



# Stuart Gardyne

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# Citation

Stuart Gardyne is a fine architect whose professional ability and personal qualities have combined to produce a career of substantial achievement. Throughout that career Stuart has exhibited persistence and commitment, openness and sensitivity, and an impressive determination to keep growing as an architect. In Stuart's case a courteous and thoughtful manner drapes a flinty core; although his ambition might be under wraps and he eschews overt self-promotion, at key junctions in his life this careful person has made brave choices which have enabled him to make his mark on the city he knows so well.

It's easy to make retrospective sense of a life and career but certain professional motifs have been consistently present in Stuart's practice, and some personal traits have guided his progress. Stuart has paced his career and paid his dues – his architectural development has been purposeful and thoroughly deserved. Right from the start, Stuart exhibited a willingness to get hands-on experience of the business of realising design. After he graduated, he chose to work for the large and not-so-fashionable Structon Group because the firm did a lot of commercial work and therefore offered valuable lessons in the realpolitik of architecture. The time at Structon gave Stuart a strong professional base, and opportunities to develop ideas and design beliefs about the use and occupation of buildings, and workplace organisation, that later informed acclaimed projects such as Conservation House and Spark Central undertaken by his own practice, architecture+.

To an unusual extent Stuart has been able to synthesise work across genres. He takes as much care over commercial projects as he does over residential and public commissions. That is because he focuses on the people who work in, inhabit or visit buildings. Stuart's people-centric design is complemented by the pleasure he takes in figuring out the plan and the effort he makes to make the most of the brief. These qualities are evident in residential projects such as Morrison's Bush Cabin and Ponatahi House in the Wairarapa, and his own house in Wellington, which for thirty years – in the best tradition of the architect's own house – has served as a palimpsest of an architectural life.

The qualities, as well as an informed appreciation of typology, are expressed in public buildings such as Pātaka Art + Museum in Porirua, Expressions theatre and art gallery in Upper Hutt, and City Gallery, Wellington.

It is at City Gallery, perhaps the project closest to Stuart's heart and probably the most important to his career (it launched his firm, architecture+), that the architect's dextrous handling of interiors and increasingly confident treatment of form are most clearly on display. In two stages, with a third to come, Stuart has turned a public library into a vibrant public art gallery in a manner both robust and respectful. City Gallery, together with small urban interventions such as the Street Corner Canopies, and prominent buildings such as the waterfront Te Wharewaka o Pōneke–Te Raukura, declares Stuart's arrival on the public stage in Wellington. He has become a place maker, and his city is profiting from his understanding of its people and its patterns, his sympathy for cultural aspirations and his knowledge of commercial realities, his willingness to test a brief and his eagerness to challenge himself. Stuart has become an architectural leader as well as an excellent designer, and the profession he so admirably represents has benefited enormously from his collegiality, intelligence and integrity. For all these reasons Stuart Gardyne is a most worthy recipient of the New Zealand Institute of Architects' Gold Medal.

## **New Zealand Institute of Architects**



It would be a mistake, on meeting Stuart Gardyne, to assume his architecture is as quiet and reserved as he is. It is a mistake that has been made many times and, in all probability, will continue to be. Gardyne freely admits to being a shy person, not one of those with excesses of bravado or charisma. Where, in other architects, this might be a weakness, he turns it into a strength. An ever-perceptive observer, he prefers to sit back and take in what others are saying; after, he will translate what he has heard into the design. From time to time he fears being misread, but this is who he is, how he operates. He's not going to change now, and nor should he. This seeming reticence – even the architecture+ office is set well back from the street – works for him: proof positive that loud shirts, bow ties and big talk do not an architect make.

Stuart Gardyne openly acknowledges that he vacillates between self-belief and self-doubt and is perhaps too self-conscious about how this comes across. You wouldn't know it to see his drawings. His freehand plans and sections, his site analyses, belie this reserve and demonstrate a confidence of ideas and ability. This kind of drawing risks becoming a lost art with the strident advance of computer drawing, rendering and modelling. Which is not to suggest that Gardyne or his practice eschew technology; they embrace and exploit it.

But the early stages of a project are at the hand of Gardyne's pencil. Here is the elimination of doubt; here is where he discovers that elusive self-belief. For him, an idea begins with a sketch, usually of a plan. Sections come later. There is a lot of thinking and daydreaming, both of which take time. He relishes this time with his ideas; slowness can be an unbelievable luxury. These initial sketches become the genesis for discussion. Key to his work is the collaboration with others where a small sketch or diagram might spark a response that takes the project further. Gardyne is adamant that design needs talk; this from a quiet man.

Given his character, his nature, perhaps he is ideally suited to Wellington, where the practice of architecture is sophisticated in its moderation, not always visible and occasionally almost furtive. Wellington lacks the sprawl, the spread, the climate, the very heat of Auckland, and it affects deeply the way they design and the way they build there. In Auckland, brash is how you get out of bed in the

morning; in Wellington, Brash was a politician. For this is a political city, in many senses of the word. Politics drives the economy and the civil service fills the tank. Public commissions abound but they are hard won and often quietly so. Navigating this territory is a subtle game and Stuart Gardyne one of the better players.

His first significant public commission, the City Gallery, launched his practice and effectively his career. His design was both rigorous and deft, working with ideas of the free plan while still managing to honour the historic origins of the Public Library. That twenty years on, in the face of huge shifts in gallery architecture, it is still a powerful work of architecture is testament to Gardyne's foresight and sensibilities. His more recent addition, while it is an adventure in tectonics, sits easily and happily alongside his earlier work.

His early years working at Structon instilled in him a reverence for the grid which aligned with his need for order. He admits he'd be totally lost without a grid, which is often a necessary anchor but becomes a point of departure. In his Ponatahi House in the Wairarapa, he referenced Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion in a project that is disciplined almost to the point of obsession in its delivery. At its core is a two-storey block, the upper of which floats on ubiquitous round columns.

This is the heart of the house from whence the plan explodes in four directions. Walls and other elements slide out like armatures, creating numerous external courtyards and exterior spaces. These are a mix of public and private: the entry court to the south, the swimming pool to the north. Apart from a whimsical Corbusian nod in the master suite, the planning is entirely orthogonal. While this process might seem prosaic and methodical it is far from this. Meticulous, ordered, yes, but this is effortless mastery of space at a significant scale for a domestic project. Walls align where they should or subtly slip past each other where they can, affording an elegant manipulation of space. For ultimately, Gardyne is as interested in the inhabitation of spaces as he is in the design strategy that generates them. Here at Ponatahi there are many varied interior spaces each with their own character and their own relationship with an exterior space. While a reading of the full exploded view of the plan would require a helicopter, the house is eminently readable at ground level as

a succession of related but individual spaces. It is doubly readable with Catherine Griffith's typographic treatment of a poem by Jenny Bornholdt etched in glass on the upper storey.

At a different scale but no less rigorous is the cabin Gardyne has designed in Morrison's Bush. Here, a simple linear plan has a series of living spaces floating on timber while alongside a narrower group of service rooms are locked down on a concrete floor. Five simply expressed timber frames march down the plan holding aloft a mono-pitched roof lined on its underside with plywood. The glazed ends of the structure make the house transparent; on the long sides, careful modulation of openings provides protection and delivers views. This is a masterful composition in each dimension. The cross-section is lyrical with the walls and roof attached to the outside of the slender frames allowing them the freedom to simply stand. On the main exterior wall a long window extends along three of the plan's bays, framing a view of the river valley below and hills beyond. In lesser hands this might have been uninterrupted floor-to-ceiling glass with structural trickery passing the roof load to the side. Yet here, Gardyne has allowed his grid to override any such desires. The window passes right past the structural timber frames; with all the bifold windows pulled back, a triptych of the view is formed. This mediates the view, while valuing the structure and simultaneously referencing modernist New Zealand painting. That it does so without effort and so simply and so directly is evidence of Gardyne's graceful hand.

It is not only houses where Stuart Gardyne has established himself: he has produced many notable buildings and interiors in and around Wellington. One of his most significant recent works is Spark Central in Willis Street. A complicated brief called for a medium-high-rise building with a reasonably narrow frontage to the street that had to extend back a long way to make a through-site link to Boulcott Street behind. The site is directly opposite Chews Lane, recently transformed by Athfield Architects with the development of buildings on both sides. This transformation re-energised Chews Lane but it still felt like it stopped dead when it hit Willis Street. Remarkably, Gardyne's Spark Central completes the picture and does so from the opposite side of the street with a confident legibility. With large plate glass windows cascading

down to the street it provides the exclamation mark to Chews Lane, inviting people across Willis Street. Wisely, the City Council has provided a pedestrian crossing at precisely this point to facilitate this movement. The completion of this cross-access through such a subtle and simple gesture has shifted the centre of gravity of the city. Until now, the pathway through town pivoted on Stewart Dawson's corner and pedestrians had to run the gauntlet of buses until they reached the relative sanctuary of Manners Street. Although geographically the centre of town, this section of Willis Street was an urban dead spot. Now, this new cross-access has injected life into Willis Street and completed a pathway from Boulcott Street to the sea. Of course any building would have created a pathway but it took this building, this design, to complete the connection in a way that will endure.

Perhaps it is this quality of endurance that is Stuart Gardyne's greatest architectural contribution and potentially his legacy. Potentially, because there is still more to come. In some respects he is still mid-career – a career that has seen him carve out a place that is uniquely his in a growing world of copyists. If he were looking for self-belief he need look no further than the rear-view mirror where lies a confident and generous body of work.

**Tommy Honey**  
**Dean of College, Whitecliffe College**  
**of Arts & Design**

**John Walsh: To start at the beginning, you were born and raised in Wellington.**

Stuart Gardyne: Yes, I lived for all my childhood in Wilton, a western suburb close to Wadestown and Northland. Wilton was a 1950s suburb with an interesting mix of architecturally designed houses and state houses and subdivisions occurring around us. You could roam on the weekends and get your feet muddy where the Euclid earthmovers had been busy during the week.

I grew up in a house designed by Maurice Patience, a well-known Wellington architect. Down the driveway a couple of houses away was a house designed by Alan Wild, which Jane Aimer and her family lived in – Jane of course is an architect in Auckland now. Probably the best house in the neighbourhood was the one directly beside us, which was designed by Bill Toomath. We had interesting neighbours. The family who lived in the Toomath house introduced me to contemporary New Zealand art – they had paintings by McCahon, Woollaston and Illingworth on the walls.

**What did your parents do?**

My father was an accountant. He grew up on a sheep farm in Southland, in a big Presbyterian family with lots of brothers. All of his siblings went on to be farmers but my father got osteomyelitis when he was five, so farming would have been physically difficult for him. My mother was a physiotherapist and she practised as a physio during most of my childhood.

**Where did you go to school?**

In primary school I started out at Wilton School and then went to Wellesley College in Days Bay. I had very good teachers there, and Wellesley taught me a lot, including how to do maths, which, as it turns out, is pretty important if you want to be an architect.

**What about art or design? Did they interest you when you were young?**

I became more interested in art at secondary school when we studied the Bauhaus. I remember, though, when I was still at primary school, going to the Wadestown library on Saturday mornings and being drawn to magazines with floor plans and photographs of houses. I enjoyed working out on the plan where the photos were taken. I think just living in an architecturally designed house, and

in a neighbourhood with architecturally designed houses, was some sort of influence.

**You went to Wellington College. Did you enjoy your time there?**

Wellington College was a traditional boys' school. You wore a cap, I was going to say you wore a tie, but that may have been only when you got to Seventh Form. This was the early 1970s, and there'd be hair checks at school. You'd tuck your hair behind your ears and pretend it was short. But generally it was a good school. Of course school is so much about your friends – the people you spend your time with, and the experiences you have with them.

**You and Janey Christopherson have been together a long time. When did you meet?**

We met when I was sixteen, at the Christian Youth Movement, CYM it was called, at Wadestown Presbyterian Church. It was really a social club. On Sunday evenings we'd go there with lots of friends, and we'd go on camps and all that sort of stuff. Christianity isn't something that has continued in my life but I think values of community have. I believe in social equality – it's very important that we get on with each other and help each other. What we contribute to our community is what makes our lives valuable and rewarding.

Architecture, to me, is very much about providing desirable places for people to live, and which support people to lead the lives they choose to lead. Whether my beliefs come from my Christian upbringing, I'm not sure, but certainly my beliefs about equality are very liberal.

**At high school did you consider architecture as a career?**

I started secondary school knowing I wanted to be an architect. I found it extremely unusual when one of my colleagues at the School of Architecture finished his degree and immediately went and got a job as a stockbroker. I just didn't understand how you could have gone through so much of your life only to discover this isn't actually what you wanted to be. Now I realise that most people have some uncertainty about what they want to be and many change careers. Janey started in aid and development and then became a landscape designer.

**What was the process of getting into Architecture School when you enrolled at Victoria University?**

You did what was called Architecture Intermediate, which was maths, physics, human geography, cartography, psychology – those sorts of subjects. I took two years to get in, but even when I wasn't accepted the first time I didn't have any doubt that architecture was what I was going to do.

**It used to be said that the Victoria University School focused on the construction side of architecture and that the University of Auckland School was stronger on design.**

That was the perception, and perhaps it has persisted, but in terms of design credentials the Wellington School was right up there. Some very good lecturers taught some very good students at the Wellington School. I suppose in the late 1970s, when I started at the School, it was a little more holistic, you might say, in the way it approached architecture. This was due in large part to teachers like John Daish, John Gray, David Kernohan and Duncan Joiner.

**What books do you remember from those days?**

One text I still refer to is Christopher Alexander's *A Pattern Language*. Some people think the book is about the 'touchy feely' side of architecture but to me it epitomises the holistic approach to architecture. It's about the ways that individuals and communities might live, and the ways in which cities are formed from a macro to a micro scale. Another book from that time which was very influential was Jane Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

**You went to the VUW School at the time Ian Athfield and Roger Walker were causing a stir in Wellington.**

Their work didn't really impinge on the School, although it had already had a massive influence in Wellington. Wilton was studded with Roger Walker houses, and there were houses by Ath all over the rest of the city. Practices like Craig Craig Moller were active, and you could find houses by the mid-century Wellington masters – Bill Toomath, Derek Wilson, Jim Baird and Bill Alington – all around the western suburbs where we lived.

Below: Stuart Gardyne (front right) with his brother, Fraser, on a hay truck on the family farm in Waikaka, Southland (1960).



**There wasn't much practitioner influence on the School?**

Not really. I distinctly remember John Scott coming to the School once. He had a commission to do a house on Seatoun Heights and as students we were given the site to do a design as well. I have no recollection of my solution, but I certainly remember meeting John Scott. The thing that interested me most about him coming down to look at the site was that he camped there. He would pitch a tent on the piece of land where he was going to design the house.

**What were your choices when you left Architecture School?**

I just assumed I would work in Wellington. Architecture in the city then was quite vibrant and there was a lot happening. I applied to Structon Group, Athfield Architects and Craig Craig Moller for work, and accepted a job at Structon Group.

**Why that practice?**

It was a large firm, and it was mostly doing commercial work and that interested me. The projects I worked on during the 1980s at Structon Group were pretty much exclusively commercial – new buildings as well as office fit-outs. Structon Group has an extraordinary history as a training ground for architects. In my own practice at least half a dozen of us worked there. I've been with some of these people for all of my career. Arnie Makin and Craig Thomson, for example, who are technicians in our practice, started at Structon Group at the same time. It was a really good place to learn about putting buildings together with some really talented people.

I never had a desire to go overseas and work. I got wrapped up in life here, and I wasn't a moth drawn to the flame of any particular architect overseas. Halfway through Architecture School I took a year off and went travelling with Janey but I didn't feel the need to move offshore. Perhaps I didn't have the confidence, either, to do that. And, then, Janey also had work here.

**Structon Group in the early 1980s – was the firm having a post-modern moment, like many New Zealand practices at the time?**

In the late 1950s and 1960s Structon Group designed some beautiful buildings in a modernist, mannerist sort of way. It wasn't a dry modernism,

but very unusual – Structon did the Manchester Unity Building on Lambton Quay, with its coffin-shaped windows, and the celebrated Racing Conference Building. One of my first jobs at Structon was to put a canopy around a building on Featherston Street – I think it was the Royal Insurance Building. The building came down to the street in a glass façade, except at the entrance where there was a canopy which had the gull-wing shape of the Chevy owned by Ron Muston, one of the firm's directors. My task was to extend the canopy around the entire building – you didn't want to pull that gull wing off and replace it.

But certainly the early 1980s were post-modernist years. In the late '80s de-constructivism was rearing its head. I guess we went from Charles Jencks to Mark Wigley. It was very much a period of trying to understand what architecture was about. The post-modern period made architects look back at pre-modern architecture and hopefully see that architecture is a continuum. I distinctly remember being a fan of Edwin Lutyens, who was practising in the early twentieth century. My research report in my last year at the School of Architecture was about Wellington architecture in the inter-war years, which was a transitional period when there was massive change from the Gothic and the classical to modernism, via stripped classicism, neo-Georgian and art deco. There was an enormous amount of change in those two inter-war decades. Before the First World War there was nothing modern of any consequence, and after the Second World War there was nothing traditional of any consequence. It's hard to imagine a period in architecture where there was such a massive change in such a short time.

In the early part of my career the New Zealand architect I admired most was William Gummer, who was responsible for the Carillon, the National Museum, Wellington Public Library, which is now the City Gallery, and buildings in Auckland such as the Railway Station and the Dilworth Building. The Gummer building I probably most admire is the original State Insurance Building in Wellington, and then the one beside it, the second State Insurance Building which is still standing with the Athfield addition on top. Those were extraordinarily accomplished buildings. Gummer's skill as an architect is probably under-recognised.

He was an absolute master in terms of the way he put space together.

One of the most rewarding projects of my career has been the work on the City Gallery, which was essentially re-purposing the old Public Library. I think the reason it works so well as an art gallery is because Gummer's rooms were such beautiful spaces. The proportions are just extraordinary. The work on City Gallery has had a very strong influence on my career.

**You've discussed your liking for the modernist architecture of the inter-war years. Modernism of course was more than a style – it had a social dimension as well. Its association with a more egalitarian politics presumably resonated with you.**

I mentioned how Wilton was a mix of state houses, builders' houses and architecturally designed houses and it's interesting to look back and try to understand who lived in those different houses. Ironically, given their social agenda, the state houses were in many respects old-fashioned. They had a very traditional English feel about them. They didn't feel modern, while of course the whole state housing programme was very much about the brave new world.

The mid-century modern houses in other parts of the world – houses like the one in Sydney that Harry Seidler designed for his mother [Rose Seidler House] and many of the Case Study houses in California – were very much homes for the affluent. The houses architects were designing in Wellington were very different. They were modest little houses for professional people with a bit of extra money and aesthetic ambition. Materials were hard to come by and the houses were small. I like the modesty of those little houses in Karori and Ngaio. There's something far more captivating about achieving something with a paucity of means.

**How long were you with Structon Group?**

About ten years. I was a director for five of those years – I became a director at a relatively young age and it was fascinating. You don't get taught how to run a business when you study architecture, and it's not something I necessarily enjoy or feel drawn to, but you have to do it. I was given a lot of design freedom at Structon and I'm extremely grateful for that.

**What are the projects you worked on at Structon that remain important to you?**

One in particular I remember was an office interior for the insurance company General Accident, in a

Right: Gardyne family home, 27 Hereford Street, Wilton.



building that Structon Group had designed twenty years earlier. That was the era when there were still companies that built for themselves rather than occupying a building built by a developer. I distinctly remember the General Accident job happening in the punk and new wave period. I commissioned Malcolm Benham, an artist who also ran a Courtenay Place café called Inc in the early 1980s. Malcolm invited me to an exhibition in his home by a contemporary of his. I think the paintings were for sale for about \$100 each. The artist was Bill Hammond and I thought they were bloody awful.

**Do you still think that?**

I'm now a fan of Bill Hammond's work, although some of his stuff from the early '80s I still find macabre, but it usually takes time to appreciate the work of people who push the boundaries. That's true, of course, in architecture... Anyway, I got Malcolm to do some designs which were sand-blasted into glass and used in the project. But what I remember most distinctly about that fit-out is that I was very conscious of the tyranny of the two horizontal planes. You've got a floor slab with a ceiling 2.7 metres above it, and from a spatial perspective this is quite constricting. In that interior I did whatever I could to change the perception of space.

I suppose I was in that stage of a career when you're trying to be architecturally interesting and drawing on influences which might be more appropriate in other project types. At that time I was very much focused on how to deal with three-dimensional space – the issue of the pancake between two surfaces – and that has remained a concern throughout my career. For example, the Department of Health fit-out [Wellington, 1989] is very much about the three-dimensional interlinking of multiple levels.

This project was about linking spaces and changing separate spaces into a community. I think it is important that all individuals within an organisation are able to have an understanding of the full extent of its business. A lot of our recent contemporary office buildings are designed around this sort of concept – the three-dimensional atrium space as the heart of an organisation. Conservation House, Spark Central in Willis Street, and the Hutt City administration building are all examples of this.

**The issues around how a building is used and inhabited seem to have been career-long concerns for you.**

An architectural project is not just about the building. It's about the occupation of the building. When I was in London in the early 1990s I visited the original Saatchi Gallery, which was in an old paint factory in St John's Wood. It was a really nice gallery. The architect of the conversion was Max Gordon, who did a lot of work for people in the art world. He was clearly committed to a sort of minimalism – I think there was an article about him which was headed 'No trim' – but what I found most interesting about him was his strong belief that his work wasn't complete until people had occupied it.

At the School of Architecture I remember John Gray, one of our lecturers, producing beautiful hand-drawn plans into which he'd always draw the furniture. I thought that was really interesting and I've tended to do that as well. People say that when Marshall Cook visits a house the first thing he does is find the most comfortable place to sit, and from there he contemplates the space around him. I'm drawn to do the same sort of thing. Finding somewhere you can feel comfortable is very important.

A lot of the work I've done has been corporate interiors and offices. The focus of these interior projects is how people use the space. You're not really changing the container. Maybe you're trying to do stuff with the ceilings, create openings through from floor to floor, get some connectivity between different parts of the building. But typically you're given a space, and you have to use it in a sensible, efficient way and make it a good place for people to work in.

The thing we've learned is that offices can change quickly – the organisation of the staff, the number of staff, the size of the teams – and so you have to create something that can cope with change. Something which means you're not spending money every five minutes to put up a new wall or move people from one part of the office to another.

**What made you leave Structon Group?**

I didn't think I was developing or moving forward, and then there were the flow-on effects of the 1987 share market crash, which really started to

Clockwise from top: Horse-riding in Waikaka, Southland (1960); Gadyne in Wellington (1975); 1982 graduation cohort and graduation portrait.





'People say that when Marshall Cook visits a house the first thing he does is find the most comfortable place to sit, and from there he contemplates the space around him. I'm drawn to do the same sort of thing. Finding somewhere you can feel comfortable is very important.'



Clockwise from top:  
The architecture+ studio in the 1990s;  
Gardyne with partner  
Janey Christopherson  
in Oslo (1986); Gardyne  
in Wellington (1991).

hurt the Wellington construction economy. But probably the most significant reason was that I was asked to design the City Gallery. Paula Savage, the Gallery's director, wanted me to be the architect. It was a Wellington City Council project and those jobs normally went to the City Council's own architecture department. Paula Savage didn't want the Council's architects to do the design, but whoever was chosen would have to have a working relationship with them. To do the project, I had to take leave of absence from Structon.

There were a couple of very good architects in the City Council's architecture department, on the technical side in particular. One of them was Graham Allardice. Graham could be a bit of a curmudgeon, but I found out later that the house I liked the most in Wilton when I was growing up was one he'd that designed for himself. I also found out that he designed the bucket fountain in Cuba Mall.

**Looking back, how do you evaluate the City Gallery project?**

It was an extremely important job for me. Fundamentally, it involved the creation of a contemporary art gallery in a building designed to be a public library. I've always regretted that the money was never there to project the gallery into the wider urban realm. The relationship of the building to Civic Square is very mute and hasn't really changed from when it was a public library. But now – and this is the third time

I will have worked on the Gallery – we're looking to better signal that there is a contemporary art gallery here, not a public library. And that's wrapped up in a much bigger project, which is trying to get Civic Square to work more successfully.

The City Gallery building is a relationship between old and new. It's about making the old and the new speak equally; it's not about trying to cover up the past or remove traces of history. Instead, we wanted to convey a sense that this is our place in time but there have been previous occupations of the site and there will be other occupations of the site in the future.

I've found this to be a fascinating way of understanding architecture. One of the most profound buildings I've ever visited – this was in the '80s – was a building in Norway by Sverre Fehn. He did relatively few projects but some of them are phenomenal. This building was the Hedmark Museum in the town of Hamar. I didn't know the building existed and only found it because I was in Norway and in a guide book of European modern architecture there were perhaps two listings for Norwegian buildings. One of them – the Hedmark Museum – was nearby so I thought I'd better go and see it. It's basically an old ruin which Fehn had re-purposed, and the way he had treated it was extraordinary. Visiting that building had a big influence on me in terms of my understanding of City Gallery as a design project.

### City Gallery was your break-out project?

It was. I'm probably not that good about deciding what I want to do. I tend to go with the flow, sometimes making decisions not to do things but infrequently making decisions to do things. At City Gallery, something happened which led me in a direction I had not expected to go, but the consequences have been significant to my career. As I said, I needed to develop and having worked on the Gallery I didn't want to return to Structon Group, so I set up my own practice.

### What sort of projects came to your new practice?

One of the first significant projects was a fit-out for the Film Commission in the old John Chambers building, the sort of Flatiron Building where Jervois Quay and Cable Street split. It was a fascinating job – what do you do for a client that has such a specific focus, which is New Zealand film? How do you do something that evokes some sense of who we are as a people? In a way the job was a natural progression from City Gallery. It was very much about the question of how you adapt a building, the issue Carlo Scarpa handled brilliantly at the Castelvecchio [Verona] and the Querini Stampalia [Venice].

I'm very much drawn to this sort of architecture. Our own house is an example. It's a Victorian house next to a little ruin with a vine growing on it and an old shed which I don't want to pull down because I like its rusty corrugated iron. I've realised that virtually everything that I do in architecture is contextual. It's not just about the land, it's also about the society, the culture of a place, and the time in which a building occurs. For example, Pātaka, the museum in Porirua [1997–98], is very much about that city and the time – the late 1990s – when it was built. Darcy Nicholas, who was the director of Pātaka, insisted it be called the Porirua Museum of Arts and Cultures. I thought it must be 'Art and Culture', but he would correct me and say, 'No, cultures, plural. Porirua City is a city of many different people.' There weren't only Māori and Polynesian people. There's a strong Scottish community, and a community from Austria – the builders who came out to do state houses in Titahi Bay. Darcy wanted a building for all of the people who live in Porirua.

I think architects can pull together aspects of society and culture in their work. At Futuna Chapel, John Scott brought together his Māori

and Scottish heritage and Catholicism, and created something which speaks of all of those but is none of them specifically, either. What we were trying to do at Pātaka was find a New Zealand architecture which somehow spoke of contemporary New Zealand society and the influences which had led to that. It was also about trying to realise a building that the local workforce was capable of building in an economical way. The Labone Cabin [1997], in a different way, also tries to bring together the vernacular and modernism. It's about a very specific piece of landscape – a hillside in the Wairarapa – and the desire of the client for a retreat that engages with the land and which references design precedents in a considered manner.

### The Wharewaka [2001–11] on the Wellington waterfront would seem to be something of a departure for you. How does it fit into your body of work?

It was a real privilege to design the Wharewaka. That was our first real opportunity to be involved with a project beyond the Pākehā culture of New Zealand. I've always thought this is a unique place in the world because of our relationship with different cultures, and the tangata whenua in particular. That's something which I've always felt extremely proud of – being a New Zealander, the way we live and the way that I think we have tended to engage with and treat each other. I've started to question that as I get older and am now a bit more cynical about the way New Zealand culture and society can be at times.

### Is the Wharewaka a Māori building?

I don't think I can define whether something is Māori or not. It's a building owned by an iwi-based organisation with functional requirements and business objectives. The Wharewaka may have some Māori characteristics and decoration, and it expresses some fundamental ideas about what a building means in a Māori context which might be different from how an Anglo-Saxon person might see a building. I was a bit surprised to find when [Irish architect] Niall McLachlin spoke about his acclaimed Bishop Edward King Chapel in Oxford that he also has an understanding of the way that buildings in an Irish or a European context can be about the embodiment of the body, of the mind, of the soul. But in New Zealand, Western culture has largely become divorced from that way of seeing a building.

'What we were trying to do at Pātaka was find a New Zealand architecture which somehow spoke of contemporary New Zealand society and the influences which had led to that. It was also about trying to realise a building that the local workforce was capable of building in an economical way.'

### Your more recent work seems to be characterised by more abstract composition.

This is something that has crept into our work, and for this I can probably credit Michael Bennett whom I work with. I first worked with Michael when we were at Structon Group and I think a lot of the good work that has come out of our office has been the result of our collaboration. The project where we really got into abstraction was the City Gallery extension [2006] – the rusty steel box out the back. It's probably one of the few projects we've done where the tectonics, the way it's put together, are not evident. There's a skin that conceals a lot of the building's construction.

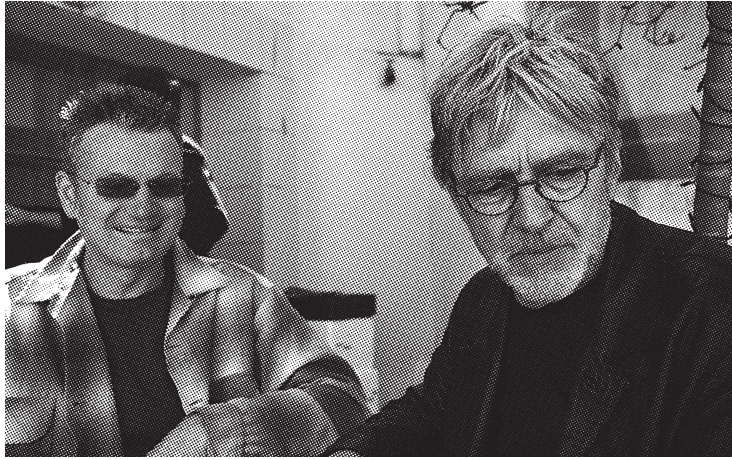
The Wharewaka, which followed shortly after the City Gallery extension, is the complete inverse of that. The structure and the bones of the building are very evident, much as Māori architecture is the embodiment or representation of the human body. At the Wharewaka, the structure of the building is the skeleton and the skin of the building is the cloak that covers that body. The Wharewaka has a sort of abstraction in terms of the cloak, but it's far less abstract and more figurative in terms of the way it's put together as a piece of architecture. The Wharewaka's triangular forms became more abstract as the project developed. Initially, the idea developed when we were working with Mike Barnes on the project ten years before it was completed. Mike introduced the idea of

the cloak, and it resolved many issues in terms of the building being a pavilion seen from above and from all the sides, whereas you normally see a whare from the front: you see just the front elevation. With the Wharewaka the sides, the back and the top are just as important. The idea of the abstracted triangles came from the idea of the patterning, and evolved into the very large elements which relate to the structure of the building. It became almost a supergraphic.

### Do your ideas for a project come at the start or do they emerge over time?

At times Michael has been frustrated with me because I haven't had some concept or idea at the early stage of a project. I think the more we work together the more we've come to appreciate that the way a project becomes what it becomes is due to the design process. You don't know what a project should be until you get into it and start to understand what the issues are. It's very much about finding out what the project means and then, at some point, it becomes clear as to what the project needs to be. I don't really like talking about a big idea because often there isn't one. The Wharewaka might be one of the few projects where I can actually say there is a big idea – the cloak. But even then the idea was just a vehicle. It was part of the process that allowed the project to move forward in a meaningful way. At a higher level I believe the big idea is the same for all projects. That is about space and inhabitation.

Gardyne with Gerald Melling at the Athfield home and studio in Khandallah (2011).



**I can see that your personal beliefs and social inclinations are immediately compatible with projects such as City Gallery, Pātaka and the Wharewaka. But of course you have to work in a capitalist system for monied or corporate clients.** I don't see that commercial clients are really any different from social clients or individuals. What a commercial developer is attempting to do is create an environment in which people can work. It's not just about maximising return. It's about creating something which meets a functional need, and doing that successfully so that people want to lease a building. It's also about creating something that contributes positively to a street. The Spark building [2007] on Willis and Boulcott streets is very much about that. That building works for Spark, but it works for the city as well.

**Was that in the brief or did you put it into the brief?** It was in the brief from the developer, Ian Cassells. The building was named Willis Central, then Telecom Central and now Spark Central and the word 'central' is important – it's about being in the heart of the city. Wellington is very much a walking city, and Ian believes its compact quality should be reinforced. I agree with him. Ian Cassells makes decisions for commercial reasons, but he also understands the city as a whole – as a place where people live, work, and have a life.

**You're a Wellington enthusiast, aren't you?** Wellington has some very interesting character. Take the northern end of Lambton Quay, for

example, which is a beautifully scaled urban environment. There's that wall of buildings, with Plischke and Firth's Massey House next to Structon's Manchester Unity, which is a lovely height, and over the road were the State Insurance buildings. Eight to ten storeys in a commercial district can be a very good scale. The other day I was looking at some photos of very tall buildings in New York by Raymond Hood. The buildings are unbelievably lovely to look at – the colour of the stone, the way that the light falls on it, the relationship with the leafless trees. But as an urban environment, the footpath below these things is not necessarily a pleasant place to be. I've always loved Scandinavian cities, Copenhagen in particular, because of their scale and the extraordinarily careful and beautiful way that Scandinavians put their cities together.

**In complex projects, what is the architect's role?** Making things happen can be extremely hard. There'll be conflicts and compromises, but often you get a better outcome because of the challenges you've faced and have had to resolve. You can't necessarily anticipate the outcome at the beginning of the process.

I remember during the Wharewaka project sitting in our meeting room with a dozen people – clients, engineers, project managers – and as the discussions went on I realised I was the only person in the room who was thinking about the whole project. Nobody else was trying to synthesise

disparate objectives and pull them together. I guess I could ask why it was so late in my career that I realised that the architect has to provide this role. I much prefer to sit and listen than to be out there espousing a position or trying to bring people along with me, but that day I realised my role was to pull everything together and synthesise it into a design solution. Nobody else can. From that time on I felt far more relaxed.

Civic and urban work morphs into the political realm, and that's a challenge in itself. I think we, as architects, should be grateful that we've got people like Pip Cheshire and Patrick Clifford who have political skills – who are able to take architectural and urban design skills into that wider realm. For me, working in Christchurch for CERA (Christchurch Earthquake Recovery Authority) on the Convention Centre project has been fascinating. It has opened a window into a world which I didn't really know existed, if that makes any sense. We've done a lot of work for central and local government but when you're actually embedded in central government you get a completely different understanding of things such as process, and how decisions are made.

**Where are you at now, with your career and your architecture?**

I haven't really thought about it. Well, I have thought about it but I'm not necessarily sure that I can articulate it... Look at the snow on the hills over there – it's absolutely lovely...

**Is that your answer?**

To a certain extent. I mentioned that halfway through my studies at the School of Architecture I took a year off and went overseas. That was my first experience of big cities – I went to New York and Hong Kong, the most dramatic urban places in the world. So certainly in my twenties and thirties I was drawn to urbanism and architecture in the urban realm. Now – and it may be partly to do with my deafness, which has got worse, and must also be to do with age – I find I prefer being away from cities. I like being out in the bush or at the coast. I'm increasingly drawn to the landscape. Even when I'm out in the country I don't want to be inside, I want to be outside. As I've said, my father was from a farm. I always knew I was going to be an architect but I could also see myself as a farmer.

Of course, that's only part of the story. The reality is that I absolutely love buildings. Two projects occupying my thinking more than anything at the moment are a cabin Janey and I want to build out at the South Wairarapa coast, which is very wild; and a house for clients on Great Barrier Island. Great Barrier is a slightly magical place. I'm really proud of the design for the house there. It's not a design or a plan or a house that would necessarily work in other parts of New Zealand, but I think it will work really well on Great Barrier – in that particular climate, for these particular clients and on that particular sandy piece of land close to the beach.

**Finally, let's talk about architecture as the art of the possible. For all the difficulties and obstacles, you have an opportunity to make things better.**

I think it was Corb who said it's better to have one beautiful thing than many ugly things, or words to that effect. While the work I do might seem to be more about creating space, I care a lot about what a building looks like – the composition and beauty of the materials and the way they're put together. As a practice we don't necessarily have the obsessive resolve or desire to craft our buildings. I care about the details, but for whatever reason I don't have the resolve to pursue them in every project, or every part of every project. Just thinking about it makes me realise we probably need to get other people into the practice who have got that real desire to do those things. But if we did, I'd probably be concerned that we'd get too obsessive, too tight, too controlled.

I recall going through City Gallery with Patrick Reynolds and saying I was disappointed about something, and Patrick said, 'You don't have to be staunch about everything.' And it's true, you don't. The reality is that sometimes you can't control things, and architecture is not actually about controlling things, although it is about order. You've got to get to the stage where you realise it's all about creating a venue for living. That doesn't negate the fact that a building should be beautiful. You should create great living environments – there's no pleasure if they're ugly. A building, whether it has rich spaces like those the Eames created or more austere spaces like Arne Jacobsen designed, has to be enriching of the soul. You're designing a building or a space for the people who are going to be in it, or occupy it. You're not doing it for yourself.

# Projects

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# Sun Alliance Building

Structon Group  
Wellington, 1987–88

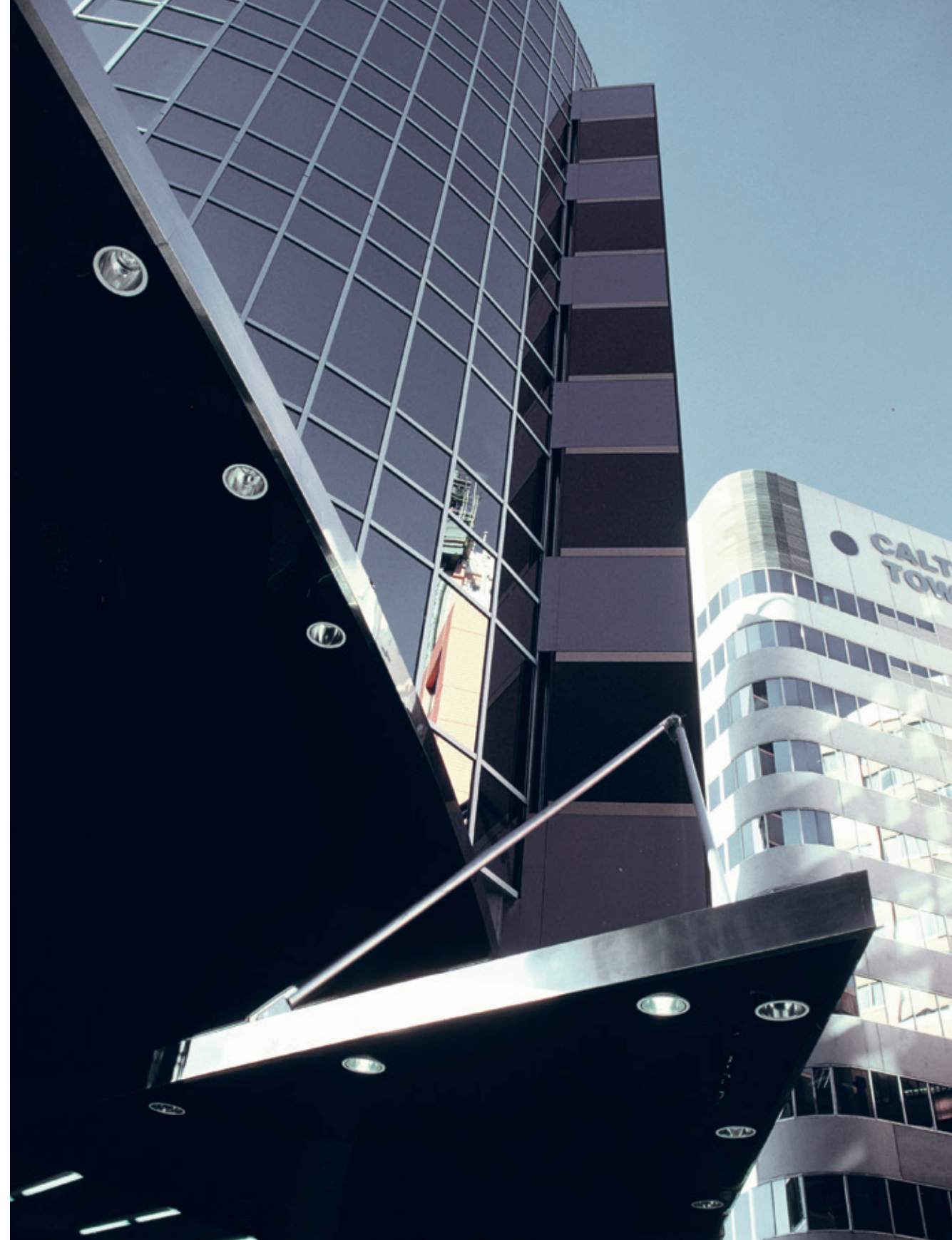
This small, multi-level office building on The Terrace sits on an irregularly shaped site above a below-grade carpark building. The two side boundary walls, clad with strips of coloured aluminium and with inserted windows, are largely solid.

The front (street-facing) and rear (harbour-facing) walls have reflective curvilinear glazing that is gripped by the orthogonal side walls, linking and navigating the irregular geometry. A commissioned artwork by sculptor Denis O'Connor sits on the forecourt below two sail-shaped canopies.



Right: Street view with Denis O'Connor sculpture at centre.

Far right: Sail-shaped canopies sit below the curvilinear façade.





The project – an early illustration of a career-long focus on the occupation and inhabitation of space – required the reorganisation of three large floorplates into a legible and easily navigable environment. Primary circulation, with paths radiating longitudinally from an atrium that connects all three floors, is defined by enclosed meeting rooms and offices, utility bays and folded-glass screens detailed with sandblasted images by artist Basia Smolnicki.

Left: An atrium provides a vertical connection across three floors.

—  
Right: Atrium void with Para Matchitt sculpture.

A commissioned wooden sculpture by Para Matchitt occupies the atrium void. The work was subject to a universal planning approach that anticipated the need to adapt to change as the organisation evolved.





To retain the dignity of the original building, all new work at City Gallery was treated as a distinct contemporary layer, expressive of the focus of the gallery yet allowing the richness of the building's history and 1930s Stripped Classical architecture to be evident. The new gallery architecture is deliberately calm and reserved so as not to compete with the installations and exhibitions on show.

Display walls, offset from the original external walls to create space in the void behind for building services, are truncated below the ceiling, admitting natural light into the space when appropriate and allowing column and beam junctions to be seen. Because the new suspended ceilings are only as wide as is required for acoustic reasons, the elegant proportions of the original spaces may still be experienced.

Left: Ground floor, between the foyer and the Hancock Gallery, looking to the café.

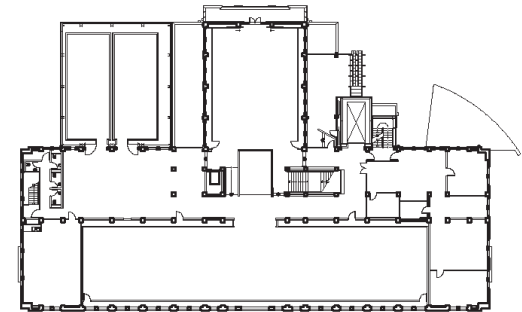
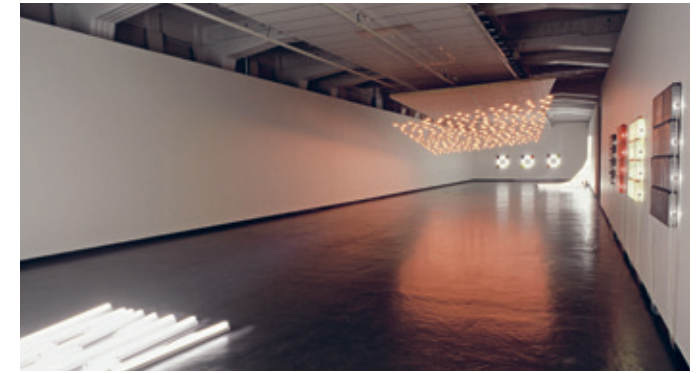
Below: View from Civic Square of the building's 'stripped classical' façade.



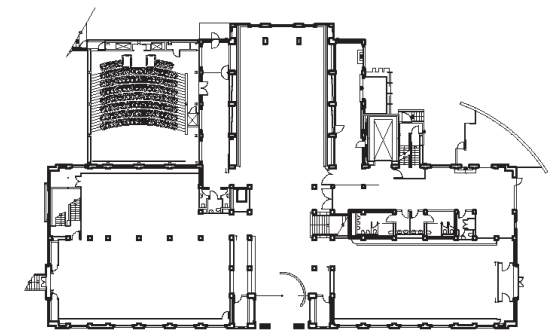
'The overarching architectural question was how to allow the history – physical and emotional – of what was once the Central Library to be recognised, despite its new function as a gallery space for contemporary art. Consequently, we avoided tidying up the building or removing references to its previous function as this would be to deny that they ever existed.'

— Stuart Gardyne

Below: City Gallery during Rosalie Gascoigne exhibition (2004).  
—  
Right: City Gallery during Bill Culbert exhibition (1997).



First Floor Plan



Ground Floor Plan



# New Zealand Film Commission Interior

Gardyne Architecture  
Wellington, 1993

This interior work for the Film Commission was an exercise in establishing an appropriate identity despite significant financial constraints. The Film Commission occupied a floor of the wedge-shaped John Chambers Building. Polished-concrete floors, macrocarpa battens and movie posters were the materials used to create 'Kiwi' character within the sand-blasted concrete shell of the old building. (One commentator said the mise-en-scène was evocative of the shearing shed.)

To further accentuate the building's distinctive shape and spatial volume, an open office arrangement was pursued, with work areas divided from the circulation 'street' by macrocarpa partitions.

Right: Circulation 'street' with macrocarpa battens.



Above: Lightboxes on the home's western edge.

—  
Below: The kitchen, separated from living spaces by fridge cabinetry.



Tiratorā, our family home, is a 30-year work in progress. The Victorian 'four-square' house has been the subject of two major renovations and numerous minor amendments, and now exhibits an eclectic mix of contemporary additions and alterations. The original kitchen lean-to, for instance, has become a north-facing courtyard with the enclosure defined by the partial retention of old brick walls, while living spaces have been reconfigured to occupy the dwelling's middle three levels, with bedrooms above and below.

**Tiratorā**  
architecture+  
Wellington, 1990 – ongoing

Living areas and view  
to Wellington harbour.



At the time of commissioning, Ocean Design had half a dozen staff but required space for growth to at least twice that number. The solution included a continuous perimeter workbench that could be occupied by a variable number of staff. Extensive glazing on two sides heightens the sense of space within the office, and this spacious feeling is further enhanced by partition wall placement and material and colour selection.

The few partition walls were carefully positioned to define space and provide screening; their placement allows the walls to remain independent of the base building structure in a 'free plan' manner influenced by modernist projects such as Mies's Barcelona Pavilion. In the entrance and reception spaces, marine charts used as wallpaper express the character and identity of the design consultancy.

Office interior with continuous perimeter workbench.



Above: Façade detail.

—  
Right: The building 'spine', detailed in red patterned screens, and courtyard.



A two-storey central spine cuts through this building, connecting the library, gallery, museum, performance space and community meeting facilities. The strong, red form of the spine is visible from within the city centre and beyond. Spatially, it identifies two entrances – from east and west – and creates a public space that, in the grand tradition of such spaces, is accessible to all. Importantly, it allows each facility to operate independently yet benefit from the proximity of the others. The building speaks of its time and place: it is intentionally 'regional' – a pragmatic solution employing simple materials and construction techniques – and responds specifically to the characteristics of the location, client requirements and the needs of a diverse community of users.

# Morrison's Bush Cabin

architecture+  
Wairarapa, 1997–98

Both treehouse and cave, this house has a river elevation that hovers above the land on stilts and a rear that merges into the land. The building, which suggests traditional Norwegian cabins and rural sheds, as well as Vernon Brown's New Zealand manifestations of them, was a result of a client's demand for a building that must "first and foremost acknowledge the landscape it is placed in" and also "impress with its simplicity and compatibility with the landscape more than...its audacity of style".

The cabin satisfies these requirements through close views of the bush and river to the east, distant views of the farmland in the valley beyond, and a panoramic view, framed by a nine-metre-wide window, of the Tararua Ranges to the north. The plan is longitudinally and laterally layered; across its length it moves from openness in the northwest to privacy in the southeast. Widthwise, the plan acknowledges the topography and establishes a served-servant spatial division that considers land, services, circulation, living and views.

Below: Cabin interior.

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Right: Setting in the Wairarapa landscape. The building is transparent from end to end.



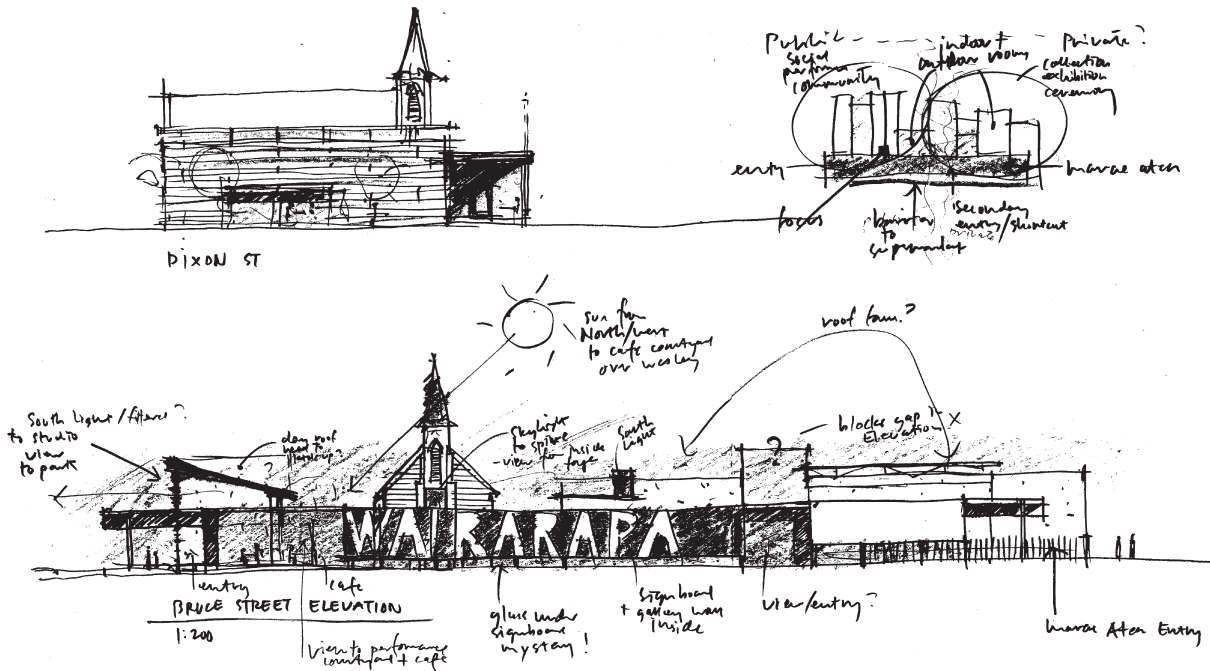
# Wairarapa Arts Centre

architecture+, competition entry  
Masterton, 1998

Five practices were asked to prepare competition designs for this project, with the brief to redevelop a site with four existing buildings. Of these, the most significant were a purpose-built gallery constructed in 1969 and a Methodist church, which also functioned as an exhibition and performance space. The architecture+ proposal was based on a planning strategy likened to an open hand. The foyer promenade runs parallel to the street and forms the 'palm'; the linear form is dramatic, intimate and mysterious.

The street-facing façade was intended as a long, low billboard, on which exhibitions could be advertised or where artists could apply temporary public artworks. The foyer's glazed opposite side opens to the exhibition spaces – 'fingers' – with gardens between. Functional exhibition and support spaces are located in pavilions separated by these gardens. Each has its own autonomy and architectural character, setting up a village typology and intimacy in contrast to the dramatic scale and contemporary nature of the billboard façade.

Below: Sketches of the proposed building's elevations.



The design for Expressions – a theatre and art gallery complex at Upper Hutt Civic Centre – evolved from design studies and a 'value management workshop' held in early 2000. The resulting two-level solution, which arranges a theatre above the art gallery, allows the extant Civic Hall to be connected to the new facilities. At a conceptual level, the two-volume form is composed of 'open' and 'closed' parts. The transparent form, which accommodates the foyer and public facilities, incorporates a massive portal with a rich texture of timber surfaces and red mosaic tiles. The solid form, with pre-cast concrete panels supporting the suspended floor and roof systems, accommodates facilities that require light control, such as the galleries, theatre and back-of-house facilities. The auditorium projects its 'tail' into the open foyer as a dramatic reminder of the presence of the theatre above.

Above: Expressions, view from Fergusson Drive (northern aspect).

Right: The transparent form accommodates foyer and public facilities.



# Expressions

architecture+  
Upper Hutt, 1999 – 2003

# Street Corner Canopies

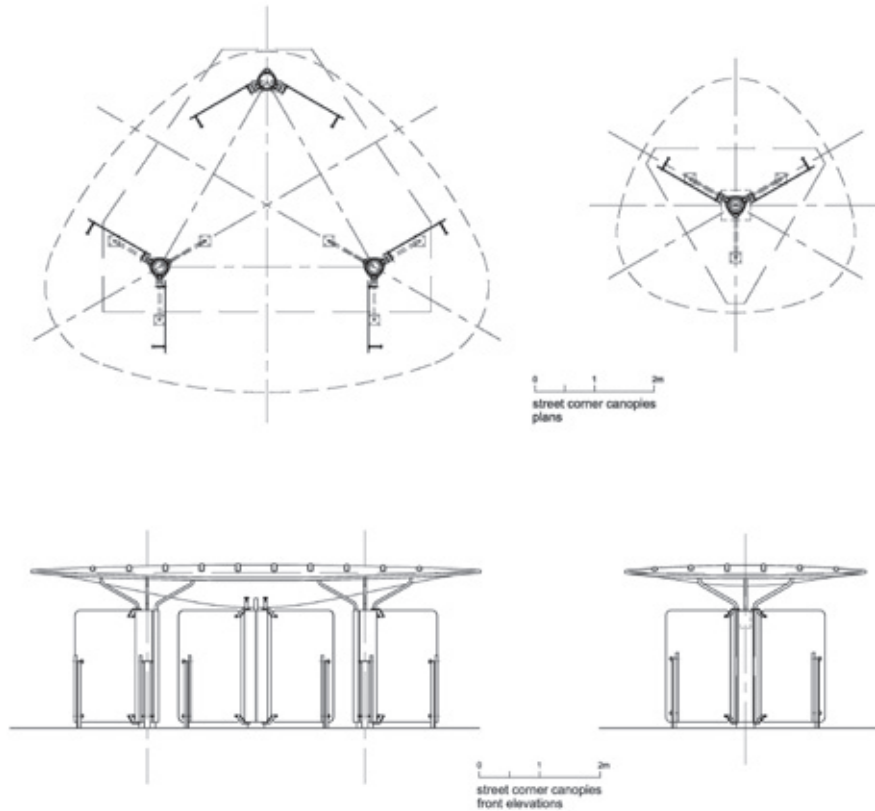
architecture+ Wellington, 2000–03

This Wellington City Council commission was part of a larger initiative to improve the pedestrian experience of the city and encourage the use of public transport. The objective of the canopies was, in part, to help dissuade pedestrians from crossing against the lights in bad weather by providing them with shelter. The canopies are street furniture rather than individual, site-specific architectural objects but, although generic, they are fully adaptable to a specific location thanks to a 'free' plan shape that allows them to sit comfortably with any corner or kerb geometry. An initial three-column canopy design was later supplemented with a smaller, single-column version for less busy sites.



Above right: Canopies on the corner of Molesworth Street and Lambton Quay.

Below: Elevations and roof plans.



This house, sited on a plateau elevated above a flood-prone river terrace and surrounded by rolling pastures, a serpentine creek and remnant native trees, benefits from wide rural and montane views. The centrally positioned main house is the dominant element in the composition; however, the arrangement of subsidiary buildings (a small guesthouse, home office, swimming pool and gym) creates and defines sheltered outdoor spaces, gardens and courtyards. The rooms of the house and other buildings all have clear and strong relationships between inside and outside, with many different external spaces formed to provide extensions to the living areas.

The main house is aligned in an east–west direction with living spaces at each end and kitchen and dining in the centre. These two living spaces connect respectively to an elevated timber belvedere to the east and the main lawn to the west. The upper level of the house is wrapped with a partially glazed screen, which gives form to the house behind and allows walls to be shaped and windows placed without concern for compositional issues. The screen also acts as an environmental modifier, shielding walls and windows from wind and selectively providing sun screening. Typographer Catherine Griffiths was commissioned to provide a sandblasted artwork to the screen, and the application of Jenny Bornholdt's commissioned poem lends another layer of meaning to the house and a personal imprint for the owners.

Below: Ponatahi House, view to north.



# Ponatahi House

Wairarapa, 2001–03

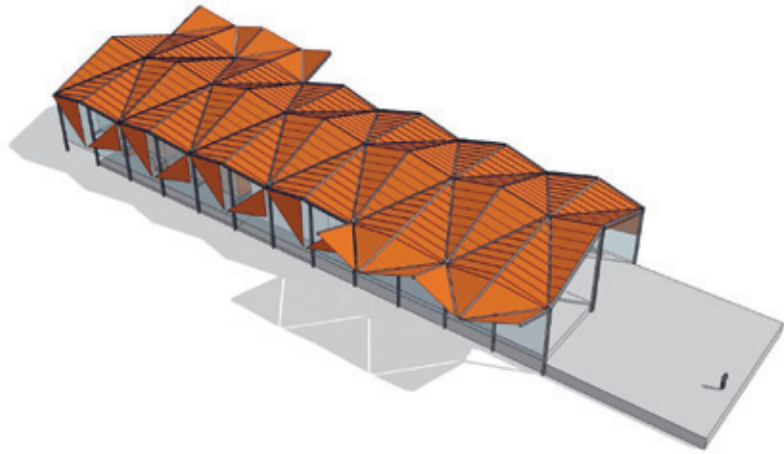
**Te Wharewaka o Pōneke – Te Raukura**  
architecture+ Wellington, 2001 –11



Above: View across Wellington's lagoon to building's north face.

Below: Axonometric of structure and roof.

Right: View of triangulated 'korowai' roof form and terraced landscape descending to lagoon.



While the purpose of the Wharewaka is to showcase and shelter waka, the building is – from a cultural, civic and architectural perspective – important in its own right. The building's form follows a traditional Māori typology where the whare is representative of the human body. However, the concept has been extended through the use of an exterior 'cloak', or korowai – an outer layer that gives protection to the building in a manner similar to that which the korowai gives to the human body.

The cloak covers the body of the building, draping down its sides, facilitating access and providing transparency or enclosure where desired. It is an environmental control that provides shade to reduce solar gain, and shelter from the elements. Significantly, this building re-establishes a Māori presence on the Wellington waterfront that has been notably absent since the 1880s.

'After 170 years of European settlement Māori once more have a presence on Wellington's waterfront. Prickly and armour-plated, Te Wharewaka assertively claims its place next to Victorian neighbours by the lagoon in the Taranaki Wharf West precinct.'

—  
2012 NZIA National Awards jury

Below: The north-eastern end of the building references the shapes and forms of the whareniui.

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Right: A representation of a star compass, used by Polynesian seafarers as a navigation aid, inlaid in the ātea, or courtyard, of the building.

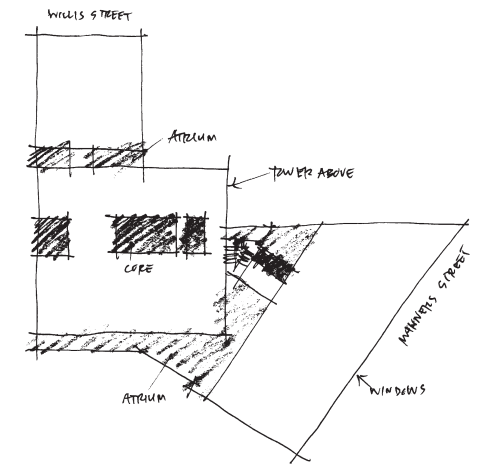






This project evolved from the Department of Conservation's desire for new head office accommodation for around 325 staff, and a requirement that the workplace incorporate a strong commitment to sustainability. To satisfy the latter demand, the fabric of the ex-cinema complex was substantially altered, with external façades opened up and a double-skin façade system added. To admit natural light, two sky-lit atria were inserted by cutting through floor slabs. The atria also relieve the expanse of the large floorplates and divide the floors into three distinct areas, each with a more personal scale. Where double-height cinemas once existed, new floors were added, as was a roof garden that provides access to quiet outdoor space away from busy city streets.

Although the project has a significant environmental focus, another primary objective was to create a "supremely good" working environment. A clear and strongly organised planning solution accentuates vertical circulation and horizontal pathways. Meeting rooms, utility spaces and support areas define linear pathways throughout the building; work areas, consequently, are flexible and free of interruptions and impediments.



Above: Site plan.  
 —  
 Opposite: Building atrium, created by cutting through pre-existing floorplates.  
 —  
 Left: Manners Street (north-east) façade.

This abstract cubic addition, clad with a rusted-steel-web-grate rainscreen, brings a visual strength and aesthetic lightness that allow the 'new' to be distinct from 'old' without being domineering. Largely windowless, as it accommodates an auditorium and galleries, the form is articulated by two rooftop projections that signal the presence of glazed roof lanterns within two new gallery spaces. The lanterns, an important change in device from the centrally suspended ceilings found in the existing galleries, increase the sense of height and space within these smaller rooms and provide controlled natural light. In these rooms, timber sarking recounts the imprint of the timber used as formwork for the existing concrete soffits.



Above: The new addition on the north side of the gallery. On the right is Athfield Architects' Wellington City Library Building (1991).

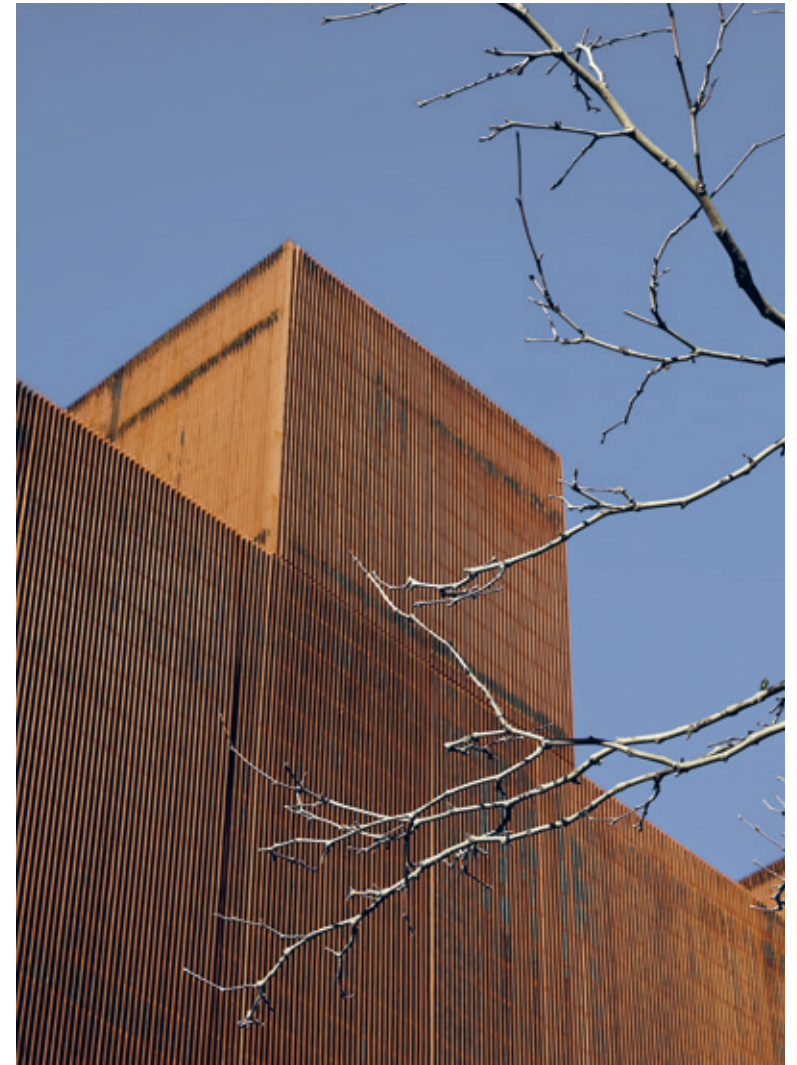
Left: The gallery, shown here during an exhibition by Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama (2009), was originally designed by Gummer & Ford (with Messenger, Taylor and Wolfe) between 1935 and 1940.

'This new extension... is at once fragile and substantial. The fine steel exterior belies the complexity and richness within. The interior, once tight and suffering a little too much from the order of the original building, has been freed...'

Tommy Honey, *Architecture NZ* (Issue 2, 2010)

The Denis and Verna Adam Auditorium, on the ground floor of the new extension.





Above: One of two rectangular structures that sit on top of the extension. A light well is concealed within.

—  
Left: A concrete plinth provides seating across the northern face of the extension.

Spark Central is a 14-storey commercial office building composed of two towers, one on Willis Street, one on Boulcott Street, joined by an atrium orientated north–south that connects both city thoroughfares. The 35,000m<sup>2</sup> building, built on a 3660m<sup>2</sup> central city site and designed to a 5 Green Star NZGBC standard, incorporates most of the heritage-listed Tisdalls Building, including the façade and a historic interior stairway.

Glazed street façades to the east and west, comprised of a unitised curtain-wall glazing system spanning floor to floor, are key parts of the building's identity. The glazed walls are either vertical or slope inwards or outwards by 400mm per floor, forming a series of vertical glass ribbons. The glazing provides visual and thermal performance yet is highly transparent, offering passersby a clear view of activities within the building. At the heart of the building a tall, narrow atrium is a dramatic presence that allows clear visual connections between floors, views to the south and north and filtered natural light to the office floors.

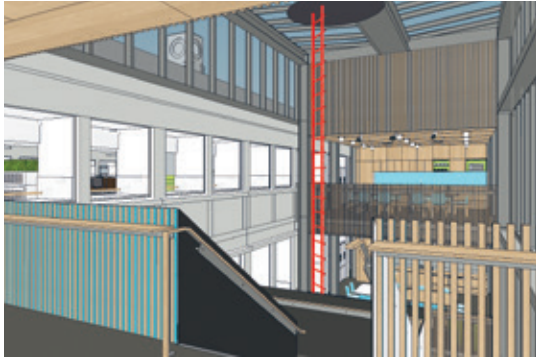


Left: The Willis Street Tower comprises the reinforced structural frame of an existing 1980s office building (the Airways Building). It also incorporates most of the heritage-listed Tisdalls Building, including the façade.

—  
Opposite:  
Willis Street  
(eastern) façade.

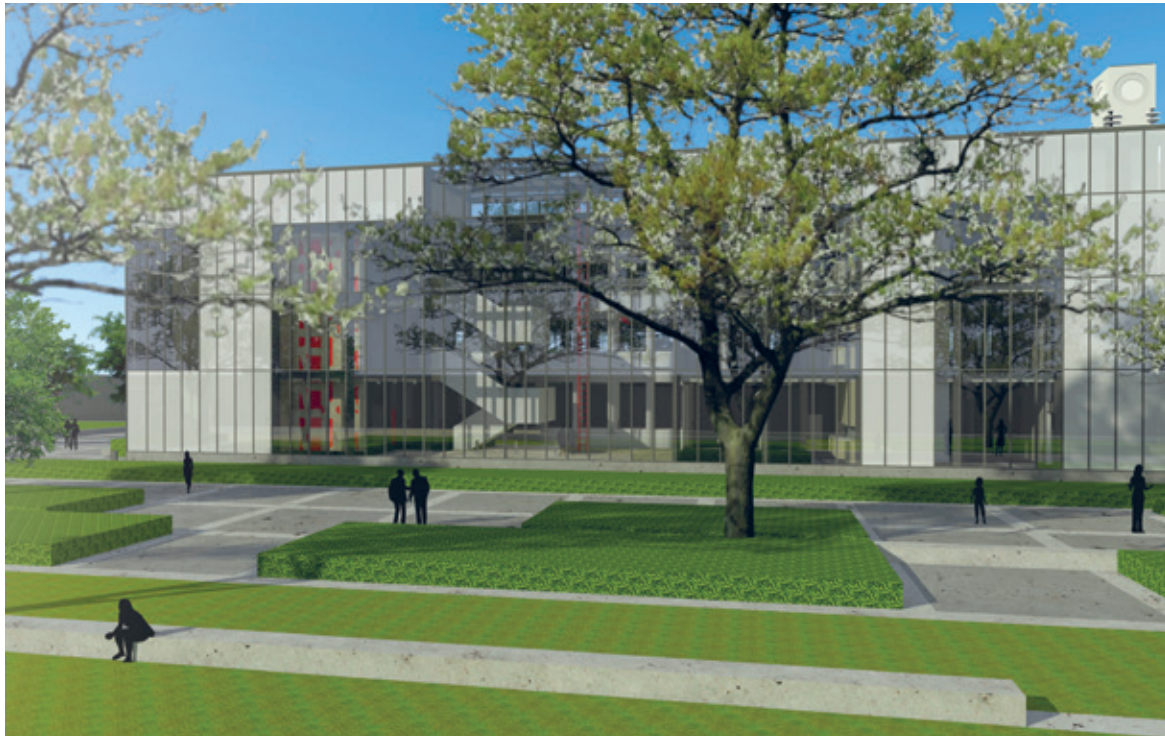


**Hutt City Administration Building**  
 architecture+, Lower Hutt  
 2011 – under construction



This project, a continuation of an ongoing investigation into contemporary workplace architecture incorporates a three-level atrium that physically links the building's floorplates. This occurs in the context of a heritage building that required major alterations to address seismic issues. A 'served and servant' planning strategy has been adopted that locates all vertical circulation, plant, toilets and kitchens within a new glazed annex along with the atrium. This establishes flexible and adaptable work-zones, with shared collaboration spaces that face the atrium and beyond to Riddiford Gardens.

Above: Render of atrium.  
 —  
 Below: Render of exterior.



Made possible by the generous donations of former students, this project necessarily required simplicity of form and avoidance of complexity to ensure the greatest amount of facility and functionality that funding allowed. Sitting between the oldest remaining school building, Firth Hall, and the tall tower block, the replacement hall provides almost double the capacity of the existing hall.

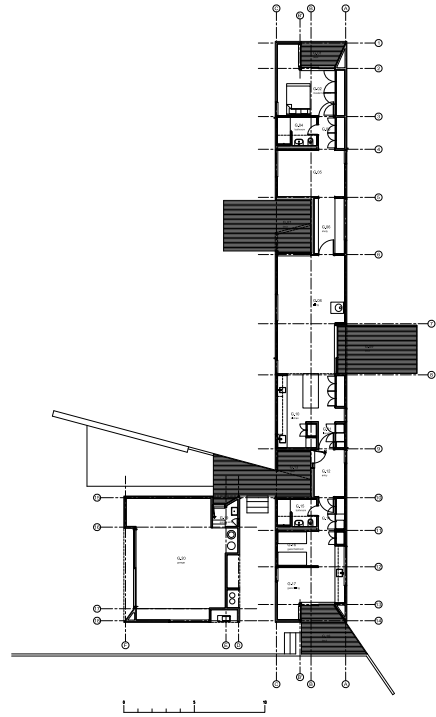
The design incorporates the stained-glass memorial window from the original hall, built in 1930 to commemorate former students killed in the First World War. The new hall is at the heart of the school and will redefine external spaces and linkages to the surrounding school campus.



Above left: Render of the proposed hall from the north.  
 —  
 Left: Interior view from mezzanine.

**Wellington College Memorial Hall**  
 architecture+  
 Wellington, 2011 – ongoing

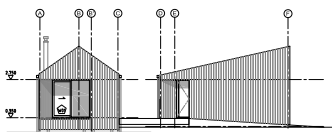
**Omaka Valley House**  
architecture+  
Marlborough, 2012 – ongoing



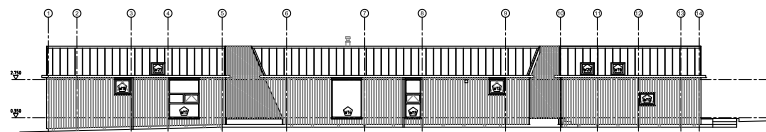
Sited in a vineyard with expansive views across valley and hills to distant mountains, this modestly-sized house was configured as an exaggerated linear gable – a simple form in scale with neighbouring farm buildings. As with Morrison’s Bush Cabin, the plan is like that of a ‘shotgun shack’: you can see right through the house from end to end. The timber floor is elevated above the ground to establish a distinction between interior and exterior, and decks project from recesses in the building to form elevated platforms that sit above the surrounding vineyard.

Left: Plan of the house.

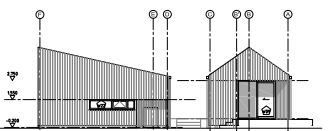
Below: Elevations of the house.



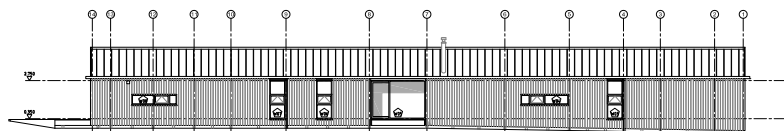
North Elevation



West Elevation



South Elevation



East Elevation



This competition submission to develop a prominent site on Wellington’s waterfront focused on the provision of public open space. The ground-level space prioritises the public realm over commerce through the provision of porticos that invite, engage and welcome the public. The building footprint acknowledges the wharf and city geometries, and the architectural expression fits with the neighbours. To enable views of the harbour, transparency throughout the site has been maximised, while allowable building volume was also sacrificed to respect the heritage of the Ferry Terminal Building and to provide more public space.

Above: Exterior view of the competition entry.

Right: The proposed building’s undercroft.



**Kumutoto – Site 10**  
architecture+  
Wellington, 2013

**Hutt City Town Hall  
and Events Centre**  
architecture+  
Lower Hutt, 2011–ongoing

Sited adjacent to the Civic Administration Building, this project addresses the need to seismically strengthen and upgrade the mid-century clocktower and town hall while adding a new events facility that will aid the revitalisation of the precinct. A new foyer passes through the building, linking the road with the gardens behind, and laterally connects the town hall to a new flat-floor event space.



Above: Laings Road (northeast) perspective.

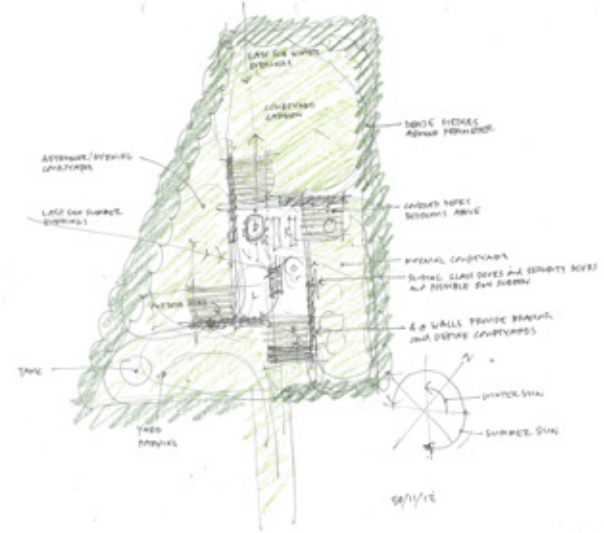
Below: The Town Hall complex viewed from Riddiford Gardens (southwest).



This project – a family retreat close to the beach on Great Barrier Island – looks to respond appropriately to the warm and wet climate and to the casual, off-grid beach environment. The house continues the architect’s exploration of the ‘Miesian courtyard house’ and de Stijl composition, with a ‘pinwheel’ plan composed of four walls extending into the garden to create four courtyard spaces. The courtyards below are partially covered by the bedrooms above, which cantilever across the space to provide options for shade and shelter depending on the time of day and wind direction.

Below: Investigation of plan in sketch form.

Bottom: Interior perspective.



**Medlands Beach House**  
architecture+  
Great Barrier Island, 2013–ongoing



# Credits

22–23

**Sun Alliance Building, 1987–88**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Graeme Bell (director)

24–25

**Department of Health Interior, 1989–90**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, John Gates (director)

26–29

**City Gallery Wellington, 1992–93**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Paul Lenihan, Roger Shand, Graham Allardice  
Photography: Grant Sheehan, Mark Hadfield

30

**New Zealand Film Commission Interior, 1993**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne  
Photography: Grant Sheehan

31–33

**Tirator, 1990–ongoing**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Nick Whiting  
Photography: Patrick Reynolds

34

**Ocean Design Interior, 1994–95**  
Stuart Gardyne, Michael Bennett  
Photography: David Hamilton

35

**Pātaka Art + Museum, 1997–98**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Michael Bennett, Stephen Pouloupoulos, Anne Salmond, Craig Thomson, Arnie Makan, Phillip Tai, Andrew Camberis, Nina Wale, Bernard Whitcher, Chris Wags  
Photography: Mark Hadfield

36–37

**Morrison's Bush Cabin, 1997–98**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Michael Bennett  
Photography: Paul McCredie

38

**Wairarapa Arts Centre Competition Entry, 1998**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Michael Bennett

39

**Expressions, 1999–2003**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Michael Bennett, Stephen Pouloupoulos, Anne Salmond, Craig Thomson, Arnie Makan, Damon Peachey, Mark Ritchie, Bridget Lissaman  
Photography: Simon Devitt

40

**Street Corner Canopies, 2000–03**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Michael Bennett, Stephen Pouloupoulos, Craig Thomson, Damon Peachey  
Photography: Paul McCredie

41

**Ponatahi House, 2001–03**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Michael Bennett, Allan Wright, Arnie Makan, Amelia Minty, Bridget Lissaman, Geoff Pitts, Belinda Tuohy, Michelle Cooper, Nina Wale  
Photography: Paul McCredie

42–45

**Te Wharewaka, 2001–11**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Michael Bennett, Belinda Tuohy, Craig Thomson, Iain Hibbard, Damon Peachey, Nick Whiting, Chris Hay, Andrew Camberis, Todd Allen  
Photography: Paul McCredie

46–47

**Conservation House, 2004–06**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Michael Bennett, Stephen Pouloupoulos, Craig Thomson, Belinda Tuohy, Alice Cuttance, Damon Peachey, Rachel Logie, Jack Ayre, Nick Whiting, Iain Hibbard, Kim Manford, Erini Kaldelis, Stephanie Livick  
Photography: Paul McCredie, Patrick Reynolds (p.46)

48–53

**City Gallery Extension, 2006–08**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Michael Bennett, Damon Peachey, Arnie Makan, Belinda Tuohy, Nick Whiting, Rachel Logie  
Photography: Patrick Reynolds

54–55

**Spark Central, 2007–11**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Michael Bennett, Stephen Pouloupoulos, Arnie Makan, Kim Manford, Iain Hibbard, Andrew Camberis, Kirsty Chamberlain, Craig Thomson, Mervyn Rothwell, Rachel Logie, Claudio Holzer, Ben Crichton  
Photography: Paul McCredie

56

**Hutt City Administration Building, 2011–under construction**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Michael Bennett, Stephen Pouloupoulos, Arnie Makan, Iain Hibbard, Kim Manford, Craig Thomson, Erini Kaldelis, Kirsty Chamberlain, Belinda Tuohy

57

**Wellington College Memorial Hall, 2011–ongoing**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Michael Bennett, Damon Peachey

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**Omaka Valley House 2012–ongoing**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Michael Bennett, Damon Peachey

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**Kumutoto Site 10 Competition Entry, 2013**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Michael Bennett

60

**Hutt City Town Hall and Events Centre, 2011–ongoing**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Michael Bennett, Stephen Pouloupoulos, Arnie Makan, Iain Hibbard, Kim Manford, Andrew Camberis, Terese Fitzgerald

61

**Medlands Beach House, 2013–ongoing**  
Project team: Stuart Gardyne, Michael Bennett, Damon Peachey, Angela Gibson

# Significant Awards

2013 New Zealand Architecture Award: Spark Central

2012 Wellington Architecture Award: Spark Central

2012 New Zealand Architecture Award: Te Wharewaka o Pōneke – Te Raukura

2011 New Zealand Architecture Award: City Gallery Extension

2011 Wellington Architecture Award: Te Wharewaka o Pōneke – Te Raukura

2010 Wellington Architecture Award: City Gallery Extension

2008 Supreme Award and New Zealand Architecture Award: Conservation House

2007 Wellington Architecture Award: Conservation House

2005 New Zealand Architecture Award: Expressions

2001 Regional Architecture Award: Morrison's Bush Cabin

2000 Regional Architecture Award: Pātaka Art + Museum

2000 Regional Architecture Award: Wadestown House

1996 National Architecture Award: Ocean Design Interior

1995 Regional Architecture Award: Film Commission Interior

1994 National Architecture Award: City Gallery

1991 National Architecture Award: Department of Health Interior

1989 National Architecture Award: Sun Alliance Building

Tirator, the Gardyne family home.



At the 2015 New Zealand Architecture Awards, Gardyne-Christopherson family, from left: Taeri Christopherson, Janey Christopherson, Stuart Gardyne, Mackenzie Gardyne.

— architecture+ directors and family members, from left: Arnie Makan, Christine Fielding, Allan Wright, Janey Christopherson, Stuart Gardyne, Cathy Magiannis, Stephen Pouloupoulos, Patricia Bennett, Michael Bennett, Bharti Makan.



