Meeting at the Edge
Eloise Veber

Submitted in March 2015
for the completion of a
Masters by Project (Architecture)
Unitec Department of Architecture
Auckland, New Zealand
1424278
Abstract

New Zealanders have an undeniable attraction to the coast. As a nation bordering only oceans, natural activity at the edge has captured our attention and imagination since early settlement. Despite different cultural meanings, a love of our unique landscapes and wild oceans unites us. We are outward looking, obsessed by our edges. The meeting of the land and sea is a point of great energy and power that inspires and nourishes. Open spaces at the water’s edge provide an exciting and energising place to meet, relax and refuel. We radiate our cityscapes around a waterfront boulevard, and flock to the edge instead of a town square.

So if the coastline is our place to gather, what role can architecture play in facilitating these gatherings?

Public architecture in New Zealand seldom reflects this relationship we have with the foreshore. We are afraid to dominate the openness and interrupt the already powerful phenomena at play on the coast. We place humble structures at the edge; public toilets, baches, lighthouses, and lookout. Disused jetties become repurposed viewing platforms from which we can guiltlessly explore the spatiality of the transition from land to sea.

This project looks at two coastal museums as case studies: Te Papa Tongarewa - The Museum of New Zealand and the Museum of Anthropology in BC, Canada. These two museums are both situated on the water’s edge, in a place of transition from urban to natural, in situations where the local inhabitants have strong cultural connections to the land and sea. The studies look at the way the architecture of the museums reflects these aspects of the site in their contextual relationship, their form and the journey created for the user.

The Museum of Anthropology, which takes its form and layout from traditional Coast Salish architecture leads us down a series of ramps to an exploding main space where visitors and large carvings mingle. Arranged around a clear axis, the climax is a space that looks outward to the natural setting and faces the ocean, mirrored in pond directly outside the space, emphasizing our relationship to the landscape and the ocean. Te Papa on the other hand does little to capture our deep connection to the landscape and the sea.

This project proposes a new national museum in Northland, on the site of the Copthorne Hotel at Waitangi in the Bay of Islands. The museum provides a place where Māori, non-Māori and tourists can gather, reflect on the past and imagine the future, and celebrate a profound love of the place where land and sea interact.
Part One

I. Background
II. Te Papa Tongarewa – The Museum of New Zealand
III. Case Study One: Looking at Te Papa
    Context and Form
    Journey
    Conclusion
IV. Case Study Two: Canadian Soil
    Context
    Form
    Journey
    Conclusion
V. Being Edgy – City Vs. Sea, why is the edge so alluring?
VI. Diagrams
VII. Precedents
Research Question

How can we design waterfront public buildings in New Zealand that embody and celebrate our deep connection with the land and sea and our tendency to meet and gather on the edge?
I. Background

On the front page of the NZIA News, September 1988, Sir Wallace Rowling introduced a design competition for the new Museum of New Zealand. The museum was envisaged to be “a powerful expression of the total culture of New Zealand”\(^1\) with an “architecture that is the visible and concrete symbol of the spirit of our age in New Zealand.”\(^2\)

1988 marks a time of considerable political and cultural reform in New Zealand. The 1970s and 80s were a period of change for Māori rights activists and the political and judicial systems. Although Māori had been protesting the Crown’s confiscation of land since Treaty breaches started in the 1850s\(^3\), in the 1970s Māori were starting to be listened to. In February of 1975 Te Ropu Matakite (‘Those with foresight’), lead by Dame Whina Cooper (Te Rarawa) at age 75, left Spirits Bay in the Far North on a hīkoi to Parliament in Wellington to protest the loss of iwi land. A record 30,000-40,000 people joined them on the way, making history with the power of their voice.\(^4\)

---

3 Receiving no financial aid from Britain, the New Zealand government raised money by buying land from Māori at a very cheap price and selling it for a large profit to new settlers. This was a breach to the Treaty of Waitangi, which stated that no land could be bought or taken from Māori, even if Māori wanted to sell it e.g. 300 acres of land, now the Auckland CBD area, was bought from Ngāti Whataua for 200 pounds, and 90 acres was sold within 3 months for 24,000 pounds. (“Te Matakite o Aotearoa – The Māori Land March” see footnote below)
In 1977, protestors occupied Takaparawhau (Bastion Point) in support of Ngāti Whātua (tāngata whenua of central Auckland), after the government announced a housing development on land that the Crown had acquired in the Orākēi area. The protest took the form of occupation, where protesters formed a camp at the point and stayed 507 days before being forcibly removed by the New Zealand police.  

The phenomena of hīkoi and land occupation protests become a visual representation of Māori deep ancestral connection with the land. Documentation of the protests shows images of people physically connected to the land, protecting the land by standing on it. They become part of the land, as if chained to a tree.

---

The New Zealand government started to respond and make changes during this time. In 1974 Waitangi Day was made a national holiday, and the following year the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 was enacted, which recognised the Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand law for the first time. The Waitangi Tribunal was also established, and with the 1985 Amendment to the Act, the Tribunal was able to investigate claims dating back to the signing of the Treaty in 1840. The first claims were settled in 1992.

Our past national museums and their colonial framework were becoming stifling and inappropriate in this new era of consideration for the meaning of Te Tiriti and the rights of Māori. Their names alone, the ‘Colonial Museum’ (1865 - 1935) and the ‘Dominion Museum’ (1936 – 1997) describe a global phenomenon glorifying the European settlers against the indigenous people. There was a move to “liberate dominated peoples from the hegemonic interpretations of others so

---

8 New Zealand’s first national museum, called the Colonial Museum, was founded in 1865 and located on Museum Street in Wellington. By 1907 talk also arose of the need for a national art gallery, and by 1930 a design for a new building, housing both the national museum and art gallery, was underway. The Dominion Museum building, located on Buckle Street, was completed in 1936 and was designed by Gummer and Ford (Auckland Domain Winter Garden, Auckland Railway Station), and here our national collection stayed until its relocation to the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in 1998. In 1972, the Dominion Museum was renamed the National Museum. This building has now been repurposed by Massey University for its fashion design, textiles and interior design courses.
they [could] speak for themselves” and as Georges Erasmus told delegates in Ottawa at the Assembly of First Nations Conference November 1988, “We are embarking on the beginning of a new kind of relationship.”

It is believed that the Museum of New Zealand project was a strategic move toward ‘social commitment’ and, according to former Director of Museum Resources at Te Papa, William Tramposch, “the New Zealand government has supported the museum and accepted that museums and culture can help alleviate the pernicious conditions caused by racism and prejudice.”

Globally, changes began to take place in the 1980s in the approach to indigenous artefacts, consultation, repatriation and sensitive exhibiting of once confiscated artefacts. “Faced now with increasing calls for the repatriation of artefacts and reburial of skeletal remains, museums are recognising that First Peoples have legitimate state in museum operations and in how their histories are represented.”


In New Zealand, the Te Maori exhibition was the first step in a new direction for Māori to exhibit their taonga and present their culture. The experience of touring the Te Maori exhibition in 1984 changed the way many people thought about what it meant to exhibit taonga, and inhabit/claim space as Māori and as New Zealanders.

“The Metropolitan is synonymous with international art. It is the centre of the world of art. By taking our art to New York, we altered its status and changed overnight the perception of it by people at home and abroad. We brought Maori art out of the closet, out from obscurity, out from anonymity, and out of the cupboard of primitive contextualisation. In fact, we rescued it and freed it from the limiting intellectual climate of New Zealand, releasing it so it could be seen by the world.”

“The Te Māori exhibition was a milestone in the Māori cultural renaissance of the 1970s onwards. Featuring traditional Māori artwork, the exhibition at first toured the United States in 1984 and was shown in New York, St Louis, Chicago and San Francisco. It was a great success and returned to tour New Zealand, again to applause, and a swelling of Māori pride.”

This meant that towards the mid-80s, change towards biculturalism was exciting - a positive step forward, shedding the framework of past oppression in the 150 years before. There was need to overhaul the exhibits of our national museum in a way that would reflect changes to New Zealand’s changing and multicultural society. Moreover, New Zealand’s national collection of art and artifacts had outgrown the capacity of the National Museum on Buckle Street (see footnote 8). In 1988 a formal consultation process began for a new building on Wellington’s waterfront next to Taranaki Wharf, an area of reclaimed land that was pushed up by the Wellington earthquake in 1855, and the site of the former Te Aro Pa.

---


The decision to run a competition to decide on the architect for a new national museum was one of optimism for an image of bicultural identity that was “creative, intuitive, innovative, inventive and sensitive.” Rowling’s press release also enthusiastically emphasised a real commitment to finding “a truly indigenous architecture.” A new building could mean a fresh start and a chance to fully adopt new ways of thinking. “In contrast to the previous National Museum – housed in a 1930s neo-classical edifice… Te Papa has embraced the role of being ‘a place to encounter’.”

The competition process to decide on an architect for the museum ran from 1988 – 1990, and of the five shortlisted firms, JASMAX Group was awarded the project. Construction took four years, and the building opened its doors on 14 February 1998.

The museum’s official name is Te Papa Tongarewa – The Museum of New Zealand, often Te Papa for short. Papa refers to the land – Papatuanuku (earth mother), Papa kainga (village) and also papahou - a carved treasure box for taonga (culturally significant objects). Tongarewa means treasure and is used in the context of well-respected people and chiefs, a type of greenstone, and the mauri or stone buried in a building's foundations.

Te Papa is a favourite destination for tourists and has received over 20 million visitors since opening its doors 16 years ago. The museum is an undeniable success with tourists and local visitors, and manages to bring the museum experience into the digital age. However, there are areas where Te Papa under-performs, and the most glaring of these is that the architecture is not what we were promised.

16 Ibid, 1.

Fig 7. Cover of Architecture New Zealand, July/August, 1990. The issue printed the designs and design statements of the five shortlisted proposals in the competition.
The design competition began in 1990, and in the competition brief the aim of the building was stated as the following:

- Unite the National Museum and National Art Gallery as one entity
- Unite the collections of the two institutions so that New Zealand’s stories could be told in an interdisciplinary way
- Be a partnership between Tāngata Whenua (Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand) and Tāngata Tiriti (people in New Zealand by right of the Treaty of Waitangi)
- Speak with authority
- Represent and appeal to New Zealand’s increasingly diverse society
- Be a place for discussion, debate, involvement, and celebration
- Link the past, present and future.¹⁹

The brief is a daunting task - to embody the essence of a new national identity, and be a space allowing that new identity to play out.

There have been many critiques of Te Papa since its unveiling in February 1998, but none so far detailing the architectural experience of the visitor. It is essential that we look at the architecture of Te Papa and learn from it.

I would like to revisit Te Papa with critical eyes. Almost 20 years after the building has opened, does the building achieve what it set out to do?

What follows are two case studies. The first is a phenomenological study of a journey through Te Papa, looking at the key circulation, public and open spaces within the museum. The second is a comparative study of the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, designed by Canadian architect Arthur Erickson in 1976. I analysed the two museums according to three aspects of their architecture: context, form and journey.20

Fig 9. West Elevation from the working drawings for Te Papa by Jasmax Group.

20 Francis Ching published Space, Form and Order in 1996. In order for us to analyse buildings he identifies 5 key systems – the spatial system, the structural system, the enclosure system, the circulation system, and context. More recently in 2009, Wolfgang Kemp published Architecktur Analysieren. He divides the book into 8 chapters, again each is an aspect of architectural analysis - the detail, the unit/unity, the space, the plan, the façade, the body, the type and the context. After comparing and combining Kemp and Ching’s systems of analysis, I have identified three aspects to analyse for this project: Context, form and journey. I used these three aspects to analyse the findings in my two case studies: Te Papa and the Museum of Anthropology, UBC.

Francis Ching, Space, Form and Order (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), XII-XIII.
Wolfgang Kemp, Architecktur analysieren, (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 2009).
III. Case Study One: Looking at Te Papa

CONTEXT AND FORM

Two halves

JASMAX’s winning competition proposal was a building of two halves - a clear diagram showing Māori and Pākehā coming together. A six-storey rectangular exhibition building facing the city housed the Pākehā exhibits, and a ribbed roof structure, covered by a series of curved roofs, faced the sea and housed the Māori exhibits. The two forms were joined by a concourse or ‘common ground’ - a partially outdoor space that bridged the space between the two forms. The concourse also acted as a covered entranceway - extending out to the north-east entrance of the site and inviting people into the centre of the building.

In their design statement, JASMAX stated:

“We propose a building that supports encounter between tāngata whenua and tāngata tiriti within the context of papatuanuku, a building which preserves and respects the differences in the cultures while promoting a common ground between them.”

The built museum retains elements of the competition entry. There are still three main building elements – two halves meeting, and a linear element that counters this.

The two halves still house the Māori and non-Māori exhibits respectively, yet as they are no longer separated by a semi outdoor space, they are less distinct from each other. Rather than the concourse, there is a perpendicular wall, which extends and draws people into the centre of the building.

Christine McCarthy, in her essay *Rethinking Bicultural Architecture in New Zealand*, notes the architectural nature of biculturalism: “The move from the tidiness of homogeneity to the spatial complexities of negotiated power-sharing, and the recognition of two complex groups of people....is architectural in nature.”

A form that symbolised the meeting between Māori and Pākehā was part of Te Papa’s brief. Yet rather than a symbol of two halves of a whole, we have two different symbols in conversation – or in awkward silence. While the city grid metaphor is said to encompass Pākehā, a combination of marae and cliff-like forms express Māoritanga. A city grid with it’s back to a marae. Urban vs. natural.
Fig 12. Hobson lands at Waitangi for the first signing of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Fig 13. Waka crews land at Te Tii Bay on Waitangi Day 2015.

Fig 14. Te Papa’s north facade. Children play on the sloped surface as passersby take a scenic shortcut from the city to Waitangi Park.
Sea

“Te Papa was architecturally designed as the meeting of Maori and Pakeha ‘halves’ on a shoreline location.” 22

Nestled on the edge – the building sits on the point of transition from city to sea, which is significant in a country where love of natural form takes precedence. The edge is a meeting place, and Te Papa’s architecture embodies the meeting of two conditions.

The beach is a space of historical significance to New Zealanders, as the place where Polynesian and European explorers first landed; it is an entry point to this new land. It also became a point of exchange between Māori and Pākehā during Treaty signings. Today we remember the signing of the Treaty at beach locations. 23

“It is both fitting and provocative that Te Papa’s basic mission – representing nationhood – is being decided at this physical location, and is now being controversially negotiated through the subject of ‘the beach’. ” 24

The sea is an important element in the narrative of ‘City to sea’, yet the building is closed to the harbour. Although the waterfront location was considered in the design, the building has difficulty relating to its context.

At Stage 2 of the competition, the finalists were informed that they must step the museum back from the water’s edge, to make way for the Wellington 500 Street Race. The race took place three times during the design and construction phase, from 1993-96. The Street Race was discontinued due to lack of financial backing in 1997, before the Museum opened its doors in February 1998. 25

All that remains is an overly wide boulevard between the museum and the harbour. The design solution for the Northern façade is an embankment or fortress wall. It faces a blank wall to the sea. With such a lack of porosity, we are deprived visually and physically of a connection to the sea. This only makes us crave it more.

Paul Williams, “A Breach on the Beach: Te Papa and the Fraying of Biculturalism,” (Museum and Society, no.2): 82.

Every Waitangi Day a fleet of waka, including Ngāpuhi and their waka Ngatokimatawhaorua, come down the Waitangi River to land at Te Tii Bay. The waka crews perform haka on the sand to onlookers, to acknowledge the signing of the Treaty. In February 2015 Ngāti Paoa celebrated the 175th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty by bringing their waka Koturi Tuarua down the Tamaki River and landing at Karaka Bay where they were met by their iwi to share in formal celebrations.

Paul Williams, “A Breach on the Beach: Te Papa and the Fraying of Biculturalism,” 82.

“Meeting fails to resolve street car race’s fate,” The Dominion, October 11, 1997, 3.
Planting blurs the line between the confines of the museum and the disused road, mediating the abrupt meeting of conditions. With further development to Wellington’s waterfront in the early 2000s, the boulevard has become an important linkage between the city and Mt Victoria, and Wellingtonians flock to fill the gap on a sunny day, making it a highway of rollerblading families, preteen skateboarders and picnickers. However this is more a reflection of the waterfront as a whole, and can’t hide the failure of the architecture to address and celebrate its context.

As a passer-by, the boulevard reads as alive, open public space, and the museum as private, closed and somewhat dead. The northern wall speaks of cliffs and glaciers plunging fiercely into the ocean, but also of disused structures: a crashed cruise ship, a mummified fort, an overgrown waterfront prison.

The marae is sea facing to acknowledge the connection of Māori to the ocean. Yet the architecture floats the marae to the top of huge sloping walls, seaside cliffs, and renders the area a scenic lookout. This is an awkward marriage of the vernacular and the deeply spiritual.

Fig 17. Landscaping softens the divide between museum and boulevard.
Mountain

Linzey reads the seaward form of the museum as mountainous:

“The permanent exhibition spaces pile up like mountain ranges. Entering this part of Te Papa is like entering the earth itself, metaphorically going into the ground, or under the mountains, engaging patrons in a mythological as well as geological underworld. A number of issues concerning Maori sensitivities, particularly regarding architectural aesthetics, are also addressed through this metaphor. For example, Cliff Whiting’s innovative and provocative pan-tribal marae, which according to Maori protocols should be in touch with the earth, is instead perched on the roof of the museum, setting up possible associations with Ranginui, the sky of Te Ao Mārama, rather than Papatuanuku, the earth. This mytho-spatial reversal is made more convincing by Te Papa’s overall architectural composition, since the mountainous mass of the building itself constitutes, at least metaphorically, a grounded place.”26

The issue of groundedness goes further than the marae. Upon entry we become overwhelmed by such a massive bunker that we lose our ability to place the building in its environment. We gain no understanding of the nature of the ground it sits on, where land starts and water begins. Nor is there acknowledgement of surrounding natural landforms such as Matiu Somes Island and Tangi Te Keo Mt Victoria.

Grid

On the south façade, a multistorey rectilinear building is embedded into the whole. The intention is that the galleries housing the European exhibits face the city, and relate Pākehā culture to the city grid. Yet with the clichéd rhythm of an office block, it can’t speak to its context, missing the local language of the repurposed warehouses of the Courtenay quarter.

The south façade has its eyes closed to the street. At ground level it is surrounded by an open-air car park, which requires Wellingtonian pedestrians to filter through parked and driving cars to get to the building’s entrance, and leaves them totally exposed to the weather. Perhaps the open car park is there to reinforce connections to the urban context.

An issue also lies in the application of a city grid metaphor. An image of a grid, whether 2D or 3D, does not capture the true qualities of a city organised on a grid plan. Spatially what is exciting about a city grid is the contrast between solid and void, and light and dark. In Wellington we experience added delights due to the greatly varied terrain. There are the San Francisco style view shafts gazing across the city from the Dixon Street steps to the top of Majoribanks Street. This shaft cuts a line across the city, connecting two otherwise unconnected parts of the landscape. Another is the wind-tunnel effect, causing intense lateral gusts of wind. Walking down one street can be an exciting leapfrog in and out of a storm. This excitement is not captured in Te Papa’s grid form.

Wall

During the developed design stage, what was the concourse separating the ‘two halves’, became a 4-metre wide, six-storey high basalt clad wall. It counters the duality of the two halves by cutting through the building perpendicular its centerline.

Architect Pete Bossley, in Redirect, Redevelop, explains that as well as suggesting the presence of greater forces than the building itself (geological power or Ruamoko), the wall addresses the issues of exceptional volume, the required condition of interior darkness, and biculturalism, and emphasises “the spatial flow from land to sea, from urban to natural.”

wall expresses this special flow by going through a physical transformation. On one end it tries to mirror the scale of the buildings around, and on the other end starts to speak of cliffs or icebergs, impressive natural forms that stand tall and proud towards the sea.

In his essay A fault-line at Te Papa, Linzey says the wall can be “likened to the ridge-pole back-bone of every traditional meeting-house on marae throughout New Zealand.”

Yet the wall does not perform the role of the spine. On one end it pierces the envelope and marches forward - a signpost to the city. At the other, it thrusts out and plunges down through the wharf into the ocean, as if punching a hole in the wharf and leaking water into the museum grounds. Both its ends draw the energy of the spine into the ground, as if running down the pou and into the mauri, yet the penetrations undermine the pono – a body with skin, whose spine is always connected by ribs. The wall also protrudes out the ceiling like a massive humpback, the shrivelling body hanging off the exposed backbone.

From the exterior the wall is a prominent organising feature that directs our movement. It signifies journey. But do we relate to its sense of journey once inside? It is always described as one wall, but closer inspection, it is really it is two parallel walls, or a hollowed wall. Whether we know it or not, we weave under, through and inside it along our journey through the museum. Activities that happen in and around it are banal - lifts, stairs, seats, or profound - our ascent to the marae. It doesn’t retain the sense of clarity that it does on the exterior of the building. And we, also, have little clarity in our journey once we enter the building.

Fig 19. Greeted by a driveway - view of wall from South approach.

Fig 20. Facade finishes in a carpark - South facade.

Fig 21. Pavement only wide enough for two abreast, one pedestrian walks on the driveway - at the base of the south facade.
JOURNEY

Approach

There are a number of ways to approach the building and all of them are awkward. As a pedestrian looking for the museum, at least Te Papa is easy to find. Situated at the edge of the lower Courtenay Quarter in a former industrial precinct, the building is surrounded by wide streets, low-lying warehouses and three storey buildings. The wall that protrudes proudly south towards Cable Street successfully identifies the main entrance from all directions. It gives a sense of grandeur from the street and steering us around into a large plaza. We are welcomed visually, but not physically.

The western approach from Taranaki Street is probably the most common. As we approach lower Taranaki Street we see Te Papa easily, but the sheltering buildings end before we have crossed the last two blocks, leaving us to brave high winds and horizontal rain for much of Wellington’s stormy year. In order to shorten the distance spent in wild weather, it is tempting to cut diagonally through the adjacent petrol station, and make a run for it across a busy arterial route. Whether we take the short cut or not, we finally cross the street, only to be stranded in a tour bus lane. Once we make it over this, we finally have a moment to pause. An oversized plaza lies before us, allowing us a moment to pause. An oversized plaza lies before us, allowing us a moment to take in the museum building. We see a tall fortress at the edge of No Man’s Land, and notice that the entrance sits at the convergence of two forms.

Still with no shelter around, we embark on a long cold crawl to the main door. Unless we are arriving in a tourist bus, the approach is not designed with us in mind.

29 No Man’s Land is an area of contested land, that remains uninhabited due to fear or uncertainty. In WWI this was the space preceeding the trench where neither side wanted to go because it was too dangerous.
Interior

Upon entering a marae, as one crosses the marae ātea one moves from the world of light towards Te Ao Mārama – the world of darkness, cosmology, knowledge and understanding.

Entering the museum we move from the world of light towards one of darkness. According to Bossley the wall was introduced in part to help organise a separation between the spaces that could have natural light and those that couldn’t, so we continue to see the play of separation of light and dark as we move through the building. Once in the entrance foyer we see the wall full height, and watch it start to change. The polished basalt becomes porous, bridges enter it and we start to interact with it. The coat check and lift shaft are placed within the wall’s core.

With the convergence of two forms still overhead, the entrance foyer is unified at floor level, and offers us one clear path forward. It is a place of interacting with other visitors, those arriving pass those leaving and vice versa.

Ascending to the Wellington Foyer, we enter the core of the building. We’ve had a clear journey up until now, with one main path that is clearly defined. It is at this point our paths split into many, and the journey starts to fragment. This is potentially the space where the division between light and dark could be fully understood. After mounting the stairs we enter the cleavage on the light side, and turn to face the dark side.

30 The marae ātea is the courtyard in front of the wharenui on the marae. It is where the pōwhiri or formal welcome takes place, which is a reenactment of the creation story, the separating of Ranginui (sky rather) and Papatuanuku (earth mother). The marae ātea is the domain of Tumatauenga (god of war and people). Formal greetings and discussions take place here, and it is the appropriate place to discuss grievances or contentious issues. (“marae ātea,” Maori Dictionary, accessed March 9, 2015, http://www.maoridictionary.co.nz/word/3665.)

However, rather than gazing upon mystery, the underworld, the past, death and the unknown, we gaze up to spotlights, their reflections on shiny stone surfaces, and lit exhibition names ahead of us fighting for our attention. This view into the depths of darkness is disappointingly familiar.

“The core, a dramatic space the full height of the museum, allows visitors to see all floors from the Wellington Foyer, and was conceived as a unique space for changing exhibitions exploring New Zealand’s environmental and cultural identity.”

The purpose of the foyer and atrium or ‘cleavage’ was to create a void where visitors could make sense of a place where many paths merge. They would be able to see each other from different levels and exhibitions, and retain a sense of unity. But the visual links are weak. After taking in the views of Wellington harbour, we turn to face the centre of the building. Here we expect the purpose of our journey to be revealed to us, but it no clear purpose is revealed. A view of the levels above is concealed by bridges. The Signs of a Nation exhibition, which cites its home at the crest of the cleavage space, cannot be seen from this distance. And we do not get a sense of darkness, or the wonder of Te Ao Mārama.

The centre is not a place to stay. Multiple paths offer us options that lead us away from the centre, yet the pathways leading away from the void are ambiguous. Visual links become a tease because we do not know how to get there. On the other hand, Te Ara a Hine lays before us but gives no clue as to where it will lead us. The most popular route for visitors will no doubt be straight into Mountain to Sea, as the exhibits are so visible from the foyer – destination is known.

If art, a sense of exploration or continuing a journey attract, then we follow Te Ara a Hine, and enter into the core of the wall.

Being inside the wall brings up Richard Sennett’s idea of border vs. boundary, from his essay The Public Realm, where a border is porous and a play of flow and exchange, and a boundary is two conditions meeting at a finite edge - one stops and the other starts. We must ask what is the nature of the wall? A fault line is a line that can be drawn but not a line that can be experienced until it has ruptured, and then it is a fissure, a gap, the space in between one condition and another. Moving up the ramp we have on the left framed views of the harbour that bathe us in light, and on the right, a solid looming wall, separated into bays in which art can be displayed. Te Ara a Hine reads as if we are in a wholly defined space – a positive rather than a negative. But if we think back to the metaphor, we are potentially in the gap between light and dark, which is surely a beautiful moment and cause for architectural celebration. A stairwell leads in the opposite direction to Te Ara a Hine, again into the core of the wall itself, but we see no celebration of this.

After ascending the ramp of Te Ara a Hine, a final stairwell gives us the promise of moving into a space bathed in light. But the gift at the end is disappointing. Fire exit doors protecting a majestically scenic balcony beyond. Who is this view for? And next to it, the exterior courtyard that is the marae ātea or courtyard showing formal gateway from Te Ara a Tane.

After calming an initial sense of disorientation, we proceed down the hall and find ourselves on new ground. Rongomaraeroa, a marae for everyone, is grounded in this homely, colourful space. The wharenui, Te Hono Ki Hawaiki, is adorned with Cliff Whiting’s beautiful depictions of Te Rā, Maui, Paikea, Ranginui and Papatūānuku amongst others, bringing life and movement to everyone that enters, no matter their origin or knowledge base of Māori spirituality and mythology.

Cliff Whiting explains his process of designing and building the wharenui in a contemporary way, where he allowed visitors to come through while they were carving, a process that would usually be tapu. He enjoyed the process of consulting with the public through the phase of making, something that felt appropriate for a marae where everyone is to belong. Rongomaraeroa remains a place that visitors are free to explore, and spatial divisions of tapu and noa only become activated during formal ceremonies.

Personally I feel warmed by the idea of not being formally welcomed onto the marae, because being a New Zealander I understand that means it must be my place. But as a foreigner, entering a space with an empty stage and empty chairs is ambiguous. Although the room is homely, and Whiting’s carvings enliven the pre-European stories of our nation, the marae aspect is specifically deactivated. If

---


there are no formal proceedings taking place, we rely on display boards to inform us spatially, and we miss the learning that could be available around marae, marae ātea and the concepts of tapu and noa. We can pass through the marae and weave out to the exterior courtyard, breaking the customary sense of spatial progression.

From Te Hono ki Hawaiki we pass through the Māori exhibits and come to the cleavage for the second time. This is where we see the exhibition spaces facing each other – Māori and Pākehā. Deirdre Brown suggests the dynamic here of tāngata whenua facing manuhiri at a pōwhiri (see diagram). “The two wings are reminiscent of the visitor and host sides of the meeting house, with the space of encounter between” and “the first people have a spatial relationship with those who have arrived.” 36 The issue here is that although it could be imagined that these spaces are arranged to be facing each other, the visitors using them don’t face each other, and as the floor falls away into the void, there is no forum to meet each other.

Signs of a Nation, the exhibition of the Treaty is placed in between the two sides, and is presented as the central exhibition, perhaps of the whole museum. But the exhibition isn’t actually in a central space. In plan it is part of the cleavage, but as we experience it, it sits tucked in a dead-end alcove, allowing us to pass right by and not engage.

Mark Amery in his paper Changes of Heart: Toi Te Papa – Art of the Nation, discusses VOID, the new work by Bill Culbert and Ralph Hotere. “A core is asserted within a building that has been criticised for its lack of clear central axis.” Although we would have passed the floor level element of the artwork upon arrival, it isn’t until we reach this middle floor that we have a chance to lean over and contemplate the circle below as a spatial indicator. The work connects a black circle framed with light on level 1, to a suspended ring of light on level 6, framing a special core for us to contemplate.

Circumnavigating the cleavage we find ourselves again inside the wall. This is point where the cleavage and the wall intersect, and is also the meeting place between the two exhibition spaces... it is the café. The barista is actually making coffee within the core of the wall. This space does little to place us in New Zealand. It reads casino hotel lobby.

Looking down over the bridge that leads to the visiting exhibition space is actually one of the most successful view shafts in the museum. This is the time when we see back to where we have come from. We look down to visitors coming and going and identify with them. We are reminded of where we are in relation to the harbour, and we can see the wall as a place of change - a transition from light to dark.

36 Deirdre Brown, Māori Architecture: From Fale to Wharenui and Beyond (Auckland: Raupo NZ, 2009), 150.
Exterior

If we opt to take the lift from the Wellington Foyer, then a sense of journey becomes even more broken, and the exhibits unfold in no particular order. Yet a surprise is revealed on the way up. Next to Level 6 is labelled Viewing Terrace. Is this the climactic space?

We arrive at an oddly dead, small floor on a landing flooded with light. The ceramics exhibition space, a small balcony surrounding the very top of the cleavage, mysteriously appears within the darkness to the right. Delightfully, there hovers the upper ring of the VOID artwork, so we know we have arrived at the top of the core. At this point it is necessary to guess where the viewing terrace is. Taking the only other path on level 6, we cross a small courtyard and suddenly plunge down a dog's leg ramp into the centre of the wall. Finally the core of the wall feels how we might have expected. A dramatic place of darkness within shafts of light. An expression of the mighty power of nature. Then out the other side to a blinding terrace (if we’ve hit Wellington on a good day). It is reasonably caged in, for obvious reasons, but allows us a good hit of fresh air, sense of height and conquering, and if we perch just next to the glass then we can look past it’s structural fins and enjoy the view of the harbour below. We also get an impressive view of the top of the wall, and the way it casts itself from one side of the site to the other and through the wharf like a cliff into water.

If the marae ātea is a family-friendly scenic lookout, then this is the viewing platform for experienced hikers.

Fig 38. Viewing Terrace.
Conclusion

Te Papa was intended to express and facilitate a coming together of Māori and non-Māori. It was to be a place where New Zealanders would feel represented, and also feel at home. Nestled on the cusp between city and sea, it would express our differing world views, and propose how our varied relationships with the land and ocean might be aligned on a kind of continuum where we join in the middle.

But the building doesn’t successfully relate to its immediate surroundings, and therefore has trouble presenting an expression of our deep connections to land and sea. Formally we have two halves forming a whole, that apparently face outwards to look at their surroundings. Yet one half is closed to the city and the other is closed to the sea.

Nor is the idea of the continuum clearly communicated in the architecture. A guiding wall knows its journey on the surface, but loses clarity on what that means within. A journey is about connections and pauses; about knowing where we have come from, and where we are going whilst pausing to learn and reflect and engage with those accompanying us. Learning and reflecting through the architecture of this museum is hard work. Our moments of pause have split visions, or are too welcoming to challenge us to ask and learn new things about what space means to others. We have no sense of where our journey fits into the whole, physically and spiritually, and therefore don’t know how to visualise ourselves within it. We can expect more of our museum.

To provide a comparison for the case study on Te Papa, I analysed a similar journey at another museum – the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. I analysed the same three aspects of the architecture: context, form and journey.
The Museum of Anthropology (MoA) was designed by Canadian architect Arthur Erickson in 1976. Erickson was in the later stages of his career. He had designed various public and institutional buildings in Canada and abroad, and went on to design the Vancouver Art Gallery and Law Court in 1978.

The MoA is at the edge of the campus of the University of British Columbia, which sits within the Pacific Spirit Regional Park on a peninsula about an hour’s bus ride from downtown Vancouver. The peninsula is unceded First Nations territory, belonging to the Musqueam people.

CONTEXT

Much like in New Zealand, Canadians are constantly confronted with powerful landscapes. Views with a large depth of field juxtapose vast oceans and rivers with the monumentality of encircling mountain ranges. Also like New Zealand, the indigenous people have a strong ancestral connection with the land.

The village life of the Northwest coast nations has always been based around the sea. Their villages were arranged around the arc of a bay, with all of the buildings facing the sea.

The layout of MoA is based around the villages of Haida Gwaii, an island up the coast of British Columbia. The museum looks out to a large outdoor exhibition area, featuring replicas of the architecture and carvings of the Haida people. Exhibits are arranged around a central pond, which hints at the traditional relationship to the coast. The Salish Sea is only a hundred metres further down a high cliff, although trees now hide the view.

37 The pond was never actually built until the Winter Olympics, which was held in Whistler in 1998, when a temporary pond was put in place for a ceremonial welcome at MoA so visitors could experience the building as it was intended. It was so popular that it has since been built permanently.

IV. Case Study Two: Canadian Soil
A traditional Haida village is comprised primarily of longhouses, large dwellings big enough to house one chief and his whole extended family (up to 40 people). Longhouses are one large space where everything takes place – sleeping, eating and also ceremonies like the potlatch. The families lived around a fire with woven mats for sleeping and wooden boxes for sitting. The secondary buildings in the village are plankhouses. These were also places of dwelling as well as the spiritual realm of the ancestors. There would be a fire in the centre of the room in winter and a small, boarded hole in the roof as a chimney. Haida architecture is characterised by its massive post and beam structures using whole cedar logs as structural beams. The large size and structure of their buildings helped to withstand strong winter storms.

Haida communities were basically disbanded at the end of the 19th Century due to smallpox and other diseases, so no original Haida houses or totem poles remain. Between 1958 and 1962, prominent Haida artist and sculptor Bill Reid led a team commissioned to design and build replica buildings and totem poles for the museum. The houses and poles were originally installed in Totem Park, in another part of UBC and were relocated to the grounds of the MoA in 1978. The buildings include a longhouse, a larger family dwelling or bighouse, a plankhouse, a small mortuary chamber, and many carvings and totem poles. They were the first of their kind to be built in over 100 years.
FORM

Erickson’s form sits striding and confident in its site. The massive exoskeleton of concrete beams picks up on the Haida post and beam structures. The museum claims its space, but is not unforgiving - daylight being allowed in generously at every bay. From the exterior – a proud form, which manages to juxtapose stillness and movement, stubbornness and hospitality. And from the interior, the dominant structure manages to be uplifting – with a huge amount of glazing between the posts – and skylights between the beams. The strong diagram in the cross-section shows a gentle ramp leading us to the open and optimistic great hall looking out over the ocean.

JOURNEY

Approaching the building from the campus, we creep away from the small city that is UBC, and peer into the regional park that sweeps around the edge of the cliff like a necklace. The museum, which is set down from the road, is nestled comfortably within the trees of the park. The building becomes a mediator between campus and the ocean view. To enter the building is to enter a haven within the forest and emerge at the clearing that leads to the cliff’s edge.

The entrance of the museum is set back from the main road and draws visitors down a flight of step onto a human scale landing – much like the Waikato Museum. In the 1990s, Musqueam First Nations were invited to make changes to the entrance of the museum, to reframe the museum as a place that belonged on Musqueam land and where visitors were being welcomed on by Musqueam locals, their art and artifacts. There are three pieces of Musqueam art and a welcome stone, which gives the nation a voice and prepares the visitor to start thinking about relationships between past and present, land and people, indigenous and colonial. Before we enter, the glazed doors allow us to digest and understand the journey ahead, get a glimpse of the heart of the building and anticipate the view of mountains and ocean.
Fig 42 - 44. 
Entering the MoA from the UBC campus, and the first view of the short ramp to the Grand Hall.
Fig 45 - 48. Carvings of Coast Salish Nations displayed on the ramp. Each bay displays work from a different nation.
All exhibition spaces are accessed by first ascending the main ramp to the Grand Hall. On the ramp, the order of exhibits is based on a map of the First Nations in British Columbia, starting with Musqueam, then Kwakwaka’wakw and ending with Haida, so as we go down the ramp we are moving northward up the coast. The ramp sways and zigzags, telling us when to walk and when to pause. The different regions are delineated, not only by their different carving techniques, but by the rhythm of the bays. We are led around the walls like a wharenui – where each bay has a different story to engage with. We have no questions about where to go – there is a clear journey.

We are in full view of what is ahead and the space starts to transition. Moving from a low, steady ceiling in the ramp area, the space widens and ceiling rises as we move down, preparing us for the sudden explosion of space and structure. The ramp ends. The space widens ten fold and the ceiling flies away. We are thrust into a vast, light, safe space, where the museum’s largest totem poles and carvings can gather informally, mingling with us on the carpet. Families chat, tour groups listen, and carvings guard the secrets of times past within their bodies. The Grand Hall is one coherent space where everything happens. Movement and stillness. The everyday and the spiritual mixing together - much like the interior of a longhouse. But instead of one small rectangular hole for the smoke to escape, we are flooded with stripes of light, and the ramps are edged with a sunlit frame.
CONCLUSION

In a building that understands its immediate surroundings, and the locals’ connection to the land, we have a form that sits easily in its context. It teaches visitors about its relationship to the campus, the trees and the ground filled with Musqueam life and history. It explores the connection between land and sea, and describes a moment of being on the edge, poised in a clearing, looking wistfully to mountains beyond. We learn of the spatial layout of Haida villages, and think of fishing villages we know in our own countries. The building is in harmony with its natural and its architectural contexts, two things that Te Papa struggles with.

But the aspect that stands in greatest contrast to Te Papa is the organisation of the interior. At the MoA we are presented with one clear journey, controlled but exciting. Local history claims the stage, with small and large exhibits forging a path towards a huge view of our natural surroundings. The histories and collections of other lands are accessed off the Grand Hall, always looping us back to the main space. The architecture is triumphantly expressive of traditional Haida construction, allowing the vernacular to be paired with a sculptural play of light concrete detailing. The Grand Hall is the centre, the hearth – a place we gather. The journey is a time to pause, reflect and learn, and is accessible by both locals and foreign visitors. Granted, the MoA’s programme is much smaller than Te Papa’s, but Erickson’s vision for our path through the building would also be achievable on a larger scale.
V. Being Edgy:
City vs. sea, why is the edge so alluring?

“It is both fitting and provocative that Te Papa’s basic mission – representing nationhood – is being decided at this physical location, and is now being controversially negotiated through the subject of ‘the beach’.”  

New Zealanders have an undeniable attraction to the coast. As a nation bordering only oceans, we are outward looking - obsessed by our edges. The meeting of the land and sea is a point of great energy and power that inspires and nourishes us. It draws us to it, providing a place to refuel.

Chris Prentice, in his essay On the Beach? The Question of the Local in Aotearoa/ New Zealand Cultural Studies, considers the role the landscape plays in anchoring the idea of the local.

“Appeals to the qualities and uniqueness of the landscape in Aotearoa/ New Zealand are so pervasive and frequent as to have become naturalised understandings or representations of nationhood. They rely on disavowing that ‘identifying New Zealand’s specificity with unique aspects of its natural endowments is a cultural practice’ (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett).”


We have a cultural awareness of the coast being our favourite destination to get away. Yet perhaps the edge is more than a leisure spot. With many of our settlements on the coast, we radiate our townscapes around a waterfront boulevard. Enamored with its energy, we congregate at the open edge instead of the town square. Toy, in his essay *Auckland: Water City of the South Pacific*, argues that integrating with the water would endlessly benefit our urban development. Yet we remain apprehensive to create these links in our public architecture. Are we just shy of our design skills? Or are there cultural boundaries at play that overwhelm us?

This section explores the spatial qualities of the New Zealand coast and our relationship to it. This manifests as a series of different and sometimes disparate points of view. The ideas help us build a narrative about our obsession with the edge. This elusive endroit has different meanings to different people, but sits in the hearts of many.

**Refuge or chaos?**

There is a duality of conditions at play on the coast - the feeling of security, and the feeling of danger. We know the softness of seeing the horizon line, but are also faced with invigoration.

*Beach New Zealand*, a photo essay by Jocelyn Carlin, describes the beach as the centre for our social interactions. Photographers Robin Morrison and Marti Friedlander have captured work and leisure activities playing out on our shores, depicting the edge as a space that brings a sense of adventure together with our daily lives.

We feel comfortable gathering on the shoreline, a place to feel consoled by the company of family and celebrate with friends, minus the distractions of technology, work and other aspects of life that might fill our domestic space.

Fig 52 - 54. Left to right: Coromandel 1966; Cattle on the move to coastal pasture near Fantail Bay on the Port Jackson road; Wedding at Raglan.
The total openness at the edge allows us to gaze beyond, providing a mental escape from the stress of daily life. We are grounded by the site of the horizon, and overwhelmed by our existence as we watch the sun and moon rise or set. We experience calmness and change. We see the land and sea interact and take on qualities of the other. The air near the sea starts to taste salty and feel damp, and pohutukawa leaves gather in the water. As respite from the disarray of our built environment, we feel unity in the open space. Our rolling sand dunes flanked by cliffs hold us close. It is whole and connecting, we know where we are. We are together.

Yet the New Zealand coastline is also characterised by its unpredictability. It provides a place for excitement and adventure. Take Princess Bay on the South coast of Wellington - a destination for South Wellingtonians to gather in the weekends, and after work. On one day, a distant view of the snowy caps of the Kaikoura ranges, revealing the spatial relationship between south and north - we feel connected and elated. On another, a silvery cloak leaking light, billowing tumbling dense clouds physically represent the storm approaching – we feel impressed and powerless. The wild and heavy ocean challenges the fragility of the human body. With a history of danger and destruction, we stop at its edge in challenge and defiance. This changing tableau keeps us guessing, which is invigorating and addictive.

Perhaps the danger at the edge offers an excuse for rebellion. Lloyd Jones, in his essay for Beach New Zealand notes:

“Ocean beaches invite us to be expansive. They offer thresholds and danger. But if they represent the epic then they also accommodate the paganistic. Why do thousands every New Year’s Eve gather at the Mount and Whangamata?”

Lloyd Jones, introduction to Beach New Zealand, by Jocelyn Carlin (Auckland: David Bateman, 1999), 15.
The wildness and recklessness at the edge of the popular east coast isn’t an anomaly in this country’s history. Kororāreka, now known as Russell – a port for whalers and sealers in the 1830s-40s, once had the reputation as the Hellhole of the Pacific. “A visitor described Kororāreka as ‘Gomorrah, the Scourge of the Pacific, which should be struck down by the ravages of disease for its depravity.’”  \(^{41}\)

There is an alternative view, where facing and contemplating the open sea is a lonesome act. In his chapter Islands, landfalls, distance, Pound collects a new set of images from poems and artists – embodied by a melancholy figure facing the sea. “We gaze endlessly out, there is no answering gaze; or, if anything does look back, it is only the blind, blank, barely sane stare of distance itself.”  \(^{42}\)

Bill Pearson’s 1952 essay Fretful Sleepers takes this further, frames the scary openness within the youthful fabric of our macroculture, not yet able to hold and secure us:

“Caught between the mountains and the sea, never far from the silence of the bush and the stars, we are in the bland frightening witness of the infinite, and we haven’t created a social convention strong enough to reassure us.”  \(^{43}\)

Pound responds:

“An unbearable abyss, a threat against which ‘we’ have, as yet, no institutional shield, no walls. No wonder we sleep badly. But it is a space too of a starry grandeur, of the classic Sublime, with its seas, its mountain, its dark skies, its silences, its solitudes, its terrors and its stars.”  \(^{44}\)

---


43 Ibid, 35.

44 Ibid 36.
Māori world view

Tāngata whenua is a term that was developed to refer to Māori after the arrival of the British to New Zealand, which translates as people of the land. Mostly understood to mean indigenous or first peoples, this term acknowledges the importance of land for Māori. Māori are deeply rooted in the place they come from. “The environment is seen as an ancestral landscape that encapsulates sites of significance.”45 Mountains, rivers and oceans are ancestors, and each person can name the natural formations that form part of their lineage. More than a metaphor for Māori, these formations have a life force.

For Māori, the landscape is rich and abundant. It is nourishing with food and holds within its fabric the stories of ancestors and the past. “The foreshore provided a larder, a pataka or storehouse of food that had to be managed effectively.”46

Building on the land becomes an intertwining of land and people. “The environment may be considered an extension of all marae symbolise and vice versa.”47 The emphasis is on binding rather than dividing, so European concepts of ownership that separate people are jarring. “Flowing through everything on the foreshore and seabed is mauri or life force. All things are connected by and through mauri. Concepts of divisibility like individual ownership or title are awkward or foreign.”48 The loss of ‘ownership’ of the land, waterways and sea by Māori from the 1860s onwards, was among other things a loss of control over what was done with resources. Māori manage recourses through a concept of Kaitiakitanga, a terms which encompasses guardianship, preservation and sheltering.49

In his essay, Jones introduces us to a collection of expressions and proverbs that align Māori with the land and Pākehā with the sea.

“Visitors coming on to a marae acquire the unknown qualities of the sea: Haere mai, haere mai, ki atua which translates as Come forward, come forward to the land. The arrival of pakeha is associated with the invasive qualities of the sea. Tribal land lost through war or sales to the Pakeha was said to have been ‘taken by the waves’. And with the steady advance of the Pakeha and with it, colonisation, Orbell notes, a number of sayings identified the Maori with the land and the encroaching Pakeha with the sea: I naianei kua ha to haha tai, Now the sound of the waves has gone far inland.”50


48 Ibid, 12.

49 Ibid, 12.

The Edge Condition

The edge is the meeting of two conditions. In The Image of the City, Kevin Lynch named the edge as one of the five elements that allow observers to take in spatial information in the city. A change in spatial qualities highlights the properties of each.\(^{51}\)

This idea is elaborated on by Richard Sennett in his 2008 essay The Public Realm and again later in his 2011 publication Together: the rituals, pleasures and politics of cooperation.

Sennett writes:

“Edges come in two sorts: boundaries and borders. A boundary is a relatively inert edge; population thins out at this sort of edge and there’s little exchange among creatures. A border is more of an active edge, as at the shoreline dividing ocean and land; this is a zone of intense biological activity, a feeding ground for animals, a nutrient zone for plants. In human ecology, the eight-lane highway isolating part of the city from each other is a boundary, whereas a mixed-use street at the edge between two communities can be more of a border.”\(^{52}\)

Sennett explains how he has learnt to look past the common assumption that the centre or heart of the community needs to be placed in a central position. Sometimes the centre of a suburb is dead, whereas its edges, especially in a densely populated city, are active. The place of change becomes an exciting place of interaction between two neighbourhoods. He explains through an example in his professional career:

“Some years ago I was involved in plans for creating a market to serve the Hispanic community of Spanish Harlem in New York. This community, one of the poorest in the city, lies above 96th Street on Manhattan’s Upper East Side. Just below 96th Street, in an abrupt shift, lies one of the richest communities in the world, running from 96th down to 59th Street, comparable to Mayfair in London or the 7th Arrondissement in Paris. 96th Street itself could function either as a boundary or a border. We planners chose to locate La Marqueta in the center of Spanish Harlem twenty blocks away, in the very center of the community, and to regard 96th Street as a dead edge, where nothing much happens. We chose wrongly. Had we located the market on that street, we might have encouraged activity which brought the rich and the poor into some daily, commercial contact.”\(^{53}\)

---


"New Zealand’s extensive coastline attracted campers from the first years of the 20th century and about half of the country’s campgrounds were located at beaches."

We seem to favour temporary structures by the sea. In 1910, what is now Tarnaki Drive was a campsite, busy with tents. The Fielding Star reported of the popularity of seaside camping in Auckland: “In most of the beautiful bays in the harbour campers are to be found, and at the beauty spots near the city small canvas villages have sprung up. At Takapuna and Milford Beach there are a number of happy parties in camp, while at Orakei Bay and in many coves on that side of the harbour tents are dotted in all directions.”

Not much has changed. Today we flock to beach campsites to enjoy close knit tent villages that prioritise outdoor living, swimming and sports over the conveniences of electricity and permanent shelter. Perhaps the temporary nature of the structures makes us feel at ease when indulging in our love of being in the elements.


Water and cities

For most of the 2.6 million New Zealanders who live in urban areas, the beach remains a place for holidays. Richard Toy in his 1976 essay Auckland: Water City of the South Pacific encourages the use of the bays for more than just leisure.

“A switch in perception is involved, a recognition of the main harbours, the inland waterways and their innumerable bays as the main living elements of the city; as the places, that is of residence, work, recreation and movement. This is the opposite of the present pattern in which building centres on and concentrates the isthmus. With congruence, centre becomes many centres. These bay centres have a direction towards the space of the waters, with building around the perimeters. The centre is space, not building.”

As Sennett learnt in New York, Toy encourages us to realise that the centre of the community does not always lie at the midpoint of the city grid. It is the place where we feel enlivened, where we interact, and for New Zealanders it should be our shorelines. He hopes for us an urban future engaged with the sea.

“A natural bay structure (has) qualities which could provide a framework for vivid, meaningful settlement. These qualities, which balance the claims of place and mobility, can be intensified by building and settlement.”

He shares his concern about the effects of cars dominating our urban design. He sees suburbs like Grafton and Onehunga being endangered by the motorway. “The water has been relegated to the status of playground and view.”


58 Ibid, 214.
Too afraid to ‘own’ the edge with permanent structures, we place humble structures at the edge. Public toilets, small baches, and lighthouses are acceptable, while anything more causes a stir. As Mark Wigley observed in 1986, “New Zealand architecture is a contradiction in terms. What defines the regional condition is not a certain architecture but a certain resistance to architecture.”

In an urban setting, there is opposition to a built-up waterfront. This may be rooted in a (fair) fear of ill-designed developments, but it is escalated by a fear of messing up the edge. In Auckland there has been much opposition to a housing development at Bayswater Marina in the Waitematā Harbour, despite a dire need for higher density living in sprawling Auckland. Developer Simon Herbert scaled back the development from 250 to 125 apartments and town houses after the public showed their concern.

“Bayswater resident Paddy Stafford-Bush said for 30 years the community had demanded the reclamation stay public open space. “There is shock-horror from the community,” she said. “People had not realised how dramatic a change it would be - they are giving us a built environment.””


Our architecture is obsessed by views, allowing us to gaze out to the soothing horizon line. A brief history of New Zealand ‘architecture on the edge’ would cover jetties, lighthouses, public toilets, surf clubs, yacht clubs and the odd aquarium. Marine-related purposes are acceptable, but nothing more dominating. As explorers of our land we make pilgrimages to these structures. We climb up to lighthouses to enjoy the wild winds and imagine the lives of those who worked there. Historic wharves provide the perfect opportunity to breach the line between land and water, allowing us to move closer to the horizon that intrigues us so much, and then turn back to gaze at our inhabitation of the coast.

When we engage in larger scale urban development at the edge, a comfortable move is to build low to the ground, bowing down to it. Recent developments of Silo Park in Auckland and the earlier Civic Square and City to Sea Bridge in Wellington, show urban centres with changing use, which connect the public to the water’s edge. Both of these spaces are flexible space for the public to fill with activities.

Fig 64 - 69. From left to right, top to bottom: Tokomaru Bay historical wharf; Kohimarama public toilets; Bean Rock; Austin’s Chapple House; Hut on Sleds and Coromandel Bach.
5 Acts of Engaging with the Edge

In order to develop a design methodology, I began by creating diagrams that analyse the spatial aspects of the edge.

In the first diagram, I listed common ways of engaging and experiencing the edge, and then grouped them into five sets of behaviours.

- Reaching
Walking as far as you can towards the edge and over to the other side, edging towards the horizon, out to the end of the jetty, down the steps, to touch the water.

-Exploring
A lateral movement, walking around the rocks, with no view of a destination, this is pure curiosity to navigate along the edge as far as you can go, bays reveal themselves one after another and you must decide when you are satisfied enough to turn around.

-Climbing
Ascending as high as you can to see as far out as possible – up a mountain or cliff to see the horizon.

-Sheltering
Hiding from the elements, seeking shade or shelter in a bunker/tent/canopy behind the exposed sand dunes.

-Approaching
Coming to the land from the sea, as an explorer would have approached the land, seeing the formations change and reveal themselves as you come closer to the other side of the border.
Fig 70. Diagram One: 5 Acts of Engaging with the Edge - Reaching, Exploring, Climbing, Sheltering, Approaching.
The second diagram analyses the spatial qualities of two edge conditions – land and sea, and the space between them. I attributed qualities to land (stability, stillness and constantness) and sea (fluidity, movement and change). Now we have the two states, one is resting, and the other is flowing. Buildings rest still on the land, while other elements flow over the land, and in and out of buildings – like weather, wind, rain, tides also the movement of people. “Whatungarongaro he tangata, toitū te whenua. Man comes and goes, the land is permanent.”

It is important to note that these ‘5 Acts of Engaging,’ in which we gaze at the land as a picture, are purely European in their sensibility. Francis Pound, in his book Frames on the Land, explores what it means to paint landscapes in New Zealand through studies of early examples. In View of the Bay by Augustus Earle, he compares the treatment of two figures:

“There is a figure standing, with its back to us, in the foreground centre… the figure is European – the immaculately white hat, the burdenless back, the trousers and coat are sufficient signs of that. It stands, absolutely still, and gazes into the landscape, while the Māori figures move in the land. This stillness, this movement, is significant, for landscape painting, the pictorial attitude to nature in New Zealand, is a European code of behaviour. The Māori did not paint landscape, or feel the need to.”


Fig 72. Diagram Two: The spatial qualities at the edge sorted into three rows, stability, fluidity, and the place where the two meet - the edge condition.
Te Papa competition entries

The competition brief for Te Papa placed a strong emphasis on the need for the building to address three things; the waterfront site, our relationship to the landscape, and to embody both Māori and non-Māori world views, exploring how they coexist.\(^{63}\)

From the five shortlisted schemes and other published entries, the former two elements seem to have come more naturally to the architects. While the latter was addressed – it seemed to be treated separately, and segregated building elements rather than being entwined into the architecture of the whole museum.

In his opinion piece in Architecture New Zealand, John Hunt observes that many of the competition entries shy away from dealing with the issue of biculturalism. “A majority of submissions chose to draw back from such difficult and unresolved issues and seek refuge in the certainties of functional program or harbourside setting.”\(^{64}\)

In many cases, embracing the land and sea, metaphorically and site-specifically, is seen to belong to the ‘Māori part’ of the building. Placing Māori exhibits near the ocean was the most common response, expressing the ancestral connection of Māori to the land.

One design that was able to address Māori and non-Māori cultural values, as well as acknowledging land and sea, was the entry by Athfield, Gehry and Thompson. In an interview with Gordon Campbell in 2011, Athfield discusses their decision to use a feather as an ordering device. The team interpreted the building as a waka huia – or feather box. The translucent feather element floats over the gallery boxes, enclosing a central axis and circulation space that leads to a principal space open to the harbour - embracing the land and sea.\(^{65}\)

Another is the entry by Architecti (Cook Hitchcock Sargisson, Bowes Clifford Thomson, John Scott and Ross Jenner). Their design uses a series of inclined planes to explore meanings of groundedness and the interweaving of cultures. “We conceived of the building as pulling out of the ground in all its mythological, geological, and cultural significance.”\(^{66}\)


Fig 73. Entry by Warren and Mahoney. “The marae is not designed as a building enclosing space. Neither is it a house enclosing another house. It stands as a place in its own right overlooking the harbour and the panorama of surrounding hills, open to the sky.”

Fig 74. Entry by Jasmax Group. “The Maori gallery is a sculptured form suggestive of the traditional anthropomorphic Maori meeting house. It is a highly directional building and is oriented toward the sun, sea and sky.”

Fig 75. Entry by Boon Phillip Cox. “The whole unites land and building, sea and sky, past and future, Maori and Pakeha and is itself united by a series of ‘gates’. A Maori Gate rises from the beach; a Pakeha Gate gives entry through a strong city wall; a Bi-cultural Gate is an expression of our national pride.”

Fig 76. Entry by Athfield Architects with Gehry and Thompson. “The principal space actually embraced the land and sea, and this was really important.”

Fig 77. Entry by Architecti. “The intersecting ground planes form platforms of cultural interaction.”
Ngāti Poneke Marae

Another paper project for the Wellington harbour, dating back further than the Te Papa competition entries, is NZ architect Rewi Thompson’s Ngāti Poneke Marae. This project explores personal and cultural connections to land and sea through architecture.

Thompson responded to a competition in the journal Japan Architect in 1980 that called for designs of a ‘hometown museum’. The brief asked for the museum entries not to be a “mausoleum in which things of the past are enshrined in glass cases,”69 rather a “culture centre and museum for the hometown… that will inspire delving into the past, research and growth for the future.”70

For the design, Thompson looked back to the arrival of his Māori ancestors in New Zealand. “Tired and hungry we hauled our canoe high onto the beach. It had carried our people and contained within its hull our culture. We had arrived… home.”71 His museum was a 200-metre long space frame structure, leaning against Mt Victoria like a resting waka, with its stern still dipped into the harbour. “Within it, the elements of a marae hung in a lattice of steel in the sparkling Wellington light, honoured and clarified by being thrust into the sky.”72

70 Ibid 93.
71 Ibid, 93.
72 Ibid, 93.
Te Mirumiru, Kawakawa

Te Mirumiru is a Kohanga Reo designed for Ngati Hine by Collingridge and Smith Architects. Although not situated on the coast, the building explores our connection to the land and sea through the relationship between Ranginui, Papatuanuku and their son Tangaroa.

Ranginui (sky father) and Papatuanuku (earth mother), once connected, were prised apart by the son Tanemahuta (God of the forest). The space created between has since been inhabited by their own children including Tangaroa (God of the sea). Later in the creation stories, New Zealand was pulled out of the ocean by Maui. So Papa – the earth, rises through Tangaroa to create landforms for us to inhabit. In turn humans are created from the earth of Papatuanuku. So the land, and our ancestors are all born out of the sea, from the earthly seabed of Papatuanuku.

The building’s form is womb-like, and shows the building rising from a cut in the land. The cut in the land represents the caesarean of Hine ā Maru, the first recorded woman ever to have survived a caesarean, the ancestor from which all Ngāti Hine are descendents.73 We enter into the land, and once inside the womb, make our way to the world of light.


Fig 80 and 81. Te Mirumiru by Collingridge and Smith Architects.
PART TWO

VIII. Design Summary
IX. Site - Waitangi
X. Precedents
XI. Models
XII. Programme
XIII. Design Intent
XIV. Conclusion
XV. Figure Reference List
XVI. Bibliography
VIII. Design Summary

This project proposes a new national museum at the site of the Copthorne Hotel in Waitangi. The museum will sit on a small outcrop of land in Te Ti Bay, at the mouth of the Waitangi River. The project looks at the edge condition as a place of exchange and coming together. The architecture will explore a relationship with the coastal site, our connection to the landscape as New Zealanders, and will be place for Māori and non-Māori to gather and share knowledge and understanding.

IX. Site - Waitangi

Background

The Waitangi Treaty grounds, situated just north of Paihia in the Bay of Islands, are owned and cared for by the Waitangi Trust. The trust grounds (500 hectares) are home to some of New Zealand’s most significant events including the first signing of the eponymous Treaty of Waitangi, Te Tirirti o Waitangi.

The Waitangi headland was first inhabited by James Busby and his wife. They shipped a partially prefabricated Australian hardwood house from Sydney and erected it onsite in 1834. Busby conducted much of his official business as the British government’s representative in the house, originally known as ‘the Residency’, from 1834-1840. In 1839 William Hobson arrived in New Zealand under instruction to establish a British colony in New Zealand. A year later Hobson landed at the base of the headland, now called Hobson Bay, for the first signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in Busby’s house. Over the next few months Hobson collected over 500 signatures for the Treaty from Māori chiefs all over the country.74


The Busbys resided on the estate until 1882, when the house and farm were sold. The property was left uninhabited for fifty years and fell into disrepair. Governor-General Lord Bledisloe and his wife bought the property in 1932, and with the centenary of the signing of the Treaty nearing, they committed to restoring the house and farm as it was imagined to be in 1840. They formed the Waitangi National Trust Board in 1932, and hired architects William Gummer and William Page to restore the house. The restoration became more an exercise in transforming the house and grounds into a national monument, with little emphasis on historical research. The house restoration became almost an entire rebuild with large extensions to the rear, and flagpoles and canons were added to the grounds. In the 1960s and 70s experts began to question the makeover, which has since been described as an “architectural avalanche overwhelming the house.” Conservation architect Clive Lucas was commissioned in 1988 to prepare a conservation plan. Lucas recommended that Busby House, now called the Treaty House, be truly restored. In 1989-1990 the Treaty House underwent a second makeover, with the original back wall being exposed on the interior to display the original 1830s construction. The new 1932 wings are now used as exhibition spaces, embracing the 1932 sentiments to expand as part of the history of the house.

In the lead up to the centenary celebrations of the signing of the Treaty, Sir Apirana Ngata (Ngāti Porou) collaborated with Tau Henare on a project to build a Whare Rūnanga that would be New Zealand’s first pan-tribal whare, to stand alongside Busby House and represent the Māori parties that signed the Treaty. Ngata explains in his speech at the Centennial Waitangi Day celebrations in 1940:

“If only the Busby House stood to represent the historical fact of the signing of the Treaty, I think there would have been something wanting. People would have asked ‘What represents the Māori who were the other party to the agreement?’ The meeting house represents the part of the Māori of 100 years ago, and, your Excellency, I hope the building will represent the Māori race at Waitangi for 100 years to come.”

Designed and carved in Northland, the whare incorporates the artistic styles of the 11 major iwi (tribes) of New Zealand in the carvings, tukutuku (reed panels) and kōwhaiwahi (painted rafter patterns). The main carved figure in the house depicts Kupe, the Polynesian explorer.

While whare usually embody an ancestor, Te Whare Rūnanga embodies the treaty itself, and on the foundation stone laid in 1934, the house is named ‘Te Tiriti o Waitangi’.

---


Alongside the preparation of Te Whare Runanga, Ngāpuhi also contributed the carving of a replica of the waka taua (war canoe) Ngatokimatawhaorua for the centenary. The 35-metre long waka was carved from solid kauri and needs a minimum of 76 paddlers. For many years it was deemed the longest canoe in the world.\(^\text{81}\)

After the 1940 celebrations, Ngatokimatawhaorua was stored next to the Whare Runanga. Because of the difficulty moving it, it was not relaunched again until the Queen’s visit in 1974. During her visit, the Queen took a voyage in the bay and designated it ‘Her Majesty’s Ship’, which makes the waka part of her Royal Navy. A whare waka was built at Hobson Bay to make it easier to launch, and the waka now rests here permanently and is taken out every year for the Waitangi Day celebrations.\(^\text{82}\)

The Treaty house and atea (ceremonial grounds) in front of the house face Kororāreka, now known as Russell, which sits on the opposite side of the bay. From the 1820s, Kororāreka was New Zealand’s largest port, and a centre for whalers and sealers, and remained so for about twenty years. It had a reputation for drunken and illicit behaviour, and trivial brawls would escalate into violent fights with lives lost in some cases. With no judicial system, it was difficult to control the disputes. After the signing of the Treaty in 1840, Okiato became New Zealand’s first capital, just south of the port. After two years the capital was moved to Auckland and the price of whale oil fell which led to the decline of Kororāreka, with the population dropping to 40.\(^\text{83}\)

---


82 Ibid.

Māori architect John Scott designed the Waitangi Visitor’s Centre in 1981/2 – one of his last big projects. The buildings are still used today, but the exterior is hidden by matured bush. The buildings read as a multilevel set of pavilions amongst the trees, and connect to canopy walkways that bridge the valley and take visitors directly to the atea in front of the Treaty House and Whare Rūnanga. The architecture embodies the pavilions that Scott was exploring at the time. The centre uses local materiality combining concrete block, brick tiles and native timbers, and formally he has said that it speaks of the wharenui, the church and the woolshed.84

A new gateway building, completed by HB Architects in 2009, greets us on arrival. The building, new toilets and walkway lead us to the existing John Scott buildings. From the Waitangi visitors car park, the gateway building provides a strong and welcoming entry point to the historical site, which is separated from the car park by large bush. Also designed by HB architects is a new museum currently under construction. It will face the car park and be accessible through the gateway building. The museum will tell the history of Waitangi and provide community learning spaces.85

To the south of the Treaty grounds, at the mouth of the Waitangi River, is the Copthorne Hotel Waitangi (originally the Waitangi Resort Hotel), designed for the Waitangi Trust in 1968. The original design was a set of one story buildings, that have since been added to many times by a number of firms including two 2-storey blocks added by JASMaD in 1977. The hotel looks to the bay and the small beach lined with Phoenix palms on one side and to the silvery tidal river on the other. The grounds of the hotel are fluid and although the pool area is fenced, the layered landscaping invites the beach in as part of the front garden. Amidst a mandatory stroll along the beach, visitors are enticed to venture out beyond the grounds towards the tip of the river mouth. A rocky outcrop houses a beacon, and provides an opportunity to step out beyond the land, experience a place where land and water mix and look back and contemplate the past.

---


Site Analysis

The Waitangi Treaty grounds are rich and alive with history. The ground itself is layered deep with the memory of events that have taken place on it and it is a place of national contemplation for concepts of land ownership, settlement and belonging. With two symbolic buildings and other structures embodying parts of history, the grounds are like an open-air museum of settlement and interaction between Māori and Pākehā. Open every day of the year, stories are kept alive by retelling them daily to visitors. The meaning of the site is fully awakened every year on Waitangi Day, when tens of thousands of visitors and locals gather to take part in the festival and remember the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The space comes alive with debate, celebration and protest.

Two spatial observations can be made about the Treaty grounds that relate to this project. The first is about the relationship between the two buildings, and the progression from a place of hiding to a place of openness. The Treaty House and the Whare Rūnanga are nestled in trees at the west of the site. Sitting ‘back in the trees’ reinforces the idea of architecture belonging to the land having qualities of solidity and safety. In contrast, the exposure of the grounds around the flagpole presents a place of change, unpredictability and extremity. Standing on the Whare porch, one is propelled to venture out and explore the edge of the site. It is upon approach towards the flagpole that we get a glimpse of the open ocean at the top of the bay. To get a better look one must move closer to the edge. However there is another line of trees growing tall around the coastal edge of the site. This extra layer of protection softens the edge and gives complexity and layering to the progression through the site.

Secondly, a curvature characterises the ātea, or ceremonial grounds surrounding the flagpole. As we move closer to the edge, the more it disappears. It’s not until we have reached the tree line, that it is revealed how far we have descended towards the sea. The curve continues as a rocky slope that slips ominously into the ocean.

86 Except Christmas Day.
Chosen Site

This project proposes a new national museum on the site of the Copthorne Hotel, with none of the existing hotel buildings retained. The new museum concentrates on creating links through the site, some visually clear and some that reveal themselves. These paths would be activated in different ways on Waitangi Day to other days. Linkages emphasised include the beachfront pedestrian access to the Treaty grounds from Waitangi Bridge, currently only available to hotel patrons, views across the bay to Kororāreka, the historic port town, and promoting exploration of the water’s edge including the mangroves and the beacon at Tī Point.
Fig 92 - 93. The edge of chosen site at Te Tii Bay; Looking north up the beach.
Fig 94. Existing site plan (NTS).
To embark on the design process I started building conceptual models. I made these models over the course of a year, exploring various ideas to do with the edge. I worked planes to explore the ’5 Acts of Engaging with the Edge’ that I identified in my diagram. I used a series of processes to translate the physical/emotional gestures into formal gestures.

I was initially concerned with lines that explore the act of stretching and wandering along that edge, the connections that build up, and the way paths can interact and build something larger. There are the lines that are parallel to the edge and those that are perpendicular – which are about being curious, reaching beyond, exploring – that moment when we see a jetty and just have to walk to the end, and then you see stairs down to the water and you take them to because you cannot resist going further. And then you put your toes in the water. I played with these two directions interacting, weaving through each other, morphing and merging. But there was no change happening; how do you get the two conditions to affect each other?

I moved on to exploring the edge in terms of planes. What if the edge is not a line but has layers and depth to it? How would these layers start to rift and ripple if you interrupted them? The perpendicular causes a moment of change – a new edge is created. Bringing planes and lines together create linkages and express flow. Can we encompass the ‘Acts of Engaging’ formally? Multiplied and pushed close and against each other creates shelter. They congregate on the edge.
XII. Programme

Context

- Connection to bridge over Waitangi River
- Connection to existing jetty, beacon and Bay of Islands Yacht Club
- Visual connection to Russell
- Encourage engagement with sea
- Encourage social engagement
- Accommodate daily visitors
- Welcome international tourists
- Room to accommodate 10,000 coming through the site on Waitangi Day

User groups

- Māori
- Non-Māori New Zealanders
- Aucklanders
- Tourists to NZ (staying in Bay of Islands, day-trippers from Auckland, road trippers in Campervans)
- School groups, community/youth groups
- Locals to Northland – families, organised groups, individuals

Parking/access

- Share and extend existing Treaty Ground car park (except on Waitangi Day when alternative parking is arranged)
- Campervan parking
- Tour bus drop-off and park
- Cycle way (connecting site to Paihia)
- Cycle connection to Haruru Falls via Golf Course

Museum

- Entrance foyer
- 5 interior galleries
  - local – Far North taonga
  - National (permanent display of national collection)
  - Digital kid’s learning space
  - Visiting exhibition space (for visiting pieces from National collection or international exhibits)
  - Flexible space – learning or exhibition
- 2 exterior galleries
  - Carving/Toi Māori
  - Navigation
- 3 x toilets
  - staff on ground floor
  - 2 x public - ground and upper floor
- Kiosk at entrance
- Café/restaurant on lower level
- A place to launch waka
- Grass roofs
- Secure and culturally sensitive storage for artefacts
- Research library
- Staff offices
- Staff meeting room
- Staff lunch room
- Staff-only courtyard
- Staff-only entrance
- Truck entrance to storage and turning bay (shared with tour buses)
XIII. Design Intent

The design response is a subtly concealed building that faces the sea and eagerly stretches its arms along the shoreline. It is a place where locals and foreign visitors, Maori and non-Maori can come together, share experiences and feel at home. We can use the building as it suits us; as a scenic indoor picnic space, a reprieve from the weather, a place to get a coffee, a scenic route to the Treaty Grounds, or to be enriched with knowledge and inspired by the taonga of those before us.

The building’s form embodies what it means to be on the edge teetering between two states. It hides gently in the landscape, while also swelling the landforms, lifting them up and bursting out of them. It obsessively acknowledges the view, allowing us to indulge in long gazes at the clouds, while also closing our minds to the outside world for controlled moments. It reaches to the water but doesn’t touch it, and it bridges between the land and water but also divides them.

There are five formal elements in the architecture – the grass roof, the hub, the two exhibition wings, and the ramps.

Journey

Approaching the building from the land, we have the same view from every angle - a grassy hill with textured protrusions bursting through, and a wide and welcoming entrance at its centre. The opportunity to have our feet on the grass brings us closer to the land. We ascend along one of the many paths up the hill, and we become inquisitive about the view from the top of the hill. From the grass-roof viewing platform we see unobstructed view of the bay, reminiscent of the Treaty grounds to our North. We get glimpses of the museum’s ramps below. We are ready to head down to the entrance.

A large hall welcomes us with its outstretched hands and our journey is short and clear. As we enter we take in the view ahead. Huge windows frame the bay, while busy timber detailing hangs over our heads adding layers and complexity by playing with texture and light. We are in what can be called the hub - the main space or hearth of the building. It is not an exhibition space, but a welcome foyer designed with a town square in mind. Visitors can rest or meet friends, and a viewing ledge doubles as a stage. From here the paths split and we can choose our journey, free to loop back to the hub at any stage or continue on our way.
Fig 100. Museum roof plan (NTS)

Fig 101. Diagram showing the building as an embodiment of natural pathways on the site (NTS)
Fig 102. Sketches showing the journey through the building characterised by a series of either outward-looking or inward-looking moments.

Fig 103. Cross section through hub (NTS)
The local exhibition gallery is nestled along the edge of the exterior ramp that leads north to the whare waka at Hobson Bay. The two-storey national exhibition gallery stretches to the south, and connects us to the ground floor galleries including children’s space and an outdoor gallery.

A winding exterior ramp meanders down to the water’s edge. It provides direct access to the café/restaurant that is situated half way down the ramp, tucked in between the first and ground levels. The rhythmic tossing and turning of the ramp invites a series of pauses at each corner.

Pauses throughout our journey frame moments in the landscape, becoming a series of viewing platforms. This contrasts with the hub and the grass-roof where we contemplate the landscape as a whole. Each pause is an opportunity to learn and connect with taonga on display. We are given visual links back to the hub, and enticing glimpses of what’s ahead.

On Waitangi Day the hill provides a place for families to sit and watch the waka race out from under the bridge, turn in the bay, and land gracefully on the other side of the river mouth. The hub provides a place to shelter from the sun or rain, and a useful meeting point. The northward ramp becomes a new route to the Treaty Grounds and the food markets surrounding the whare waka at Hobson Bay. The new use of the peninsula allows visitors to complete a round circuit of the Waitangi site, which is currently prevented by the positioning of the private Copthorne Hotel grounds.

In this museum we are connected to the land, the sea and the sky. We are able to contemplate layers and levels of the building in relation to the ground beneath us. We have a main space that is central and open, orientated to the view but with no designated programme other than gathering – like the New Zealand beach. Our paths are visually linked, so we can glimpse each other and retain a spatial relationship with others. The form and journey through the building reflects how we engage with the edge as New Zealanders.
Fig 104. Partial Long Section showing hub, stairwell, water wall and kid's space (NTS)
In 1945, Cantabrian poet Allen Curnow commented on the youth of our nationhood:
“Strictly speaking New Zealand doesn’t exist yet, though some possible New Zealands glimmer in some poems and in some canvases. It remains to be created – should I say invented – by writers, musicians, artists, architects, publishers”.

It is not easy to summarise New Zealand architecture. At a broad glance, it’s the wharenui and the wharekai, the elegant shed, the deck with a sea view and the small white Anglican church. Robin Morrison, Robin White, Home magazine (deck with sea view) and others, capture these humble buildings perched in the landscape, in a search for identity.

What unites these architectural moments is their finite and scattered nature, polka-dotted over the land like patches on a guide blanket. Our large-scale buildings are also disparate in their architecture. The Civic Theatre, the Auckland Museum, Futuna Chapel, are all single, momentary visions for what national architecture might be.

This project focuses on one aspect of our national culture – our obsession with the edge – and how this might inform our architecture. We feel a deep connection with the coastline, yet are rarely brave enough to build there for fear of interfering. The project reads the edge as a meeting of two conditions, an exciting inbetween space where we feel at once at home and adventurous, and a place of high importance to Maori that expresses nourishment, abundance, and the rising of Papatuanuku from the sea.

Through studying the architecture of Te Papa – our largest public building on the coast – and our response to the architecture, we learn more about ourselves and what we expect from a building that sits on our waterfront. It must be an extension of the site, acknowledge the surrounding landforms, and provide a journey that connects and orientates us. The Museum of Anthropology gives us some clues as to how we can have an expressive architecture that sits in harmony with the context, and balances a complex form with a clear journey.

The design response embodies the qualities of the edge and sets up a clear journey. The journey, inspired by the way people engage with the existing site, is studded with pauses to glimpse moments of the landscape, and large gathering spaces where we admire the surroundings in their entirety. There is total transparency in the journey, so we can always see where we’ve come from and where we are going. The central space of the building is the grand entrance, which facilitates the gathering of people and contemplation of the coastal context, and provides a node that all paths loop back to.

If engaging with the edge is a national pastime, then an architecture informed by this starts to embody a national identity.
XV. Figure Reference List


Fig 3. Colonial Museum. Alexander Turnbull Library, Reference number: 1/2-005154-G.


Fig 5. French officials return twenty toi moko to Te Papa in January 2012. Photo: Vanessa O’Brien for USA TODAY.


Fig 7. Cover of Architecture New Zealand, July/August, 1990.

Fig 8. Concourse cross-section submitted as a part of the Jasmax Group Stage 2 Competition Entry. Source: Architecture New Zealand, July/Aug, 1990, 32.

Fig 9. West Elevation from the working drawings for Te Papa by Jasmax Group. Source: Wellington City Archives.


Fig 11. Te Papa - north waterfront approach. Author’s own photo.


Fig 13. Waka crews land at Te Tii Bay on Waitangi Day 2015. Source: Author’s own photo.
Fig 14. Te Papa’s North facade. Children play on the sloped surface as passers-by take a scenic shortcut from the city to Waitangi Park. Source: Author’s own photo.

Fig 16. The Wall. Source: Author’s own photo.

Fig 18. Te Papa aims to bridge the gap between city and sea.

Fig 17. Landscaping softens the divide between museum and boulevard. Source: Author’s own photo.

Fig 19. Greeted by a driveway - view of wall from South approach. Source: Author’s own photo.

Fig 20. Facade finishes in a carpark - South facade. Source: Author’s own photo.

Fig 21. Pavement only wide enough for two abreast, one pedestrian walks on the driveway - at the base of the south facade. Source: Author’s own photo.

Fig 22. Entrance foyer. Source: Author’s own photo.

Fig 23. Bag check housed within the wall. Source: Author’s own photo.

Fig 24. Main stairs - to Wellington foyer. Source: Author’s own photo.

Fig 25. Wellington foyer. Source: Author’s own photo.

Fig 26. The cleavage - obscured views to levels above. Source: Author’s own photo.

Fig 27-33. Walking up the ramp - Te Ara a Hine; View of the harbour; Stairs to the marae; Closed doors at the top of the stairs; Hallway to marae; Rongomaraeroa, with the carved house Te Hono ki Hawaiki; Marae ātea or courtyard showing formal gateway from Te Ara a Tane. Source: Author’s own photos.

Fig 34. Cleavage at level 3 - cafe and the Signs of a Nation exhibit in the background. Source: Author’s own photo.

Fig 35. View back down to Wellington Foyer. Source: Author’s own photo.

Fig 36 - 37. Void - artwork by Bill Culbert and Ralph Hotere. Source: Author’s own photo.

Fig 38. Viewing Terrace. Source: Author’s own photo.

Fig 39. The wall before we pass through it to access the viewing terrace. Source: Author’s own photo.

Fig 40. Replica of a Haida Village at the Museum of Anthropology, carved by Bill Reid and his team. Source: Author’s own photo.

Fig 41. View of Grand Hall from the exterior. Source: Author’s own photo.
Fig 42 - 44. Entering the MoA from the UBC campus, and the first view of the short ramp to the Grand Hall. Source: Author's own photo.

Fig 45 - 48. Carvings of Coast Salish Nations displayed on the ramp. Each bay displays work from a different nation. Source: Author's own photo.

Fig 49. People spread out and discover things in the Grand Hall. Source: Author's own photo.

Fig 50. The Grand Hall has the capacity to display very large carvings including a house entrance way (seen partly to the right). Source: Author's own photo.

Fig 51. Woman stands at the edge of the pond and admires the mountain range in the distance.


Fig 54. Wedding at Raglan. Photo: Julie Hewlett.

Fig 55 and 56. Wellingtonians gather on Princess Bay on Wellington’s south coast. Source: Alex Hills.


Fig 58. Print by J S Polack, 1838, National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (Ref: PUBL-0115-1).

Fig 59. ‘Canvas City’ on the beach at Orakei, 1910. Source: ‘Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries’, Ref 7-A5418.


Fig 62. Artist’s impression of housing development at Bayswater Marina. “Bayswater plan meets mixed reaction,” NZ Herald, May 7, 2014.

Fig 63. Protest against a housing development at New Chums Beach in the Coromandel. Source: “People adorn Matarangi Beach on the Coromandel Peninsula to protest against proposed development at New Chum Beach.” NZ Herald, Jan 4 2011. Photo: Paul Estcourt.

Fig 64. Tokomaru Bay Wharf. Photo: Emma Armstrong.

Fig 65. Kohimarama public toilets. Photo: Author’s own.

Fig 66. Bean Rock. Photo: Author’s own.


Fig 70. Diagram One: 5 Acts of Engaging with the Edge - Reaching, Exploring, Climbing, Sheltering, Approaching. Author’s own.

Fig 71. Sketches showing architecture as still and motionless on the land, while wind, trees, people, the sea, sunlight and weather flow over and through them. Author’s own.

Fig 72. Diagram Two: The spatial qualities at the edge sorted into three rows - stability, fluidity, and a place where the two meet - the edge condition. Author’s own.

Fig 73. Image: Warren and Mahoney.


Fig 76. Image: Athfield Architects with Gehry and Thompson.


Fig 78 and 79. Ngāti Poneke Marae. Image: Rewi Thompson.


Fig 82. The Busby residence, now called the Treaty House. Photo: Author’s own.

Fig 83. Te Whare Rūnanga, 1934. Photo: Author’s own.

Fig 84. The flagpole on Treaty Grounds, with Russell, formerly Kororāreka in the background. Photo: Author’s own.


Fig 86. Waitangi Visitor’s Centre by John Scott. Photo: Author’s own.

Fig 87. The Treaty House and Te Whare Rūnanga nestled in the trees. Photo: Author’s own.

Fig 88 - 91. Copthorne Hotel, Waitangi. Photo: Author’s own.

Fig 89 - 93. The edge of chosen site at Te Tii Bay; Looking north up the beach.
Fig 94. Existing site plan.

Fig 95 - 98. Author’s test models exploring the edge condition.

Fig 99 - 104. Author's own preliminary design drawings.
XVI. Bibliography

PUBLISHED WORKS


“Meeting fails to resolve street car race’s fate.” *The Dominion*. October 11, 1997, 3.


UNPUBLISHED WORKS

Film/TV


Radio


Web


Acknowledgements

Thanks to Mike Austin and Kerry Francis for guiding me, to Ann Stevenson and Roger Walker for sharing their knowledge, to Clare Veber and Emma Armstrong for their input, and to Kelly Henderson for her companionship.