"everything tastes better with cream": New Zealand architecture in the 1950s:
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ABSTRACTS

Karen Astwood ""The engineer with imagination": The relationship between engineers and architecture in 1950s New Zealand."
The relationship between New Zealand's architectural and engineering professions has shifted and changed since early colonial times. In the early twentieth-century strict divisions between the two professions were established and the boundaries were staunchly guarded.

However, in 1950s, New Zealand modernist architects stressed the importance of truth to function - traditionally the remit of engineers. At the same time, innovative and popular construction technologies, such as prestressed concrete, gave civil engineers freedom to pay greater attention to designing beautiful structures.
This paper documents increasing attention by mid-twentieth-century civil engineers to "architectural considerations," such as form and aesthetics. The reasons behind this shift in thinking are investigated, including the extent that contemporary architectural theory inspired engineers. It is argued that cross-influences between architecture and engineering in the 1950s were a contributing factor in the building of closer ties between the professions.

Phil Callaghan and Paul Addison "Time to bloom: the '50s fashion for floral clocks"
New Zealand's first floral clock was dedicated at Jellicoe Park, in the Auckland borough of Onehunga, in 1940, as part of the nation's centennial celebrations. However, it was during the 1950s that a wave of floral clocks swept the country as a symbol of civic pride and vibrancy, following the austerity and drabness of the war years. A number of installations coincided with the royal progress of the newly crowned Elizabeth II through the Dominion during the summer of 1953–54. This paper will explore the phenomenon of the floral clock in 1950s New Zealand.

Alison Dangerfield "Up the Hutt Valley"
Lower Hutt has been called a flagship for Post War Modernism. The fast growth of Lower Hutt, from a small feeder city outside Wellington to a city of full standing on its own, provided the opportunity for architects and urban designers to creatively expand the small metropolis in the post war period. A flush of civic development, and residential and business expansion, encouraged architectural gems to be designed and built. And they can be seen "up the Hutt."

Unapologetically modern and bold, this often dispersed collection of 1950s' architectural buildings and urban solutions showcase Lower Hutt in a tasteful and self-possessed way. Modernism of the 1950s helps to define Lower Hutt, and while the Modern movement is not yet fully understood and appreciated, Lower Hutt citizens are beginning to claim and treasure their distinctive point of difference.

Phillip Hartley "Raising The Curtains"
Glass curtain walls revealed themselves onto established city streetscapes in New Zealand during the 1950s, in a dramatic change of pace in Modern architectural design intent. The adoption of such a singular representation of international Modernism has provided a singularly important group of buildings. However, their

deterioration due to the passage of time, and the pervasive performance-driven demands for present-day requirements, have distinctly differing impacts upon the future of the country's curtain wall heritage. This paper examines the influences upon the design, form and materiality of curtain walls in New Zealand, the nature of their defects, and the over-arching issues that threaten their survival.

Nigel Isaacs "*Carpentry in New Zealand* – a text book for use by apprentices"
The 1953 National Housing Conference explored a wide range of ways of dealing with the problems of post-WW II housing, including reducing the costs of construction. The New Zealand Master Builders' Federation in its conference proposal was clear that one way to reduce costs was by a skilled and educated workforce. They noted the need for "*an authoritative text-book on carpentry and joinery, based on New Zealand building practice,*" and their proposal was adopted as Conference Resolution 17.

A committee was formed to guide the content and form of the book, and anonymous staff from the Technical Correspondence School prepared the text. Geoffrey Nees (architect of Kelburn, Wellington) employed five draughtsmen to complete the nearly 500 illustrations. The 1948 book *The Australian Carpenter* by C. Lloyd and the NZ Army Education Welfare Service (AEWS) series of five carpentry booklets formed the basis for this new book, which focused on the syllabus of the NZ Trade Certificate.

Carpentry in New Zealand was published in June 1958 and was an immediate success with 33,600 copies printed by September 1973. A new cover and conversion to metric units occurred in 1977, with the third edition published in 1980. The final printing was in 1987.

Ian Lochhead " Commemorating the Pioneers: the architecture of the Canterbury Centennial"
Discussions of Canterbury architecture of the 1950s have usually focused on the emergence of the modern movement designs of the so-called Christchurch School, and in particular the early works of Miles Warren and Peter Beaven. Warren's Dorset Street Flats of 1956-57 and Beaven's Canterbury Court of 1959, along with Paul Pascoe's Christchurch Airport terminal (1959-60), are seen as the precursors of the decade of remarkable creativity that was to follow in the 1960s. This focus on the 1950s as a period of steady modernist progression that paved the way for an even more vital future has tended to obscure some significant designs, among them the major commemorative project that marked the Canterbury Provincial centennial, the extension of the Canterbury Museum, to the designs of the Dunedin firm of Miller, White and Dunn. Completed in 1958, this neo-Gothic extension was generally dismissed by younger architects as reactionary, an unimaginative, historicist response to the challenge of extending Mountfort's 1876 Rolleston Avenue façade. More than half a century later, the architects' decision to continue the architectural character of Mountfort's building and maintain the streetscape values of Rolleston Avenue seems more prescient than reactionary. The paper also examines the other significant architectural response to the centennial, Heathcote Helmore's Pioneer Women's Memorial, located on the summit of the Bridle Path, linking the port of Lyttelton to Christchurch and the Canterbury Plains. Both projects adopted a retrospective stylistic stance in order to celebrate the mythology of Canterbury's Pakeha pioneers, in marked contrast to the modernist design vocabularies associated with the national and provincial centennial building projects of the 1940s. The paper explores the reasons for this distinctive approach to the design of Canterbury's centennial projects and assesses their significance within the context of Christchurch's dramatically changed urban landscape in the twenty-first-century.

Christine McCarthy "Peaceful uses: New Zealand nuclear architecture"
Prior to the 1968 National power plan, which identified the need for nuclear power in New Zealand, the New Zealand government entertained serious proposals for nuclear power generation. Peaceful uses of atomic energy were seen as the answer to post-war power shortages. This paper will examine the context and the architecture which promoted the building of atomic and nuclear power plants in New Zealand during the 1950s, including the international models considered, and the "proposed atomic power plant for Auckland."

Tony Richardson "The Fine Line Between Convenience and Luxury: the 1950s domestic architecture of Philip Sherwood King"
Just as everything tastes better with cream, it's the little detail touches that make the difference between a residential structure that is purely functional and one that engages its occupants. Le Corbusier neatly encapsulated the difference in his description of the house as "a machine for living." Hamilton architect Philip Sherwood King (1921-2003) was one exponent of the importance of liveability in design. His 1950s houses incorporated many of these detail touches: an exoskeleton house frame that allowed floor to ceiling ranchsliders in the lounge, acoustic wall treatments to complement built-in stereo systems that piped music into every room, a cupboard and step at the entrance to hold boot-cleaning equipment and facilitate its use, a wood bin next to the fireplace that opened to the exterior so it could be loaded without traipsing firewood through the lounge, false walls that concealed pulled-back curtains, curved corners on walls that formed sharp angles near an entrance. Some of these detail touches, like using black and white checkerboard tiled flooring to create an illusion of space, King probably stole from Plischke, with whom he worked at the DHC during the war. Others seem to be original. Liveability was the driving force behind his residential designs, and that is reflected in a diverse range of external forms - from severe modernist boxes to elegant Victorian villa extensions - that he used to showcase his work. Despite significant shifts in fashion and technology over the last half-century, a surprising number of King's designs are still occupied by the original clients or their descendants, an eloquent testimony to their liveability and evidence that King never allowed the "cream" to get in the way of substance.

The research has involved bringing together desk research and interviews with current and past owners of King's houses, together with some information gleaned from King's family and colleagues. No central repository of his work survives.

Mark Southcombe "An International Exchange"
Don Wilson was a provincial New Zealand modernist architect who was also a Fulbright scholar. In 1957 he travelled to Chicago to study experimental building techniques at the Illinois Institute of Technology under the guidance of Mies van der Rohe.

This paper documents and considers the travel and two significant projects completed in Wanganui in the years after he returned from his American scholarship and the impact of his travel on his architecture. The two projects are his own house designed during his research and travel in the USA and built on his return home to New Zealand, and the glass curtain wall Government Life Insurance office building designed before he left and revised on his return in 1957.

Linda Tyler "Transforming an Edwardian boarding house to urban marae at Auckland University College in 1954"
In writing the history of art in Aotearoa/New Zealand, much attention has been focussed on the exhibitions and activities of painters and sculptors of the Māori

Renaissance in the 1950s. Equally significant was the impetus given to reviving customary crafts through the Adult Education movement associated with the University of Auckland. The Māori Social and Economic Advancement Act of 1945 positioned the responsibility for preservation, revival and maintenance of "Māori arts, crafts, language, genealogy and history" with iwi, and led to the formation of the Māori Women's Welfare League in September 1951, with its agenda to perpetuate women's skills in Māori arts and crafts, and for these to be practised within an architectural context.

A Māori advisory committee was established in the Adult Education at Auckland University College in 1945, tasked with mitigating Māori urban alienation through the teaching of Māori arts and cultural history to establish "pride of race and cultural achievement." In 1949, the first tutor for the Māori Adult Education Extension Programme was appointed, Maharaia Winiata (1912-1960) followed by a graduate of the Rotorua School of Māori Arts and Crafts, Master carver Henare Toka (Ngāti Whatua) and his wife Mere. They recruited students from the Auckland University College Māori Club and pupils from Māori secondary schools to decorate the entrance hall of Sonoma House, 21 Princes Street, with kowhaiwhai and tukutuku. Thus an Edwardian building was reborn as the University's Adult Education Centre, and was acclaimed for its biculturalism in the spring issue of *Te Ao Hou* in 1954. Now sixty years old, the tukutuku panels have been preserved by present day Deputy Vice Chancellor Jim Peters in the ground floor of the University's Clocktower following the disestablishment of Adult Education. Seven of these tukutuku panels have recently undergone extensive conservation treatment, and they are recognised as highly significant examples of twentieth century weaving, exemplifying the approach to reviving customary tukutuku at mid-century in terms of the materials and techniques as well as patterns: Muumuu, or purapura whetuu roimata toroa), Waharua koopito, Whakarua koopito, Niho taniwha and Nihoniho. They have now gone on display in pride of place in the University clocktower. This paper will contextualise the changing meaning of these tukutuku panels from interior décor to historic design within the evolving narrative of customary Māori weaving practices.

Brenda Vale "Why don't we all live in plastic houses?"
In the 1950s plastics were hailed as a material for the modern home, whether in the form of Tupperware containers or a vinyl Barbie doll. However, modernism was traditionally built on the so-called "new" materials of glass, steel and concrete (all well known to the Romans) with no mention of plastics. What modernism was describing was the steel or reinforced concrete frame structure that meant the walls no longer need to support the floors, and hence the walls could be screens of non-load bearing glass. However, no-one waxes lyrical about plastics in modernist manifestos, although they were almost a modern material having been invented in the late nineteenth-century. However, the 1950s saw plastics, their development boosted by World War II, enter the building industry, albeit often hidden in the form of glues and pipes. Attempts were made to produce the plastic house, such as the Smithsons' 1956 "House of the Future" for the Ideal Home Exhibition, which used plastic interiors within a more conventional shell, and Goody and Hamilton's 1957 Monsanto "House of the Future" made of fibre glass panels. This paper discusses why these attempts failed and why plastics remain the hidden components of most modern building.

Robert Vale "Modernism on the Line"
The invitation to this symposium refers to "the baby boom, which "boosted the market for children's toys ...."" This paper explores the extent to which the toys of that era in New Zealand could be seen to have actively promoted and encouraged modernist architecture. The focus will be particularly on toy trains and model railways and how their manufacturers, both imported and local, produced model railway buildings that

were decidedly modern in form and quite unlike the largely nineteenth-century buildings seen by the majority of travellers on New Zealand Railways. However, by the end of the 1950s the only model railway buildings that were mass produced in New Zealand were traditional in form, although made of plastic, the quintessentially modern material.

Peter Wood "An Even Fuller Report on the F. Gordon Wilson House (1953)"
In September, 1953, *Home & Building* published a modest state house design. On the surface the only odd thing about it is that a journal dedicated to bespoke buildings should be concerned with presenting such a prosaic project. What undoubtedly lent to this house an architectural authority was its author, F. Gordon Wilson. At that time Wilson was the New Zealand Government Architect and he can be described without too much controversy as the most prominent, powerful and influential architect in the country through the 1950s (it is a sad irony of Wilson's great career that it also ended in this decade with his death in 1959). Today we are more inclined to immediately associate Wilson to New Zealand's first forays into high and medium density housing projects. This only makes it more remarkable that he would choose to put his name to this particular project when so many others were issued generically. Should we view this as an actual design by Wilson? Categorise it as an extension of his office practice, or interpret it as a political exercise? Such problems are compounded by the fact that *Home & Building* presented not one but two plans of the Wilson House, one "as build" [sic] and a second "suggested amendment." Appreciating that examples of the former had already been constructed around the country what could be gained from presenting an amendment? In order to address these questions I will be presenting in this paper the outcome of a detailed formal comparative examination of both plans. Upon this analysis I will present evidence of a more complex answer to the question of architectural authorship in which I conclude that the built examples of the Wilson House should be considered a product of The Government Architect's office, but that the "amendment" plan is more probably the work of F. Gordon Wilson, architect.