

" ... about as austere as a Dior gown ...": New Zealand Architecture the 1960s: a one day symposium

held under the auspices of the Centre for Building Performance Research, Victoria University

Date: Friday 9th December 2005

Venue: School of Architecture, Victoria University, Wellington

Convener: Christine McCarthy (christine.mccarthy@vuw.ac.nz)

Peter Middleton's 1964 description of Hoogerburg Scott's Futuna Chapel (1958-1960) as being "about as austere as a Dior gown and as comforting as a hair shirt ... [but] at least it's a meaningful statement" points to a sense of complexity and contradiction present in the architecture of the 1960s. The decade which began with Futuna's completion, ends shortly after its recognition with an N.Z.I.A. Gold Medal Award in 1968. The significance of the building weaves through the full length of the decade.

The 1960s opened with the first New Zealand television broadcast, and closed following the change to a decimal currency (1967), and the sinking of the *Wahine* in 1968. Internationally, this was a decade of anti-architecture, Woodstock, and political protest contextualised by the increasing nuclear tensions of the Cold War and the not unrelated excitement of the first lunar landing in 1969. For New Zealand architecture the decade was similarly framed, bracketed by Richard Toy's All Saint's Church, Ponsonby, Auckland (1959), and Price Adams, Dodds West Plaza, Auckland (1970-1974), indebted to the international influence of the 1955 Pirelli Building. Early in the decade Thatcher's St Paul's in Wellington came under threat of demolition, and, after a significant battle in the history of New Zealand's architectural heritage, the church was finally bought by the government in 1967. In 1963 visiting Dutch architect Aldo van Eyck gave lectures in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch, the same year that the Architects Act first restricted the use of "architect" - and the year that Ernst Plischke left New Zealand's shores to take up a professorship in Vienna. By 1969 the N.Z.I.A. had awarded Plischke an Honorary Fellowship.

The decade also provided a shift in the business of building with the establishment and development of housing developers such as Lockwood, and Neil Housing. Architecturally designed houses were located in this context and included: John Goldwater's House, Grafton (1962), Henry Kulka's Krukziener House, Auckland (1962), Lillian Chrystall's Yock House Remuera, (1964), the beginnings of Ian Athfield's house in Khandallah (1966-) and Miles and Warren's 65 Cambridge Terrace (1968). Larger architectural projects also included a diverse range: King & Dawson's Freyburg Tepid Pool, Wellington, (1964), Peter Beaven's Lyttelton Road Tunnel Authority Building (1964), and Basil Spence's controversial Beehive (1964-1982).

Explicit acknowledgement of Maori architecture is documented in the *N.Z.I.A. Journal* and included articles by Rosenberg on "Some Aspects of Maori Housing" (1964) and Robinson on "Pre-European Building in Taranaki" (1963). Ngati Whatua commissioned Sargent Smith & Partners to design the Orakei Maori Chapel (1967), and W. T. Royal was heralded as "The first full-blooded Maori to qualify as an architect by examination" (1965). Planning for, and debate over, the possibility and location of a second school of architecture continued through the decade, with Victoria University and Christchurch as the main contenders. At Auckland University, the first PhD in architecture in New Zealand was successfully completed: John Dickson's 1967 "Urban environment for old people: the individual dwelling and the common meeting place." Architectural education tapped into psychology and perception studies, and in 1969 Allan Wild was appointed to be the new Head of School for Architecture at Auckland University. By the end of the decade, colour photography had begun to creep into the pages of the *N.Z.I.A. Journal*.

Papers (15-20 min) which examine aspects of this period of New Zealand architectural history are called for from academics, practitioners, heritage consultants, and postgraduate students. The symposium is one of a series of annual meetings examining specific periods of New Zealand architectural history.

Symposium fee: The cost of the symposium (including proceedings) will be \$50, to be collected on the day of the symposium. Additional copies of proceedings will be available on the day for a cost of \$20.

Timetable:

Abstracts due: Friday 26 August 2005

Programme announced: Friday 2 September 2005
Full Papers due: Monday 14 November 2005
Registration due: Friday 25 November 2005