A ‘House of Sweden’ in Wellington, New Zealand

Master Thesis explanatory document

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ABSTRACT

A paradigm shift in embassy architecture has been initiated by The Swedish National Property Board, culminating in the ‘House of Sweden’, Washington D.C.

This project attempts to extend that initiative for the design of a House of Sweden in Wellington, New Zealand; it has relationships and integration with the host country. The process of design explorations investigated how research by design was employed to formulate a conclusion.

The stance taken renounces the notion of representational architecture that is prominent in embassy typology and concentrated solely on good architectural principles. Security is a highly influential factor in embassy architecture. The design was no more or no less secure than that of the Washington ‘House of Sweden’, but has addressed the security issues while not allowing the embassy to become an isolated entity within the building.

The overall development of the project has been determined by the urban context in which it is sited. The project provides the traditional embassy and consulate activities. However, the unusual inclusion of a shared double staircase component in the building, links Wellington waterfront to the suburban area beyond. It allows the public an ability to engage, interact, dwell and enjoy the volume of the new House of Sweden. It thus creates a ‘true’ transparency that is more than just the proverbial glass box architecture.
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Question

To design a Swedish embassy through architectural strategies that encourages integration with the host country

1.2 Objectives

The central focus of this project is research by design. The aim of the proposal is to design a Swedish embassy using known architectural strategies to promote integration with the host country of New Zealand. The aspiration is also to present an alternative approach to accepted embassy typology while still maintaining the functional requirements necessary for an embassy to operate effectively, thereby making a successful outcome for all.

The stance that an embassy is the missing link between a non-place and a very strong place, or that it is indeed both of these possibilities, is also reflected on; the prospect that an embassy is condemned to stay out of definitive classifications, in limbo of displaced, projected, invented identities. Is it possible that an embassy can have a negative effect by its very occupation in a host country? That it can be viewed as an appropriation, even if only of a small part of that host country?

Therefore, the task is: is it possible that through architectural strategies it is achievable for an embassy to be neither a non-place nor even a very strong place, but a place of integration that encourages people to meet, to converse and to dwell. To bring about such an achievement, architectural quality is of prime importance. “Why does design excellence matter? It matters because as the study of architectural history shows, our buildings say a lot about us, and in the area of international affairs, what we say about ourselves does matter.”

1.3 Scope and Limitations

The scope of this project will include the design of a building to house a Swedish embassy, the Ambassador’s residence and associated public facilities. The research by design will discover possibilities of incorporating these diverse groups within the same volume.

The traditional role of an embassy will first need to be addressed; the facilities that are necessary for daily embassy and consulate activities. However, the unusual inclusion of a public component within the building will be the driving factor in the design outcome. The public activities will derive from the existing urban fabric and the envisaged potential effect.

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Due to the representation of what an embassy is currently perceived as, and the misconceptions that are associated with this, an embassy could be compared to that of a financial institute. The likelihood, therefore, is that a very limited amount of literature on design floor plans of embassies, particularly regarding security issues, will be publicly available for reference. Not only will the difficulty of sourcing security data impede the project but there is also the risk that security concerns could architecturally hinder the overall outcome, and culminate in dominating all facets of the design. It is intended that architectural strategies will be drawn on to negate such influences which would otherwise lead to a sterile and generic end result.
2.0 CURRENT STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

2.1 Definition and History of Diplomacy

Historically, the term ‘embassy’ defined a deputation or mission sent by one ruler or state to another.\(^3\) It is therefore understood that “the original meaning of embassy is servant, bringer, messenger.”\(^4\) In other words, an emissary from 17thC Latin *emissarius*, meaning ‘scout’, a person sent as a diplomatic representative on a special mission.\(^5\) In actuality, “the ancient embassies had no special buildings at all.”\(^6\) However, the definition of the word ‘embassy’ gradually became connected, by extension, with the building itself or the establishment that houses the diplomatic mission. It came to be accepted that an embassy was the official offices and/or residence of an ambassador, an accredited diplomat at the highest level, the permanent representative sent by the State to manage international relations in another country.\(^7\)

The British Government has had a diplomatic presence in Washington D.C. since 1791. But it was not until 1893 that it changed from a legation and became a legal embassy office.\(^8\) In contrast to the British setting up embassies in other colonial countries, such as India, Houseal states that it was not until 1909 that the American government identified the need for specific premises to accommodate the ambassador and embassy staff representing the United States of America. The proposition put forward was that such a stance must be undertaken to promote the foreign business sector.\(^9\) Even then, the buildings for embassy facilities did not come to fruition until post World War I. It was at this point that the American government started to acquire buildings in Europe that would not only provide a headquarters but would also elevate their stature within the international scene. Initially, the buildings in the host city were predominately lavish residential properties and highly visible, such as the Schoenborn Palace in Prague or the suburban villa in Oslo once the residence of Alfred Nobel.\(^10\)

Was this a blueprint for the future, a predecessor for the ideology of representational embassy architecture? These buildings were huge and palatial, or at the very least, noteworthy and evidential of the first attempts at representing America abroad.\(^11\) The American embassy building programme escalated through the following four decades, not just to promote business interests abroad, but also enhanced with “numerous inviting buildings whose mission was to “sell” democracy.”\(^12\)

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4 Alessi A., p. 362  
6 Alessi A., p.362  
10 Ibid, p.14  
11 Ibid, p.12  
2.2 What was the Agent of Change?

Ironically, what manifested from the ideology of American representation abroad was also the effects of negative externalities such as the Vietnam War. In other words American embassies became a target. The most notable was the Iranian Hostage Crisis in 1979, culminating in the suicide bombings at the American Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon in 1983. It was the catalyst to bring about a profound makeover and the emergence of a new epoch in embassy architecture.\(^\text{13}\)

What principally dictated this change was the Inman Report (June, 1985).\(^\text{14}\) First and foremost, the report set out recommendations and guidelines to lay the foundations for embassy security. The most influential recommendation was the necessity of having a 100 yard building setback from the boundary. If existing embassies were unable to satisfy this requirement a new site must be sourced. The outcome was that American embassies became an outpost, moving to the outer limits of the city and becoming the genesis of shaping the embassy ‘compound’. Where embassies had previously been positioned in highly visible locations, emphatically pronouncing the presence of the foreign country within the host country, the Inman Report brought about a far-reaching impact on American embassy architecture. Together with the subsequent Crowe Report (1999), it marked a clear delineation for future architectural intentions of Standard Embassy Design (SED). American embassies, in particular, became buildings within compounds evoking the image of a secure fortress with limited visual connection that resulted in self isolation from the general public and thus the host country as a whole.\(^\text{15}\) Structures designed to meet the new standards featured nearly windowless brick walls, high perimeter fencing, completely disengaged from the surrounding context. “It certainly is not easy to operate effective cultural programs out of embassies that look like citadels.”\(^\text{16}\) The fortress mentality also had other wide ranging negative consequences, as it left other embassies and consulates more susceptible and highly vulnerable to terrorist hostilities. One known repercussion was the terrorist attack of the British consulate in Istanbul (2003).\(^\text{17}\)

2.3 Current State of Typology

Alessi raises the question: what does it mean to build an embassy nowadays?\(^\text{18}\) Has embassy architecture evolved to reflect today’s diplomatic climate?

The current shift in embassy architecture of the recent two decades is the acknowledgment that openness and a supposed transparency is a critical component in the success of diplomacy. But what is openness and transparency? ”Some architects equate openness with literal transparency, and argue that dramatically modern glass and steel architecture is the only

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\(^{15}\) Ibid


\(^{17}\) Ibid, p. 44

\(^{18}\) Alessi A., p. 361
proper metaphor for democracy.” Is this appropriate? And if so, is that visual dialogue comprehended by the people of the host city?

The Dutch embassy in Berlin by OMA / Rem Koolhaas (2003) implements such visual architectural strategies. However, critical investigation carried out to see the full extent of these qualities indicate a different conclusion. It could be implied that OMA / Rem Koolhaas has had to comply with the parameters of SED. “In the left hand corner of the entryway at the edge of the reception hall is the reinforced glass of the security guards” This building exhibits visual comparisons with the proposed American embassy in London, England. The building is a lifted glass box with a ‘water feature’ around the building that could be better interpreted as a security moat inhibiting any form of passive interaction with the host city.

Both these embassies showcase the myth of openness and transparency via the use of glass facades. In actuality the structures are no more open than that of the brick and mortar barriers that fortified the enclosed headquarters of their predecessors. It is an illusion of openness that has no validity in its intentions compared to the fortified compounds that were a true reflection of the fear of terrorism. It remains as a design within a set of parameters that are a remnant of the Inman Report.

The appearance and special features of an embassy are “necessary as ‘tools’ for the embassy staff in fulfilling its duties to promote its activities, both civil and diplomatic duties.” An embassy should both distinguish itself and be in juxtaposition with the host country it resides in, to further alliances of mutual understanding for the enrichment of both countries. The benefits for erecting buildings are twofold; “recognition on the international scene” and “more presence than just inhabiting a number of floors in a high rise.” Thus, visual awareness literally creates a presence within that country, the notion of ‘being there’ rather than merely being a symbolic reference. We must look forth to another epoch change.

22 Francois Chaslin, et al, p.129
23 Ibid, p.127
24 Ibid
2.4 Paradigm Shift in the Embassy Typology

The remnants of the Inman genre of embassy architecture is redundant and unsustainable. Therefore, the role that embassies now need to be able to fulfil in the current world climate require a paradigm shift in the ideology and typology of embassy architecture. Now, more than ever, there needs to be such interfaces that break down ignorance and intolerance between cultures and ways of life. This needed paradigm shift in embassy architecture has been initiated by The Swedish National Property Board (SFV).

The success of both the Swedish embassy in Tokyo (1991) and the Embassies of the Nordic Countries in Berlin (1997) has led to a shift in attitude and of a typology change in embassy design. “The history and typology of embassy buildings will from now on have to be treated in two epochs - before and after the embassies of the Nordic Countries.” 25 The building complex consists of the embassies of the five Nordic Countries grouped around the perimeter of the site creating an urban lane in the centre. “Berger + Parkkinen want their architecture to be openly accessible, and publicly accessible at least in feeling welcoming and manageable to the public.” 26

Jan Thews of the SFV states “an embassy used to be just an embassy, or rather an office. The embassy will help to build relationships on behalf of Swedish business, tourism, culture and the arts.” 27 This ideology clearly indicates an attitude shift, but how does this manifest into architecture? The Swedish stance indicates an interest in the progression of the programme; how to communicate what your intentions are, and thus the programme becomes the landmark, not the formal gesture that manifests into representational architecture.

The ‘House of Sweden’ (HOS), located in Washington D.C. and completed in 2002, is the newest Swedish embassy to be built. It is designed by Wingårdh Arkitektkontor AB and is comprised of the Embassy of Sweden, the Embassy of Iceland, corporate apartments, exhibition spaces, a conference centre and an auditorium. The HOS exhibits an explicit archetypical shift from the presumed ideal of embassy design. “The idea of uniting the embassy, event centre and corporate apartments under a single roof is unique to House of Sweden” 28

26 Ibid, p.9
27 Jan Thews, architect and director of property services abroad and head of the Foreign division at the National Property Board of Sweden. “New Expectations for Embassies”, The Swedish National Property Board (SFV), http://www.sfv.se/cms/showdocument/documents/sfv/engelska/house_of_sweden/background_material_the_building_the_artwork_etc_.pdf
The entrance of the HOS generates the informal architectural strategies that continue throughout the building for the visitor. By introducing public occupation within the same main volume, immediately encourages open interaction between the Swedish people and the host country. Once the visitor has passed freely through the threshold into the interior environment, the building divides into three separate entities. This is achieved by the functional organization of the building consisting of the embassy, the public facilities and apartments. The functional organization is highly generative by how people use the building and how they would interact with each other.

The HOS is perceived as being entirely open and welcoming. There must, however, be security measures implemented within such a building to allow particular elements of the embassy to operate safely and functionally. “Despite its openness, the House of Sweden has the same level of security as other Swedish embassies, neither lower nor higher.” Architectural strategies have been employed to help minimize the risk that such a new typology of architecture poses. First, there is one public movement/access point into the building. Within the building, the interior spaces are passively monitored via CCTV cameras.

Although the HOS has achieved a partial sense of integration with the inclusion of public facilities such as the exhibition space, lounge, conference rooms and auditorium, the embassy entity still remains highly segregated from the general public. Other than incorporating the entry to the embassy through the public foyer space, one can move between embassy floors...
without needing to re-engage with the public realm. The first floor of the embassy rooms is only accessible via a private embassy staircase that is separated from the public area. This creates a disengagement with the building entity as a whole, and therefore still lacks true integration.

Is there now the possibility of furthering this ideology of openness toward a more cohesive integration? What might the architectural manifestation now be?
3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Methodological Approach of the Project

I will travel to Sweden to further my understanding of the culture of Sweden and the traditions that form the architecture of this Scandinavian Country.

I will make visits to notable works of Swedish architecture and investigate and carry out critical analyses of civic buildings. These visits will be to buildings designed by prominent architects Erik Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz. I will also visit works by the emerging Swedish architecture firm Tham & Videgård Arkitekter. I will make an appraisal of the architectural works, including the Stockholm City Library, the Woodland Crematorium, Church of St Mark, Kalmar Museum of Art and the Malmo Modern Art Museum. This will not only give me a cross section of the works of Swedish architects but also a cross section of function, materials used and different topological locations.

The trip is fundamental in order to understand if architecture can be associated to a specific culture. Is there such a thing as representational architecture? Is there a link between a certain group of people and the shapes, volumes and materials that they use?

3.2 Content

As established by the House of Sweden, the incorporation of public engagement within the building volume can bring about a successful outcome. At the outset the guiding principles and occupant needs will need to be established. It will create a framework and assist in the scale of both site and building size to accommodate the necessary requirements.

3.3 Context

To establish a set of guiding principles I will study the drawings and details of the House of Sweden in greater detail. It will inform me of Swedish embassy requirements, occupant needs and the criteria for an appropriate site selection.

3.4 Exploration

Once a site has been sourced I will explore planning and spatial organizations. This will be via drawing plans and physical model making. The logic of a plan is foremost. “A good plan is the beginning and the end, because every good plan is organic. That means that its development in all directions is inherent-inevitable.”30 “To judge an architect one need only look at his ground plan. He is master then and there, or never”31 Critically analyzing the design explorations against the guiding principles, will provide insight to the functional placement of facilities and will determine the positive outcome of a building that encourages integration with the host city.

31 Ibid
4.0 REPRESENTATION IN ARCHITECTURE

Travelling through the Swedish countryside, one could easily stereotype Swedish architecture as that of the red barn, the red house, the red shed with white detailing and a pitched roof. Thus, one could say that this genre of architecture symbolizes or represents Sweden. A certain shape, a certain colour, a certain material has been chosen and has the effect of representation. Why and how has this been culturally cultivated? The buildings have been subsumed under the concept of ‘being’ Swedish.

This stance is the Romantic Fallacy; the first fallacy stated by Geoffrey Scott in, The Architecture of Humanism: A Study in the History of Taste. Romanticism is derived from the inspiration of literature. The attempt is to romanticize the aesthetic through a ‘style’. “Romanticism conceives styles as a stereotyped language.” And so, the ‘style’ is that of ‘being’ Swedish. Scott states “Romanticism allows what it knows, or conceives itself to know, about the circumstances among which forms were produced, to divert it from giving unbiased attention to the purely aesthetic character, the sensuous value, of the concrete arts...[thus]...architecture, in fact, becomes primarily symbolic.” It becomes an ideology of perception and the literature to which it has been ascribed. “And thus the romantic attitude which begins in poetry ends in pedantry, and the true spirit of architecture eludes it altogether.”

33 Ibid, p.51
34 Ibid, p.53

Figure 4.1: Sketch of Stockholm City Library
However, questions must be put forth about the endorsement of representation. For example, how can one ascribe ‘swedishness’ to the Stockholm City Library, (1928), by Gunnar Asplund? The architecture is the formal gesture of primary geometric shapes of a cylinder upon a square. Once the building was constructed it then became subsumed under the concept of ‘being’ Swedish. The building has not been fully evaluated on its own merits of delight. It has instead been hijacked by the romantic gesture others place upon it, and it becomes a crude generalization of a perceived stereotype. The meaning behind the form outweighs the form itself. The form becomes a redundant by-product to the event. Scott argues that a building should instead be judged by the architectural values of “Mass, Space, Line and Coherence”\textsuperscript{35}.

Materiality should not be associated with cultural identity either. For example, the Kalmar Museum of Art, (2008), by Tham & Videgård Arkitekter is constructed in concrete and timber materials. How could it be a representation of Sweden when it is built of universally used materials? Therefore, one must avoid stereotypes and preconceptions. These preconceptions cannot drive the design since they are too broad and allow only for crude generalisations.

One may discuss good architectural principles that have been employed for a specific building in a specific country, but this should not be solely associated with a specific culture or set of people. The architecture has derived from an attitude; a functional response to a set of guidelines realised from specific

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, p.53

Figure 4.2: Sketch of Swedish Museum of Modern Art
factors pertaining to that situation - function, topography and climate. Therefore, how is it possible to communicate “Sweden”? It is not about form; it is not about materials, and although an attitude to a typology will help manifest into architecture it should not be culturally specific. For example, the Swedish Government have a certain attitude to embassy architecture, as per the ‘House of Sweden’, but one cannot claim that the non-typical functions within the building envelope represents Sweden. Just that the people of Sweden would sanction such functions to be housed within the building.

The stance that will be taken for this project is that a building can communicate a culture. It is Swedish because there are Swedish people within the building. But what is more important is the architecture will be judged on Mass, Space, Line and Coherence. Thus, the notion of cultural identity and its representation is nullified.
5.0 URBAN ANALYSIS

5.1 Site Criteria

The proposed Swedish embassy will be located in Wellington, the capital city of the host country so that it can be positioned near other government buildings which is customary. A Swedish embassy in New Zealand would be classified as a small embassy in comparison to the ‘House of Sweden’ situated in Washington D.C. To appoint a site for the proposed embassy, specific criteria needed to be established. The key attributes associated with the successful selection for the site of the Washington ‘House of Sweden’ have been used as guidelines to aid in the site selection process. These were discussed in the “Seven Questions for Project Manager Jan Thews of the Swedish National Property Board.”

- A strategic location in the city
- Water and greenery close at hand
- Popular thoroughfare where people come to walk, jog or just enjoy being there

The proximity to central Wellington and New Zealand government buildings, as well as embassies and consulates of other countries was also a deciding factor. Furthermore, the ability to encourage public interaction at designated areas in the building, including exhibition spaces, a cafe and areas to dwell, was investigated.

36 “Seven questions for Project Manager Jan Thews of the Swedish National Property Board” http://www.sfv.se/cms/showdocuments/sfv/engelska/Long_arti_195.pdf

Other key criteria, set out by the U.S. Department of State for the new embassy in London, which were additionally considered to be relevant to the site selection process were:

- Located in the vicinity of public transport routes including buses and trains. An embassy must be easily accessible for citizens of the representative nation, particularly those who may be visitors and not currently residing in the host country.
- Be situated on a site with the benefit of rejuvenating the surrounding urban fabric. The outcome of the development should enhance the site and the local area so that it is a tribute to both the host country and the representative country.
- Security of vehicle approach and access for dignitaries entering and leaving the building due to the political status of many visitors and highly ranked government officials.


Figure 5.1: Wellington Harbour location plan
5.2 Site Location

Based on these guidelines, it was considered to be advantageous to favour a location in the vicinity of the Wellington waterfront as the area proffers a diverse range of activities. These include hospitality, business, residential housing and public recreational areas. The various pursuits are situated sporadically along the public waterfront promenade and, as a result, have created activity nodes allowing the public to have a physical connection with the water. The waterfront promenade has been enhanced by public street art; places to enjoy non-monetary leisurely activities. These findings were contributory factors in the decision to select a site in direct visual contact to this public movement line; the perception being that it would initiate the first step of interaction with the host country. The waterfront promenade was seen to be highly activated due to the perpendicular axis activating the area and connecting it to the surrounding areas.

At the outset of the research project for a Swedish embassy it was considered that a vacant site ear-marked for local waterfront development would be suitable. It would have the potential to rejuvenate the final sequence of the waterfront promenade and the visual termination of Whitmore Street.
The location was identified as Sites 8 & 9 of the Kumutoto Precinct set out in the North Queens Wharf Brief and formulated by the Water Development Subcommittee (WDS). The proposed embassy structure would have framed the pre-determined public service lane running between the two sites and would have additionally delineated the boundary of Kumutoto Plaza in conjunction with the existing buildings. The proximity to public transport offered opportunities for a high level of visual awareness within the CBD and greater Wellington area. The connection to the sea would be an important element to Swedish association.

However, after further research and initial concept designs it soon became apparent through critical analysis, that Sites 8 and 9 would neither be an appropriate nor a successful result. This was ultimately due to the scale of the site. After further investigation it became apparent that a smaller and more intimate location would be more appropriate. A site that became a part of the urban fabric rather than an isolated moment. The commercial activities were also not conducive as the site was beset by vehicle circulation. There was a lack of calmness. Also, it eventually became apparent that the locality would probably be deemed a ‘privileged’ New Zealand site. Its location as reclaimed land from the Wellington Harbour meant that the expectation was that it would most likely be reserved for a project specific for the public benefit of New Zealanders.
Figure 5.6: Sites 8 & 9 Concept sketch indicating public walkway

Figure 5.7: Sites 8 & 9 Concept sketch indicating relationship to heritage building and surrounding context
A new site then needed to be sourced. The selection was once more based on the key attributes stated earlier as well as the favourable qualities specific to Sites 8 and 9 within the Kumutoto Precinct. It was again important to have a site in close proximity to the Wellington Waterfront and in particular, visually connected to the waterfront promenade. The selection would furthermore be based on recognizing a site with the potential of incorporating a public movement line that was the driving force of the previously selected site. Finally, the site chosen was close by, found at 80 and 82 Oriental Parade. With the amalgamation of 67 Roxburgh Street, the potential of a movement line could moreover be re-established. This movement line would shape a tangible connection of the Oriental Bay suburb with the Wellington waterfront creating a link to the waterfront promenade. Currently, the promenade along Oriental Parade is underutilized as, unlike the northern section, there is an insufficient perpendicular movement axis to activate it.
5.3 Analysis from Aerial Image

In order to successfully integrate the proposed embassy building with the host city, particular urban analysis needed to be undertaken to investigate the site and the surrounding context.

The site is approximately 50 metres long and 20 metres wide at Oriental Parade tapering down to 10 metres wide at Roxburgh Street frontage.

Examination of the aerial image of the site environs indicates that the site occupies a strategic position along the waterfront skyline. Due to the corner position, it is the pivot point between the Wellington waterfront and the Oriental Bay connection. It has a natural visual proximity to the Oriental Bay park, Te Papa Tongarewa and the waterfront promenade and is a termination movement axis from the Town Belt. The site is also visual termination for both the Herd Street and Roxburgh Street axis lines.

Figure 5.9: Aerial image of immediate site and context
5.4 Panoramic Views

5.4.1 Oriental Parade

The photograph below illustrates the following characteristics:

- Currently situated on the site are two existing houses that have been a left-over from an early era of building.
- The site is greatly underutilised at present and thus redevelopment is warranted.
- There is a varied and inconsistent cluster of building heights, building masses and building materials along Oriental Parade.
- The buildings on either side of the site have little or no architectural merit and thus will not be used as a formal driving force in the design outcome.
- The facades along Oriental Parade allow for no visual rest or visual depth and are perceived as 2D planes.
- Both abutting buildings are built to the edge of the adjoining boundaries.
5.4.2 Roxburgh Street

The photograph below displays the following characteristics:

- Currently situated on the site is a residential house. Due to the potential outcome of the proposed project, the justification of demolition is warranted.
- Surrounding buildings are of varying styles, materials and heights.
- Lacks visual awareness of the Wellington Waterfront.

Figure 5.11: Photograph at corner junction of Roxburgh Street
perpendicular to the public walkway which inhibits the overall interactive stimulus of the walkway. This contributes to the Oriental Bay suburban area being isolated to the city below. At present, there is also a poor movement line further east of the site which is steep and uninviting. The other access point is from Hood Street, further west of the site, which has little to no practical progression connecting it to the waterfront promenade.

5.5 Pedestrian Patterns of Movement

The above diagram shows the existing relationship between the Wellington waterfront, the suburb of Oriental Bay and the Town Belt. Due to the steepness of the physical landform of the area, a clear connection is obstructed which is in stark contrast to the open view of the waterfront promenade towards Queens Wharf. Currently, there are limited access points linking Oriental Parade to the built-up suburb to the south. The waterfront promenade thus lacks adequate pedestrian movement lines.
5.6 Environment and Vistas

Wellington is synonymous with strong and blustery winds causing very unpleasant circumstances when partaking of outdoor activities. However, the site is situated in an area that is sheltered from the cold southerly winds, but is open to the warmer sea breezes. The northerly aspect of the location enjoys all-day sun from east to west, and in winter will continue to receive an abundance of natural light. The site location enjoys natural outlooks to key vistas, including the Museum of New Zealand - Te Papa Tongarewa and the Wellington Harbour. In contrast, the Oriental Bay suburban vistas have been restricted and gradually lost to the community due to the built-up nature of the area. The lack of any connecting access or public views creates a disjointed relationship between the suburban area and the Wellington Waterfront.
5.7 Activity

Currently, the surrounding urban fabric suffers from a lack of interactive frontages for the community. At present the area is predominately residential with sporadically situated public activities including an outdoor cafe, a restaurant, hotels and a community park.

Figure 5.14: Activities diagram
5.8 Topography

The building site has a height difference of 18 metres rising from Oriental Parade to Roxburgh Street. The greatest difference in slope is a convergence of contours at the mid point of the site creating a very steep rise/fall that results in a near shear cliff of 1:1.2. This naturally occurring landform continues around the bay and follows the natural geographical feature of the area.
5.9 Conclusions Drawn from Urban Analysis

The following factors summarize the most influential aspects of the site context and the opportunities arising from selection of this site:

- The strategic position along Oriental Parade; a corner site that is highly visible from the greater surrounding area and is the termination of the Herd Street and Roxburgh Street axis.
- The potential of connecting the Wellington waterfront promenade to Roxburgh Street by a public movement line.
- The proximity of the site to important public facilities, other government buildings, embassies and consulates.
- The shear walls of the adjoining buildings abutting the site, thus creating the design parameters.
- Topography that will be a generating element in the design.

Figure 5.17: Context plan
6.0 DESIGN PROCESS AND DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Guiding Principles

What will drive the design? What creates the parameters that the design decisions will be based on?

Through critical research into embassy architecture and the urban context of the proposed site, the following guiding principles have been realised that will form the foundation of the design proposal.

- Public movement line: How to successfully integrate a public/social realm while maintaining the necessary security measures for an embassy.
- Massing
- Approach and entry points into the building.
- Visual outlook toward important landmarks.
- Provide all necessary functional elements required for the day to day activities of an embassy.

Figure 6.1: Site plan indicating movement line through site
6.1.1 Movement Line

The public movement line will be the generating influence of the design. It will create the sphere and parameters that the design will need to adhere to. As already stated, interaction between an embassy can be facilitated by, and also be restricted by, the way the organization is arranged. It is essential that the public movement line, that passes through the building as part of the design, must perform successfully in order to achieve integration. This will be accomplished by the architectural strategy of interlocking spaces and configuration along the path. As indicated in Figure 6.2 the public movement line binds the separate functions within the single building envelope.

Figure 6.2: Diagrammatic organization layout

These functions include the embassy, the ambassador’s residence, the public and the semi-public realm. As shown in Figure 2.4 of the House of Sweden, these functions are not typically interlocked, but self isolated, stack volumes for privacy and security. However, by implementing an interlocking spatial organization pattern, it creates an intersection and visual connection between the embassy and the more public realms of the building. Therefore, the entire length of the public movement line can be interpreted as a threshold, as a linking device, and thus is critical to the success of the design of the building. But, “if considered merely as a functional linking device, then circulation paths would be endless, corridor-like spaces. The form and scale of a circulation space, however, should accommodate the movement of people as they promenade, pause, rest, or take in a view along a path.”38 Thus, the public walkway through the building could, and should, be viewed as an indoor street. By incorporating exhibition spaces, a cafe and viewing areas along the public movement line, it will encourage people to dwell, converse and contemplate. This stratagem will activate the boundary edge, allow for dwelling areas along the movement line and create a path that is wide enough to feel welcoming. If not fittingly implemented the building will have, not just a wasted movement line but it would also deter the desired integration between social groups.

6.1.2 Verticality of Movement Line

The vertical public movement line will play an unique role in the design. “Many great spatial sequences involve both movement along an axis and rising up towards higher levels...”39 A stair is a natural means of ascending and descending, a passive mode of movement. “It is the human body moving through space, the body as geometry.”40

40 Ibid, p.118
The verticality of the site is due to the natural topography; the 18 metre height difference rising from Oriental Parade to Roxburgh Street over a distance of 53 metres. It will be imperative to scale the vertical movement in a manner that does not become overwhelming or an unachievable target. Frank Lloyd Wright investigated a similar matter for the trajectory of the Guggenheim Museum, New York. It was intended by Wright that such a journey should and would feel effortless, that it would feel as if one were being carried by a wave that never breaks. To achieve this, Wright created a continuous plane from the entry level up and around the volume with activity nodes throughout the journey.

Although it would be advantageous for people from all working functions within the envelope to use the same vertical movement line, a pragmatic approach to embassy security is desirable and thus a certain measure of division has to be maintained. An example of stairs that functionally work while also allowing a degree of separation is the staircase in the palace of Chambord in France. Figure 6.3 The layout of the stairs allows for all occupants of the building to have their own individual stairway to their individual villa, while still maintaining visual interaction, and thus integration, within the same volume.

Ascending brings about a change of rhythm. It is a design tactic that imposes a human experience within the building. It can be used at a leisurely pace or as a direct route to a destination.

As previously stated, embassies are not normally seen as buildings that allow for passive public movement through the volume. The visual approach and entry to the building must be articulated in order to engage with the public in allowing them to feel that their participation is sanctioned; an existing view and an emerging view. For example, at the Swedish Museum of Modern Art (2009), Malmo, the façade is a mix of perforated and non-perforated steel. From a distance it appears as a monolithic facade, but on approach the emerging view within the building is presented. Thus, a sequence of views occurs, from the mass as a whole when viewed from afar to individual details gradually becoming evident on closer approach. This allows the building to be read as a sequence of views that are revealed to indicate movement and use of the building.

6.1.2 Approach and Entry Points into the Building

The gateway is the threshold into the building and so the approach and entry point becomes the beginning of the movement line. “Treat the main gateway as the starting point of the pedestrian circulation inside the precinct.” As previously stated, embassies are not normally seen as buildings that allow for passive public movement through the volume. The visual approach and entry to the building must be articulated in order to engage with the public in allowing them to feel that their participation is sanctioned; an existing view and an emerging view. For example, at the Swedish Museum of Modern Art (2009), Malmo, the façade is a mix of perforated and non-perforated steel. From a distance it appears as a monolithic facade, but on approach the emerging view within the building is presented. Thus, a sequence of views occurs, from the mass as a whole when viewed from afar to individual details gradually becoming evident on closer approach. This allows the building to be read as a sequence of views that are revealed to indicate movement and use of the building.

Figure 6.5: Photographs of Swedish Museum of Modern Art

44 Ibid p.252
The entry and exit point from Oriental Parade is determined by the existing external movement lines. The influencing dynamics of the existing waterfront promenade impact on the position of the entry/exit point. This will establish a synthesis between the waterfront promenade, the building and the Oriental Bay suburb. The entry point from Roxburgh Street will be situated to the eastern boundary point of the site. This will subsequently create a natural vista down through the site looking over the Wellington Harbour, reinstating the view which had gradually became hidden by the built-up nature of the area.

6.1.3 Vistas towards Important Landmarks

A series of framed views internally and externally along the movement line will establish a cluster of moments. As previously stated, the trajectory will be an important element of the design ‘event’. The site is positioned in close visual proximity to important identified Wellington landmarks. The occupant’s appreciation of the external vistas will be part of a sequential arrangement of views, creating a visual relationship between the trajectory and its surrounds.

As the proposed embassy building is situated on a corner site, the new structure should be of a greater height to that of the adjoining buildings. This will both emphasise the site corner and create a hierarchy along the facades of the street. It will attract attention to the significance of the particular building and encourage people to both visit and acknowledge the public movement line through to Roxburgh Street. It will enable the building to work as an entity and be the gateway to the suburb of Oriental Bay and the Town Belt.

The position of the gateway requires it to be a natural continuation of the existing movement path of the approaching visitor. “Place gateways at those points where the restricted access paths cross the boundary; and make the boundary zone wide enough to contain meeting places for the common functions shared by several neighborhoods.” This will thus create a natural edge that will encourage public interaction and form a visible main entry that is larger than the gateway.
The embassy rooms include:
- Reception and waiting area
- Board/meeting room
- Ambassador’s office
- Staff (administrative) areas
- Security

Public

The public areas include:
- Public walkway through the building, linking the waterfront promenade with Roxburgh Street.
- Exhibition spaces
- Cafe

Semi Public

- Multi-purpose space for events and conferences

Ambassador’s Residence

The Ambassador’s residence will be based on the requirements to house the Ambassador and his family. It will also be designed to cater for official engagements, private dinners and other formal diplomatic functions.

The functional organization process is an extension to the diagrammatic intention previously indicated. This is an exploration of the specific order of sequences in relation to certain activities. It enables the initial indications of relationships, hierarchies and spatial experiences. “A building cannot be a human building unless it is a complex of still smaller buildings or parts which

6.1.4 Functional Organization

The occupant’s needs have derived from early investigation into relevant functional requirements. The building will house a range of functions that have been organized into four categories.

Embassy

The functions required for a Swedish embassy to successfully operate in New Zealand has been based on the assumption that nine staff will be employed. This criteria has been based on the staff numbers working at the Embassy of New Zealand in Stockholm, Sweden. It will include 4 staff members from Sweden including the Ambassador and 3 secondary staff. Five locally engaged personnel from New Zealand, including the ambassador’s personal assistant, driver and two political support/translators, would also be engaged.

The building itself will be of ‘serial vision’ strategies of ‘here and there’; you see a view, you are drawn to that point, then a new view presents itself indicating to the visitor to continue on that path. This gives the visitor, or occupants, an understanding of how to move through the building.⁴⁹ For example, the Dutch embassy in Berlin by OMA / Rem Koolhus establishes a relationship between the path and surrounding context by framing views of important landmarks along the trajectory, thus connecting the elements.

⁴⁹ Gordon Cullen, p.35
manifest its own social facts.” Therefore, the many individual elements including the embassy, public walkway, multipurpose space, conference centre and public facilities, plus the social dynamics that are associated, allow the groups to create a social institution.

The functional layout has been constantly dictated by the public movement line through the site. The configuration of the walkway indicates a linear path which is the primary line of movement with a series of subsidiary spaces branching off. It enables every function to have its own realm as well as allowing each function to operate independently. In particular, the embassy will establish a visual connection with the other facets of the building while maintaining certain designated areas that reflect the security requirements as per the House of Sweden.

6.2 Process of Design

A number of explorations were undertaken in response to the critical analysis taken from investigations into architectural strategies and appropriate functional layout, principally derived from the House of Sweden.

The explorations undertaken were not designed in isolation, but were a development and/or succession of ideas learnt from each subsequent design. It was a process of discovery within the set boundaries of the guiding principles. Research by design is a method where many avenues of design exploration can be made. Each exploration was dictated by the movement line, and elements which worked successfully in one design were sometimes negated in the next due to incompatibility with further exploration of the movement line. It was a systematic approach achieved through the combination of floor plans and model making. This allowed the explorations to be critically examined in drawing plans as well as the three dimensional form to see if the architectural strategies proposed had been successful.

Following each exploration the design was evaluated against the guiding principles in order to establish the aspects which had, or had not, worked and what needed further design consideration.

50 Christopher Alexander, et al, p.469
6.2.1 Exploration One

The first exploration was an investigation using the guiding principles and architectural strategies that would manifest into a physical form on the site. The building is divided into landings of either public, semi-public or private occupation all accessed from the internal double staircase. The stairs which have two trajectories have been divided into either a public or an embassy stairway. The stairs have been designed in this way so that a person on one staircase is physically unable to cross to the other, yet is still visually connected.
Due to the limited visual boundary edge the facilities to be occupied were organised to the front of the building. It seemed advantageous to position the auditorium to the southern side as it requires limited natural light and would have its own mechanical ventilation. The function therefore was extended into the hillside.

The embassy was split between multiple levels to initiate movement along the vertical path.
6.2.1.1 Movement Line Experience of Exploration One

A. The gateway is expressed by a concrete framed entry that formally responds to the ramp that the person will take to ascend through the threshold into the building.

B. The person is given a framed vista of the destination within the building that is emphasized by a shaft of light in the distance with the silhouette of a cafe in front.

C. The person slowly ascends through the elongated threshold. They are then directed toward the light that is suggested around the corner.

D. The person makes a final ascent along the ramp with the destination point coming into view.

E. The person becomes integrated with the internal volume of the building and visually aware of the other functions of the building. They can then chose the path to take; the stair incorporating exhibition spaces toward Roxburgh Street or the stair to the embassy.

F. The stair leads out to Roxburgh Street.
The threshold journey has a dynamic spatial movement of sequences of views. The sequences are of the central volume that appears and is then hidden from sight before entering the major space. “the journey needs stages in order to unfold, and it needs a culmination,” \(^{51}\) The formal gesture of the walls indicate the space of the vertical movement line in the approach.

However, the design lacks a visual connection with Roxbough Street entry/termination. By not providing the visitor a view of the destination point “here and there”, \(^{52}\) there is no relationship between the points and thus the likelihood of people using the movement line through the building is diminished.

The design nullifies the required emphasis that should be placed on the atrium. This is due to the public not being required to physically engage with the volume as they have the ability to skirt the circumference.

The ascending point to the embassy from the ground floor is poorly located and awkwardly positioned. The communal spaces of the embassy reflect that of left over space rather than spaces in their own right.

\(^{51}\) Peter B. Jones, p.118  
\(^{52}\) Gordon Cullen, p.35
6.2.2 Exploration Two

This exploration was to investigate the architectural result in modifying the direction of the public movement line, to a more direct and visually linear approach to Roxburgh Street. The design also investigates a formal tectonic approach of the facade in order to direct visitors into the environment.

When a person disengages from the main movement line prior to entering the activity space, they are provided with a framed view toward the Wellington waterfront and Te Papa.
6.2.2.1 Movement Line Experience of Exploration Two

A. The approach to the building is visually indicated by the faceted facade drawing one’s eye towards the entry.

B. At the point of threshold there is a clear view of the movement line termination point at Roxburgh Street.

C. View before entering atrium.

D. The vertical movement line around the atrium has exit points onto landings with the waiting area at the base of the volume. A subtle architectural strategy is achieved by the separation of the public and private areas in a different manner to Exploration One. Disengaging the embassy staff and visitors to the embassy from the major movement line and then re-establishing them when they enter the waiting area at the bottom of the atrium achieves the integration sought. A 2 metre height difference has occurred over this distance.

E. View from the stairs toward the exit point of Roxburgh Street.

Figure 6.17: Exploration Two model photographs
6.2.2.2 Outcome of Exploration Two

By establishing a direct visual connection between the waterfront promenade and Roxburgh Street exit allows people to have a visual glimpse of the final destination. It creates a known ‘there’ for the public, suggesting that the movement line should, and could, be used.

Repositioning the building away from the eastern boundary creates a stronger visual awareness of the atrium and vertical movement line from the waterfront promenade. It activates the edge of the building in a positive manner.

The undulating facade would have a positive result in furthering the suggestion of using the movement line. The facade of the building would be of a mesh material that is far less permeable, stimulating attention to be drawn toward the atrium, “playing off one part of the composition against the other in order to intensify the total effect”\(^{53}\)

Although the facade did benefit the occupation, the risk was that it would dilute the visual importance of the site corner.

The functional layout of the auditorium was also unsuccessful and needed to be better integrated with the building as a whole. Also, the entire layout did not make the best use of the floor plan area.

\(^{53}\) Gordon Cullen, p.35
6.2.3 Exploration Three

Exploration Three is an extended investigation of Exploration Two. The functional organization is similar. The vacant space on the eastern boundary has been utilized, while maintaining the movement path alignment and the visual awareness to Roxburgh Street. The Ambassador’s residence was also investigated with a preliminary formulation of the intentions.

Figure 6.19: Exploration Three ground floor plan

Figure 6.20: Exploration Three first floor plan
Figure 6.21: Exploration Three second floor plan

Figure 6.22: Exploration Three third floor plan

Figure 6.23: Exploration Three Ambassador's residence ground floor plan
6.2.3.1 Movement Line Experience of Exploration Three

A. The approach to the building is now activated by the implementation of an exhibition space and a double height void along the margins affording visual awareness of the embassy reception behind.

B. The entry margin is largely open to give visual depth with a mezzanine level on the first floor.

C. Public entry into the exhibition space.

D. View along the movement path toward the stairs/atrium. The aesthetic form of the stairs is now much more dynamic. It is organic in shape and the movement for the user will be very natural while ascending. The form splays outward into the void in the direction of the waterfront giving visual priority.

E. View of movement path and entry to auditorium

F. View of atrium

Figure 6.24: Exploration Three model photographs
6.2.3.2 Outcome of Exploration Three

The vertical movement line becomes an ‘event’ through the dynamic formal aesthetic of splaying the stairs as the user proceeds vertically. By creating an ‘event’ the public will be inclined to use the stairs and not be intimidated by the 18 metre height change.

The mezzanine above the entry, which is the corridor for the ambassador to access his office, allows for the design to be constantly reinforcing the idea of encouraging integration with the host city. It allows for the ambassador to become more than just a title, but a human figure.

However, the public walkway feels isolated and other than the ambassador’s office, detracts from the idea of the integration of functions. The vertical movement line is located too far toward the rear of the building which may inhibit public use, or them even understanding it is there.

At this point the decision was made that this functional layout had become inconsistent with the aims of the guiding principles. It was decided therefore to reintroduce aspects of earlier explorations.
6.2.4 Exploration Four

Exploration Four progressed the formal aesthetic of the building, including the facade and roof. It was also an investigation into the opening of the ground level to be further transparent as a result of Exploration Three. The movement line itself remains unchanged with Exploration One.

The layout was organized for people using the building to visually engage with the vistas toward Wellington landmarks before entering the activity space.
Figure 6.28: Exploration Four second floor plan

Figure 6.29: Exploration Four third floor plan
This exploration also advanced the design of the ambassador’s residence to a higher level of detail. The functional layout, and how the public movement line would impact the design were dictating factors. It was essential to maintain the privacy for the Ambassador and his family while still being able to appreciate the panoramic views of the Wellington Harbour.
6.2.4.1 Development of the Experience of Exploration Four

A. The facade of the building is broken into strong vertical and horizontal lines using timber louvres.

B. As for Exploration One, visual awareness of the atrium is gained by the use of light.

C. Visual depth through upper levels into the atrium volume.

D. The front of the western exterior of the building has a triple height void. This would activate the frontage and encourage the use of the vertical movement line. It would also create a framed vista of the Wellington Harbour for people using the stairs. The architectural strategy was evolved from Exploration Two and Three.

E. The building has two exhibition spaces, one on the ground floor and one on the landing of the second floor, both visible from Oriental Parade.
6.2.4.2 Outcome of Exploration Four

The model indicates the importance for some, or all the facade of the building to reflect that the termination ‘pivot point’ is happening.

The facade of the building is visually intriguing and allows visual transparency into the building while not having to resort to a glass box. The visual transparency becomes more evident the closer one draws near. This establishes the architectural strategy of an ‘existing view and an emerging view’.

The ambassador’s residence is in aesthetic coherence with the embassy building. The building functional works, but further investigation and modification is required due to the formal aspects that the building needs to cater for. Having the public enter into the dining room through a meagre threshold is unacceptable.

Though the design as a whole was satisfactory it became gradually evident how important the stair had become. Not just in pragmatic terms of function, but the presence within the building itself. At this point the stair, though beautiful and functional, was too timid in the overall architecture. The stairs should demand a greater impression to all that use and view it and most importantly, should be the dictating factor for all other elements within the building and not the reverse.
6.2.5 Exploration Five

The emphasis for Exploration Five was the concentration of developing the potentiality for a greater expression of the stairs/atrium.
6.2.5.1 Outcome of Exploration Five

The exploration investigated expanding the vertical movement line to assume a more prominent role in the project, to reflect the comprehensive importance it has in the design as a whole.

This created a much larger atrium space that allowed the cafe, an exhibition space and the embassy reception to all inhabit the ground floor. It has a positive benefit of not only activating the boundary edge of the building, but also creating a vibrant internal space of activities and people moving around the edges along the stairs.

However, the building as a whole still lacks a coherence in design as the stair/atrium and the adjoining walls lack unity.

Figure 6.38: Exploration Five atrium sketch
Exploration Six continued the emphasis of the stairs and atrium indicated in Exploration Five. The functional layout remained the same. However, a psychological shift took place that was fundamental to the whole project. First and foremost, what does the stair want to be?

Once the form of the stairs could be established it would give rise to all other elements within the building emanating from the central focus of the stairs. Therefore, the surrounding wall of the stairs now curves with the form of the stairway, holding the space and giving it the dominant emphasis.
The exhibition space is accessed by various points along the stairs, allowing for passive engagement if one chooses.
6.2.6.1 Movement Line Experience of Exploration Six

A. The intention of the facade is to create an active edge. People will be able to clearly see others using the public vertical movement line; walking, dwelling and conversing with others along the walkway.

B. Once people have crossed Oriental Parade they will have a view looking deep within the building, into the atrium that houses the cafe and an exhibition space. This view into the building is more visible than previously designed. The exclusion of timber louvres from the margin of the facade will now be clad in glass.

C. The user will then lose this view and be directed through the threshold around the outer face of the stairs. However, they will be aware of the known ‘there’ and then be directed toward the light flooding from the atrium.

D. The person will then ascend into the atrium and the axis will terminate at the focal point of the exhibition space. There is then the ability to proceed to their chosen function and/or continue ascending onward to Roxburgh Street.

E. The walkway user will pass through the auditorium space before exiting to Roxburgh Street.

Figure 6.43: Exploration Six model photographs
6.2.6.2 Outcomes of Exploration Six

Exploration Six was the accumulation of ideas from preceding explorations. Through research by design it provided a growing awareness of what worked and what did not. The designs indicated favourable solutions that should either be maintained or evolved.

As stated earlier the stairs became the driving factor of all aspects of the design. The plan now clearly illustrates the intention, both functionally and formally.

The vertical movement line has evolved into both a stair and a ramp creating two distinct modes of ascending and descending. The stairs are a purely practical response, while the ramp suggests a place that would encourage people to stop, talk and dwell while looking out toward the Wellington Harbour.

The auditorium has been modified to become a more dynamic space, achieved via the implementation of tapering the walls that terminate at an oculus.
7.0 CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF FINAL DESIGN

The purpose of this project was to investigate if it is possible to design a Swedish embassy that encourages integration with the host country. This would be achieved through architectural strategies using research by design.

7.1 Public Movement Line

Initially, the vertical movement line allowed for both the public and people of the embassy to inhabit the same volume while maintaining the necessary security requirements of physical separation. However, during the exploration process the vertical movement line became not just an integral part of the design, but the dominant factor that dictated all other elements. It has subsequently established the building to assume a radial configuration path, comparable to the Stockholm City Library by Gunnar Asplund.

The double staircase has been designed to have a fluidity of movement, a participation of different user groups within the same volume; where to get to a destination or to move between subsidiary spaces one must re-engage with the central locus. This is the same for both public and embassy functions. It generates a pattern of movement that reaffirms the hierarchy of the loci and is thus constantly occupied. An active space that is highly visible from Oriental Parade that will encourage people to enter and engage with the building. This then helps the public to make use of the movement line to Roxburgh Street.

7.2 Massing

The massing of the building was justified by the location in which it is placed. It allowed for the building to extend vertically past the other adjoining buildings and reveal the facade, being the pivot point between the Central Business District and Oriental Bay. The architectural strategy of the facade aesthetic is to emphasise the verticality achieved by strong vertical timber louvres. The massing and also the timber louvres are in keeping with the sporadic nature of the many individual buildings of the street.

7.3 Approach and Entry

Due to the public movement line of the building, the approach is critical because it is the first point of visual awareness. “Make sure you treat the edge of the building as a “thing,” a “place,” a zone with volume to it, not a line or interface which has no thickness.”54 Thus, the approach is the dictating factor in tempting the public to enter the building and use the movement line and has been achieved twofold in the final design. The final positioning of the vertical movement line to allow the public to move past the facade, and a deep view to within the atrium volume that houses the cafe, an exhibition space and the public vertical movement line.

The anticipation of entering the atrium space presented from the street, has been architectural heightened through that of ‘serial vision’ of ‘here and there’. The transition between that of the street and the interior volume has

54 Christopher Alexander, et al, p.755
been emphasized through that of the threshold; “mark it with a change of light, a change of sound, a change of direction, a change of surface, a change of level, perhaps by gateways which make a change of enclosure, and above all with a change of view.” 55 This has been accomplished by elongating the threshold, changing the direction away from the destination of the ‘known’ and then drawing them back towards that destination from a different angle. The architectural strategy is heightened by moving from the dark into the light, ascending towards a goal.

The expectancy turns into reality as one makes one’s final ascent into the 16 metre high atrium volume. The axis terminates at the focal point of the movement line, a screen of densely clustered vertical louvres that draw one’s eye upward until the eye reaches the sculptural ceiling housing the oculus emitting pools of light. At this point one knows that one has arrived. It is a space of quality.

7.4 Visual Outlook toward the Host City

The design has incorporated framed openings of specific vistas along the walkway generating an organized focus that establishes an integration between the building and the host city. This has been counterbalanced by then framing internal views back to the centre of the atrium. “establish[ing] a visual relationship between a room [space] and its surroundings.” 56

7.5 Functional embassy elements

The ‘new’ House of Sweden, Wellington, New Zealand, houses all the necessary functional elements for an embassy to operate successfully. The double staircase has been a generating influence in the functional layout of the plan. The embassy and consulate is accessed from the ground floor via the reception desk. The embassy offices and the consulate office is housed on level one, while the ambassador’s office and board room is located on level three. The layout of the embassy has been designed in a linear security format from semi-public to private.

The Ambassador’s residence is not only in close proximity, it is also visually connected to the embassy building. It creates a continuous coherent aesthetic throughout the site extending the emphasis of linking Roxburgh Street to the waterfront.

55 Ibid. p.552
56 Francis D.K.Ching, p.174
8.0 SUMMARY

Throughout the entire exploration and design process, research by design has been the major contributing tool to reach a final outcome. The challenge of merging two social groups while maintaining the required level of security has provided unexpected solutions such as the double staircase. This has provided the fundamental principle for a plausible solution. It promotes public interaction and integration of the building entity with the surrounding urban context and the host city.

The final exploration demonstrates a radical approach to traditional embassy design and offers potential benefits if such a stance was taken. It has been suggested that this project is in conflict with the accepted traditional opinion of embassy architecture; indeed, that the stance taken is nothing other than perverse. The conclusion however, is that this design is not a perverse stance, but rather one that demonstrates that embassy architecture thus far with its fortress like exterior and prison like appearance is, instead, the perverse stance.
9.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY


10.0 APPENDIX

Staircase Diagram
Ground Floor Plan

- entry/exit point on Oriental Parade
- security room
- lift
- bathrooms
- fire escape
- exhibition
- embassy reception
- cafe
- storage room
- auditorium

First Floor Plan

- consulate office
- embassy offices
- lift
- storage room
- void
Fourth Floor Plan

Ambassador’s Residence entry/ exit point on Roxburgh Street

Fifth Floor Plan
Section A-A
Front Elevation
Entry Transition Sequence