London for 20 years. My parents emigrated from England to New Zealand in the 1960s. There was the pull to go in the reverse direction, though I didn't plan on staying this long.

JW [What sort of work do you undertake?](#)

GR Domestic and interiors, some retail with the aim to get more into arts work.

JW [Where in London are you based – for work, and life?](#)

GR Kew Gardens, south-west London.

JW [What's your neighbourhood like?](#)

GR Leafy – Kew Gardens' pagoda is visible from the top floor of our house. Richmond Park is just up the hill. It's the quieter end of London. You need to travel east to see modern art or much by way of architecture built in the last 25 years.

JW [What do you like about London?](#)

GR Art galleries. I try to get to see one show a week if possible. If you keep pushing yourself to explore the place, there is always something new to discover. Last week I visited Golders

Green Crematorium, a complex of Romanesque columbariums. The caretaker showed me where Lucian Freud is interred. To be able to touch history, literally, remains a big reason to stay here.

JW [Is there an architecture 'scene' in London – or many scenes, or is just too big to be collegial?](#)

GR There is something like a dozen architecture schools in London, so that's probably 12 scenes at least. It's too big for everyone to gravitate to one thing, or even want to.

JW [Do you hang out with any/many architects?](#)

GR I work harder to stay abreast of contemporary art than architecture, so a few, but not that many. However, I go to a lot of lectures, the graduation shows and do some teaching. Every two years there's the Venice Biennale and I've started going to Milan.

JW [Do you have any contact with the Royal Institute of British Architects \(RIBA\)?](#)

GR Yes, I am a member.

JW [Is London home now?](#)

GR England is probably home now, but I'm less sure whether London will be long term. I miss the sea. That's probably innate if you have grown up in Auckland.

JW [Has Brexit affected your work, or your mood?](#)

GR To date, no; however, architecture is usually one of the first professions to be hit in a downturn, if that's what's coming.

What Brexit has really done is sucked the oxygen out of every other national discussion. Most glaringly, climate change occupies a completely marginal position in the political conversation here. In Germany by contrast, environmental politics is front and centre.

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John Walsh  
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It is this emotional severing from Europe and the progressive ideas it has to offer which I find difficult to understand.

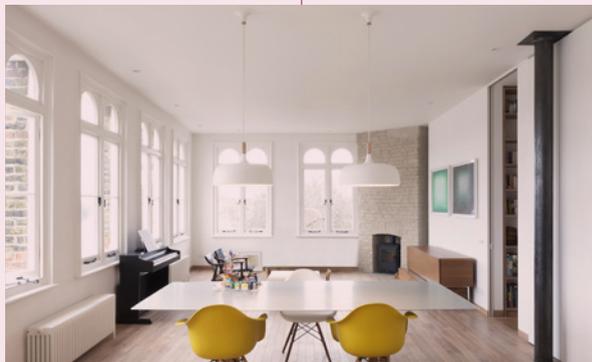


JW [You write about architecture as well as practise it. What have you written recently – and do you have any writing projects coming up?](#)

GR Writing is one way to stay connected with New Zealand. I think about the place a lot in my own work. Exposed timber construction features quite strongly in my designs.

I have just co-authored a piece to appear in *Architecture New Zealand* on Auckland architecture in the 1980s and specifically the work of Robert Paterson. Post-modernism is undergoing a revival in England and I wanted to reflect on this in a New Zealand context.

Last year I made a booklet on two small buildings by John Scott with New Zealand-born, French-based photographer Mary Gaudin. She photographs my work; we collaborate here and there on personal projects and occasionally coordinate visits to modern architecture.



Last year we saw Villa Borsani, just outside of Milan, which was styled by New Zealander Katie Lockhart. That seemed a really out-of-the-way place to find a New Zealand connection. More recently, I have started research for a possible new monograph of similar scale to my publication on Claude Megson. That book took me back to New Zealand to revisit houses I had not been inside for two decades and to reconnect with the owners.

JW [What buildings are you liking now?](#)

GR I like architects who use history as physical material in their work and who bring a light touch, humour and craft to construction.

In London, I'd recommend anyone to go visit Smiljan Radić's interior for Alexander McQueen, Bond Street. High-end retail is where you get to see the very best of Italian and German joinery. Also, the shop assistants let you photograph everything.

This year I've done quite a bit of travel in Europe – to Milan to see the work of BBPR and the Czech Republic to visit several Adolf Loos' interiors. I have just returned from a week in Ibiza hunting down buildings by Lapeña and Torres. Their architecture offers a possible alternative to the post-modern turn which architecture took in the 1980s. I'm gradually posting this to Instagram. ♦

*Giles Reid Architect*  
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[instagram.com/gilesreidarchitects/](https://www.instagram.com/gilesreidarchitects/)

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Andrew Barrie** is Professor at the School of Architecture and Planning, the University of Auckland; he is the recipient of a New Zealand Architecture Award for Cathedral Grammar Junior School, Christchurch, and is the author of a book on the Christchurch 'Cardboard' Cathedral. **Nick Jones** is a landscape architect, who worked with Wraight + Associates (Wā) in Auckland for seven years; he currently lives and works in Toronto. **Giles Reid** is principal of Giles Reid Architects, which is based in west London; he is the author of *Claude Megson: Counter Constructions* (2016). **Lisa Reihana** (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hine, Ngāi Tū) is an Auckland-based multimedia artist; her exhibition *Emissaries* was the official New Zealand exhibition at the 2017 Venice Art Biennale. **Patrick Reynolds** is an Auckland-based photographer who has contributed to numerous books on New Zealand architecture; he was recently appointed to the board of the New Zealand Transport Agency. **Rob Stevens** is an architect employed by the Department of Internal Affairs in Wellington as Portfolio Director managing nationwide property projects. **John Walsh** is Communications Director of Te Kāhui Whaihanga New Zealand Institute of Architects. **Matthew Waterfall** is director of Auckland architecture practice Waterfall Associates.

Cover **Detail, Sandro Botticelli, *The Judgement of Paris* (c. 1485)**, Cini Foundation, Venice.

Above **Giles Reid Architects: Crouch End extension** (under construction), London.

Left **Giles Reid Architects: Mortlake Apartment**, London. Photograph by **Mary Gaudin**.

Correspondence is welcome; all submissions will be considered.  
 Email: [jwalsh@nzia.co.nz](mailto:jwalsh@nzia.co.nz)

COVER STORY	FEATURE	FEATURE	COMMENT	ESSAY	INTERVIEW	TRAVEL	EXHIBITION	DRAWING	UPDATE
<b>THE PUBLIC AS PROCURER</b> by John Walsh	<b>BELJING EMBASSY</b> by John Walsh	<b>NATIONAL ARCHIVES BUILDING</b> by John Walsh	<b>PUBLIC PROCUREMENT</b> by Rob Stevens	<b>DRAWING CONCLUSIONS</b> by Matthew Waterfall	<b>TĪRAMARAMA WAY</b> with Nick Jones & Lisa Reihana	<b>LJUBLJANA</b> by Patrick Reynolds	<b>IN CONTEXT: RTA STUDIO</b> by Andrew Barrie	<b>TE WAKA HUIA</b> by Jesse Ewart, Tyler Harlen, Jason Tan & Michele Curnow	<b>LIBRARY NEWS</b> by John Walsh <b>FOREIGN AFFAIRS</b> with Giles Reid
	p. 2	p. 5	p. 6	p. 7	p. 9	p. 11	p. 13	p. 14	p. 15

