LITTLE OLD URBAN SIM
LITTLE OLD URBANISM
A suburban shift from building to block

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Acknowledgments

Thank you Neela and Anil Parbhu for your unwavering support throughout the entirety of my education.

Thank you Sam Kebbell for consistently questioning my every move, and ensuring my work be better for it.

And lastly, thank you to everyone and anyone who lent an ear throughout the year. Whether it was through interest or obligation, I thoroughly enjoyed it and am forever grateful.
Fig. 02
Computer generated tiles,
Digital drawing,
150 x 225 mm
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Fig. 03
Hataitai figure ground,
Hand drawing,
100 x 100 mm
Abstract

Hataitai forms part of a shift from countryside to cityscape. The village grew organically through the turn of the 20th century and is now heritage listed as a “good example of commercial growth” from this period. As Wellington shifts towards a polycentric city, Hataitai’s close proximity demands its town village intensify and provide more public amenity. A barrier to this is the New Zealand ICOMOS charters, which specify a “minimal intervention” approach when adapting places of heritage value. It prioritises the retention of existing fabric, with no contrast to the existing “form, scale, and material”.¹ How then, do we intensify the village and provide more public amenity, while preserving the existing fabric?

I have explored this through an elemental study of the existing fabric and the introduction of a public library. Stitching and stretching key moments to intensify the block through a direct engagement of the existing form, scale, and materials. The final scheme stretches one existing roof tile across the entire block to unify a number of other site-specific interventions, consistent with the ICOMOS charters.

This approach to urbanism is not the tabula rasa urbanism of the 1920’s, nor is it the pastiche eclecticism of the 1970’s. It’s not achieved through prescriptive guidelines or top-down planning and massing. It has been through a tectonic approach to what is existing. Providing a crucial step for the village, developing from a collection of separate buildings into a coherent urban block.

This research provides an alternative to the ICOMOS charter and contributes to the growing conversation about how we shift New Zealand’s built environment from its rural beginnings to more sustainable urban forms.

Fig. 04
Hataitai Town Centre,
Photograph,
150 x 267 mm
Research aims & implications

Little Old Urbanism is a design-led research which aims to test the principles of the ICOMOS New Zealand conservation charters against the intensification of the Hataitai town centre. It aims to identify design processes which can successfully allow for both the preservation of built fabric and the addition of public amenity. The design response will be used as a platform to discuss the broader implications of a shift in New Zealand’s built environment from rural to urban architecture.

The Wellington city council has identified a plan to densify the suburbs on the fringes of Wellington.² For Hataitai, the success of this densification will depend on the intensification of the public realm.³ Providing a successful intensification of the town centre is therefore the primary aim of this research portfolio. To do so, the design will attempt to actively engage in the suburb’s-built palimpsest. The design intent aims to add public amenity, to contrast state of public activity which is facilitated through privately owned bars and cafes. While also, resisting the tabula rasa urbanism, which would let generic re-development and corporate greed render the last hundred years of urban growth irrelevant.

Fig. 05
Building to Block,
Digital drawing,
100 x 126 mm
Fig. 06 - 09
Rural to urban, Building to blocks,
Digital diagrams of the two primary concepts of this research
Fig. 10
View from Hataitai,
Photograph,
100 x 280 mm
How do we **intensify** Hataitai’s town centre and provide more public amenity, while **preserving** the existing fabric?
Fig. 11
Hataitai urban palimpsest,
Pal-imp-sest: a parchment or tablet, reused after earlier writing has been erased (Oxford Dictionary).
Scope & Methodology

The scope of this research is focused on the tension between the preservation and progression in New Zealand’s suburban centres. The design investigation is limited to the preserved town centre of Hataitai, Wellington and examines the research question across three specific design sensibilities. The ICOMOS New Zealand conservation charter is used as a guide towards general conservation principles, practices and processes in New Zealand. Each of the three design explorations reference this document, using it as a primary criterion for preservation in New Zealand. Each design essay, Stitch, Aggregate and Stretch, targets a specific approach to preservation, with the intention to open an avenue towards a critique of the implications of the ICOMOS’s principles in the specific context of Hataitai. This is intended to open a more general conversation on how New Zealand’s suburban centres can shift from rural to urban and from buildings to blocks, while still conserving their own historical significance.

This thesis is conducted as a design-led research. The research question is responded through the specific design response, Stretch, and is aided by the contrasting design experiments of stitch and aggregate. This then led to a more discursive investigations into their broader design implications in the field of preservation and urban design. This research method aligns with Jane Rendell’s definition of design research, where “the process operates through generative modes, producing works at the outset that may then be reflected upon later”.

The following document reflects this ordering, with the research question and premise first, followed by the design response. The design response is then expanded through three essays, each exploring a specific thesis question in relation to the existing premise. Each of the presented essays is designed to be read in consecutive order, however can be read individually.

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This thesis is organised through five consecutive essays that breakdown the thesis question. The first essay, Hataitai: Rural preservation and urban progression unpicks the premise of the thesis question. Posing the preservation of Hataitai’s rural architecture against the growing demands of a polycentric Wellington City. The next three essays present three design experiments which explore a specific avenue in response to this premise and thesis question. The final essay provides a critical reflection and summary of the body of research. Altering the research question itself as a conclusion.
1. Hataitai

Hataitai: Rural preservation and urban progression unpacks the premise of the thesis question. Posing the preservation of Hataitai’s rural architecture against the growing demands of a polycentric Wellington City.

2. Stitch

Stitch takes a more sensitive view to the ICOMOS charters, operating in the negative spaces within the town centre. Exploring how to stitch together vertical and horizontal facades across threshold boundaries with manipulation of texture, colour and pattern.

3. Aggregate

Aggregate takes a more critical view on the ICOMOS charters. Exploring how new and old typologies can be aggregated together while incorporating new programs. The scheme begins to question the formal possibilities of a suburban block.

4. Stretch

Stretch looks directly at how a transition from building to block might take place in the Hataitai town centre. Stretching and augmenting specific elements across the floor, walls and roof of the suburban block. Dealing with a broader tension between finding unity through exclusion and unity through inclusion.

5. A Question of Character

The final essay, A question of character, reflects on each of the schemes, and provides a critical analysis of the larger questions being posed. Particularly around the relevance of a New Zealand ICOMOS charter, its implications in Hataitai’s context and what is most important when shifting rural buildings towards an urban block.
Initial Question

How do we intensify Hataitai’s town centre and provide more public amenity, while preserving the existing fabric?

Introduction

Hataitai
Rural Preservation & Urban Progression

Thesis Statement:
The preservation of Hataitai’s built environment can positively contribute to the suburbs increase in density and intensity.

Key Points:
1. First Draft
2. ICOMOS
3. Polycentric City
4. Second Draft

Design & Convention

Stretch
A design response

ICOMOS
New Zealand Conservation Charter

Purpose of Conservation
Conservation Principles
Conservation processes and practices

Altered Question

How do we intensify Hataitai’s town centre and provide more public amenity, while preserving the character of the existing fabric?
Stitch

A Silent Intervention

Thesis Statement:
The heritage listed town centre in Hataitai has the spatial capacity to accommodate greater public amenity, while still following the New Zealand ICOMOS charters for preservation.

Key Points:
1. Negative Space
2. Facade
3. Threshold

Aggregate

A not so Silent Intervention

Thesis Statement:
Hataitai’s existing architecture should play an active role in how it contributes towards an intensified and hybridized whole.

Key Points:
1. Typology
2. Program
3. Block

Stretch

Little Old Urbanism

Thesis Statement:
The preservation of Hataitai’s built environment can positively contribute to the suburbs increase in density and intensity.

Key Points:
1. Ground
2. Wall
3. Roof

A Question of Character

Thesis Statement:
The preservation of buildings with historic significance require equal emphasis on the retention of existing fabric and character.

Key Points:
1. ICOMOS in Hataitai
2. Why the decramastic tile?
3. Character

Conclusion
Located on the fringes of Wellington city, Hataitai is a typical New Zealand suburb ripe with urban opportunities. It’s built environment has organically accumulated since its initial conception as farmland a hundred years ago. The buildings which populate its commercial centre today, reflect an urban environment still in its first draft of urbanity. The suburb is home to six thousand people and is a vital cog in a growing polycentric city. Through this research I will explore a set of processes which aim to balance the preservation of this commercial centre, with its increase in intensity and public amenity. Proposing that the preservation of Hataitai’s built environment can positively contribute to the suburbs increase in density and intensity.
Fig. 12
Early Hataitai,
Photograph,
100 x 150 mm
“New Zealand is the last large and habitable place in the world to be discovered”\(^\text{1}\). Hataitai’s urban development reflects this. First conceived as a rural settlement, its primitive infrastructure followed paths of least resistance, contrasting the more rigorous planning regulation on the city side of the town belt. (fig. 12) These early developments now form the blueprint for Hataitai’s current urban structure. A new tunnel connection through Mt Victoria in the 1907 decreased the time it took to cross the town belt, consequently the centre of Hataitai grew its first forms of public architecture. (fig. 15,16)

It wasn’t long until the rural town boasted “the best ballroom in the city” (fig.180), 10 minutes via tram to the CBD. It is through these early forms of micro-activity in combination with the suburbs geographically rich setting, that hint towards the opportunities of a polycentric city for Wellington.

Wellington city is expected to grow in population by 16.9% over the next 24 years, while inner city suburbs such as Te Aro are expected to grow by almost 50%. For the sustainability of the city, fringe suburbs such as Hataitai have a crucial role in densifying to accommodate the growing population.

### HATAITAI SHOPPING HERITAGE AREA

**Fig. 13**
Hataitai Heritage Listing, Document

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of building / feature</th>
<th>Number</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shed, rear of 25-27 Waitoa Road</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shed, rear 3 Moxham Avenue</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Moxham Avenue</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With a current population density of 33 people per hectare, the suburb is relatively sparse. Rapidly growing suburb of Mt Eden sits at 43.7 people per hectare, while the now thriving suburb of Fitzroy in Melbourne is at 74.6 people per hectare. However, density alone does not ensure livability. A study of medium-density suburbs in Auckland undertaken by Errol Haarhoff and Lee Beattie has shown that increased density requires an increase in intensity. For Hataitai, this intensity can come from the commercial architecture in the town centre.

The preserved collection of diverse buildings that populate the town centre cannot remain stagnant in their spatial and programmatic opportunities. The taverns and small grocers which were established for the 1920’s, are no longer able to provide for the 2020’s. A second draft of urbanity is needed. It is therefore the aim of this thesis to investigate through design, what a second draft of urbanity in Hataitai might look like. The ICOMOS New Zealand charters will be used as a benchmark for our current principles, processes and practices towards preservation. With each design experiment, either using the charters as a foil or as a method of critique. The design intention is in contrast with Tabula Rasa urbanism. It intends to extend the work started by architects such as Frederick de Jersey Clere adding new layers to the existing built fabric. Extending the spatial, visual and programmatic possibilities of a collection of buildings shifting towards an urbanised block.

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Fig. 17
Hataitai,
Digital drawing,
150 x 264 mm
Fig. 18, 19
Frederick de Jersey Clere works,
Photographs & Plans

Fig. 20, 21
Waitoa Road,
Photograph,
150 x 100 mm
Stretch
A Design Response

Stretch is the design response to the proposed thesis question. It responds to the tension between preserving the existing fabric of Hataitai’s town centre and intensifying it for the next hundred years of urban growth. This is achieved through four levels of intervention; Intensifying the footprint, conserving the existing fabric, filling the gaps and unifying the whole. The design response is the result of a series of prior design experiments and led further discursive investigations in the field of urban preservation. The following pages display and describe this series of interventions made to the town centre.
Intensifying the footprint

This research considers the preservation of an entire urban block, rather than the preservation of a singular building. Preservation at this scale therefore accommodates for a variety of existing footprints and their corresponding interstitial spaces. Each scarred with their own history of spatial and visual relationships. The preservation of these spaces must therefore account for the tangible fabric on this site, as well as the experiential qualities of each nook and cranny.

The design response utilizes the existing traditions of ornamentation to accentuate each of these relationships. Each of the retail spaces along the blocks edge are decorated with a high-density basket-weave brick pattern, while the corner foursquare has a 45° herringbone pattern. The design intention is to establish a relationship between the size of spaces and their level of publicness with the density and consistency of their brick/tiling pattern. The two interior and one exterior entrances on Moxham Avenue juxtapose this relationship with a sheared square tile pattern. The design intention is to literally augment the more domestic patterns, alluding to a more public function. The two courtyards use a different pattern again, to distinguish general behaviour changes between each space. The northern courtyard (louder reading room) uses a more rugged brick texture, combined with a more banal brick arrangement. Occasionally disrupted by the cross-junction points. This combination gives the courtyard a feeling of being larger than it is, through the scale and pattern of each brick. While the southern courtyard (quiet reading room) uses a larger tile module and is more consistently repeated. This gives a slightly higher concentration of detail, for the slower moving occupants.

Fig. 22, 23
Ground Floor plan & South Elevation,
Digital drawings
Statistics

- North Library: 750m²
- South Library: 3200m²
- Roof Courtyard: 915m²
- North Courtyard: 630m²
- South Courtyard: 330m²

Block area: 3200m²
Fig. 24 - 29
Isometric and Orthogonal
Digital drawings & Hand drawings
Retain the fabric

The fifth principle of the New Zealand ICOMOS charters is the “least possible loss of existing fabric”\(^\text{10}\). This is an important principle to retain, not only for the preservation of a place but also for the conservation of resources used in the construction industry. The design response therefore strictly abides by the Wellington district plan for heritage buildings (fig.13), omitting only 3 sheds at 25-27 Waitoa Road, 3 Moxham Avenue and one small commercial structure at 17 Moxham avenue. The structures were ultimately detrimental to the quality of spaces desired for the block. The remaining footprint, structure and facade of each heritage listed building is actively included into the hybridised block. The design intention was to not dramatise the composition of new and old. Instead the design focuses on the distinct conditions of each space, operating in response to the specific materiality of each building. The design response is conceived as a continuous fabric that boldly establishes new relationships through a painterly attention to detail.
Fill the gaps

The continuation of existing fabric is best seen in the longitudinal section of the site. The staggered relationship of shop fronts is visible as each retain their own character, jarringly interrupted by openings into the courtyards behind. The library spaces above perform spatially as a singular space. However, the changes in heights and width of spaces responds directly to the existing structure of the buildings below. The large coffered ceiling and wall penetrations allow for the changing conditions of each day to keep the interior emotions of each room in flux. In elevation the contrast becomes more evident due to the distinct nature of each individual facade. The additions between buildings respond directly to their neighbours in terms of texture and detail per square meter, while remaining confidently contemporary on their own. The additions above seek to stretch the simple decramastic pattern across the block, providing a more subdued rhythm to the already messy symphony.
Unify the whole

A primary finding from the first two design experiments is the issue of the difficult whole. Each scheme can successfully transition the collection of buildings to a singular block programmatically and spatially, however a primary finding from the research was how to unify the block visually. The eventual design response creates a hierarchical compositional system to respond to this question.

Beginning with the shop fronts along at eye level, there is a constant rhythm of detail and familiar elements across that section of the block. The next ‘layer’ above, draws from the eclectic nature of each facade and allows each one to be legibly understood. The third piece of the puzzle stretches the one anomaly on the street; the decramastic roof. The scheme plays off the visual strength of this element to act as the primary visual component. Allowing for a hierarchy of pieces to
come together, with the roof being the most striking, the facades second, and the shop fronts third.

Spatially the roof stretches around the entire block, intersected at the bend in the site where the modernist apartment block pierces through. This break allows for a programmatic break, between the louder and quieter ends of the library. The break also allows for two different roof functions. At the northern end, the roof forms a large daylit coffered ceiling. Providing diffused lighting to the major library room. At the southern end, the roof surrounds only the perimeter of a publicly accessible rooftop courtyard. This adds to the expanse of public amenity given to Hataitai through this intervention. At both ends the roof pulls away to copper roofing that sits beneath the decramastic layer.
ICOMOS
New Zealand Conservation Charter

The ICOMOS New Zealand Charters is a document intended to guide the conservation of places deemed of cultural heritage value. Written in the spirit of the Venice charter, the document is altered to suit New Zealand’s heritage needs. The Hataitai town centres heritage listing ensures it as an apt candidate to be guided by this document. The following pages provide analysis of the application this document has in this context.
The ICOMOS charters are broken into three primary sections describing the purpose of the document, the principles behind it and the process and practices involved in implementing it. This analysis aims to identify the content that is of specific importance to the preservation of Hataitai’s town centre and provide a critique in response to the aims of the thesis. This document is used throughout the research as the primary criteria for preservation work.

Hataitai’s town centre is preserved as it is a “good example of commercial growth from its specific period”. When preserving the centre, whether conservatively or pro-actively, this judgment forms the criteria for preservation. The ICOMOS charter is then tested through the design experiments to investigate how accurately its principles, processes and practices can allow for preservation as well as accommodating the urban change that Hataitai requires.

The purpose of the document highlights this need to provide tangible evidence of continuity between past, present and future. Alluding to a conscious desire to allow for places of historic value to engage in an urban palimpsest. This ethos is contradicted in the principles, highlighting a need for “minimal intervention” and “least possible loss of existing fabric”. This encourages the retention of tangible evidence, however through the design experiments conducted in this thesis, it has become apparent that it is not
Conservation processes and practice

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<td><strong>14. Conservation Plans</strong></td>
<td>Assess its heritage significance and ensure a high priority is given to the authenticity and integrity of the place.</td>
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<td><strong>15. Conservation Projects</strong></td>
<td>Conservation should consult relevant people, research the place, prepare a conservation plan and document appropriately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16. Professional, trade and craft skills</strong></td>
<td>All aspects of conservation work should be undertaken by people with appropriate conservation training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17. Degrees of intervention for conservation purposes</strong></td>
<td>Preservation, Restoration, reconstruction and adaptation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18. Preservation</strong></td>
<td>Preservation involves as little intervention as possible. Stabilisation, maintenance, repair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>20. Reconstruction</strong></td>
<td>Distinguished by restoration by the introduction of new material to replace material that has been lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>21. Adaptation</strong></td>
<td>Adaptation may arise from maintaining its continued use or from a change in use. Any change should be the minimum necessary, should be reversible, and have little or no adverse effect on the cultural heritage value. Compatible with the original form and fabric of the place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>22. Non-intervention</strong></td>
<td>Assessment of cultural heritage value show that it is not desirable to undertake conservation intervention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>23. Interpretation</strong></td>
<td>Interpretations should assist the understanding of tangible and intangible values of a place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>24. Risk mitigation</strong></td>
<td>In order to safeguard cultural heritage value from natural or human induced threats, implementation of a conservation plan is appropriate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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only the tangible evidence that gives the centre its historic value. With reference to the heritage judgment, use/program is an important factor for retention. The last principle, “Fixtures, fitting and content”, is more subjective however as the document does not accommodate the existing condition of these objects. In the case of town centre, the parapets and awnings are often in states of disrepair. Specifically retaining these exact pieces does not ensure that the value of the place is retained, as the site has already been altered several times since its first inception.

It is deemed that “Number 21. Adaptation” is the most applicable process for conservation, given the urban demands on the site. This process specifies that the primary source of adaptation comes through a change in use, rather than any spatial visual change. The design response therefore complies with most of the recommendations for visual consistency of form, colours and materials. However, it is the scale of intervention which diverts from what ICOMOS specifies. This crucially allows for a significant shift from rural to urban architecture, a necessary shift for the suburb.

The ICOMOS charters in principle encourage change, a necessary element for a site which risks losing its urban palimpsest through the way it is listed. However, the guide does not aid any drastic shifts in how the sites may function on an urban scale. Most importantly, only specifying methods for conserving the tangible and providing very little guidance or encouragement for the preservation of the intangible.
Stitch
A Silent Intervention

The heritage listing that presides over the Hataitai shopping centre restricts the construction of any new building, or modification of any existing building within the heritage area. A silent intervention is the first design experiment which explores how the area may still be intensified, without disrupting the facades which line Moxham Avenue and Waitoa Road. Continuing the reverence of the facade but turning the focus to the interstitial spaces and neglected facades within the block. This design experiment ultimately questions how a series of internal surface interventions might begin to stitch key moments within the block together. Seamlessly disrupting the block through careful use of ornament, pattern and texture. Proposing that Hataitai’s town centre has the spatial capacity to accommodate greater public amenity, while still adhering to the ICOMOS New Zealand conservation charter.
Fig. 30
Hataitai Figure Ground
Pencil on cartridge paper,
100 x 100 mm
Negative Space

When the existing Hataitai town centre is drawn as a figure ground (fig. 30), the perforations of unoccupied interstitial spaces become evident. The ad-hoc arrangements of white shapes indicate a built environment which has organically grown for little over 100 years. It is through a figure ground where the tangible evidence of past, present and future become blurred into a singular palimpsest of urban growth. It is the palimpsest of time which is threatened by single-era heritage protection policies. The interstitial spaces have been recorded through photography and site-sketches. This process began an initial preservation of the tangible and intangible experiences of the existing spaces I would be later altering. Each recording focuses on the assemblage of visual languages, and the collisions between intentions. These first interventions (fig. 39) investigated, through surface manipulations, how these visual languages could be curated. Focusing initially on the negative spaces on the ground around each of the buildings which are heritage listed. Using an existing tradition of ornamentation, the ground plane is isolated and operated on through new patterns, colours.
Fig. 34
Concept sketch
Hand drawn
115 x 85 mm
Fig. 35 - 37
Forgotten spaces
Photographs
115 x 85 mm
Fig. 38
Inside/out facades
Sketch
105 x 150 mm
Fig. 39
Facade to the sky
Digital drawing
131 x 180 mm
Fig. 40
Methodist Church, Pencil on cartridge paper, 60 x 95 mm
and textures drawn off the existing site. This process applies a delicate approach to how the block might be reimagined, to increase public space, without touching the heritage buildings. The process is akin to the project Templo de Diana by Jose Maria Sanchez Garcia (fig. 44) and Stortorget by Caruso St John. (fig. 46) Templo de Diana deals with the preservation of the temple, by changing the users experience of the temple through how they view it. Re-orientating the relationship the users have with the temple from the exterior. Framing the temple in a new light and orientation to what was historically seen. Caruso St John apply a similarly sensitive approach to Stortorget. In a square surrounded by historic buildings, they treat the ground plane as a facade to the sky. Decluttering the space and carefully selecting the appropriate materials which allude to the space’s rich history. Both projects respond to the challenge of preservation in uniquely proactive manners, but their sensibility remains rooted in their context. The same ideology is used for this first intervention, with the intent to monumentise the heritage buildings in Hataitai by re-orientating the public’s experience of them. At the same time, increasing the quantity and quality of public space in the suburb.

Facade

The facade is an architectural tool which is commonly used to engage the public. This can be seen through the exaggerated parapets which line Waitoa Road and Moxham Avenue. Their use of ornamentation alludes to the functions of each building and is a key feature that makes the centre a good representation of the architecture of the time. The interventions into this block, aim to fill the teeth of the street. Consciously blurring the lines between new and old.

An independent design-led investigation was undertaken to
Fig. 43
Decramastic tile arrangement,
Digital Drawing,
150 x 230 mm
explore how a design intervention could operate within an existing condition. A work and progress installation was installed within the kitchenette of the Hataitai bowling club. The design experiment allowed me to isolate the intervention and existing ‘building’ from any external conditions such as land ownership and preservation. (fig. 50) Focusing only on the design response to a domestic oddity. The final design created a dialogue between the existing tongue and groove of the kitchenette and the inserted board and batten of the installation. This design led to further investigations surrounding the topic of operations versus representation. Particularly through small Indian ink drawings which tease out how a two-dimensional drawing can operate or make the viewer work to understand it versus a drawing understood at first glance. (fig. 63, 64) Correlations can be draw with the work of Gordon Walters and Bridget Riley. (fig. 65, 66) Walters more elusive works such as the Untitled (Koru), 1975, use the visual differences of whites and blacks to operate on the canvas. In contrast to the op art seen with Riley’s Fall, 1963, which is more immediately understood.

When operating on the facade interventions within the street elevation of Moxham Avenue, the major difference is the change from working with two-dimensional plane which is only observed to a three-dimensional object which is felt. Engaging in the

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Fig. 48
Tile Studies
Digital Drawings
“Buildings have to be useful, not ruins. So how do you make them look like you haven’t touched them, but in fact you’ve touched them a lot?”

Ricardo Flores & Eva Prats
Fig. 49
Decramastic wall,
Photograph,
70 x 95 mm

Fig. 50
Hataitai Bowling Club Kitchenette,
Photograph,
100 x 100 mm
The first design decision made was to present the work on a panel within the kitchenette. Battens were introduced as a design method to order the drawings, while also visually creating a dialogue with the kitchen. The pragmatic need to separate the panels into thirds doubled the purpose of battens as device to hide the joints.

A skirting board at the base of the installation allowed the battens to seamlessly hit the base of the counter-top. This allowed the panel to visually appear as a section of the kitchenette deconstructed to its primary tectonics. The staggered arrangement of the drawings create a secondary rhythm to the batten pattern.

The white paint finish allowed the drawings and the installation to both stand comfortably apart from the existing context. A wallpaper was also introduced to site 15mm below the skirting board, extending the peeled back wall metaphor while also tying the installation in with the ‘tiled’ roof above.

The drawings had a pragmatic need of being fixed to the wall. This was seen as another opportunity to explore how the construction and artistic sides of tectonics could come together for this specific installation. The colour decision allowed the whole piece to begin to assimilate again with the wider context.
Fig. 59 - 61
Exhibition opening day,
Photographs,
20.07.18
Fig. 62
Riley and wall,
Photograph,
360 x 220 mm
Fig. 63, 64
Indian ink tiles
Indian sketches,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 65, 66
Koru & Fall
Gordon Walters & Bridget Riley
tactile became a major component of these surface interventions as a direct finding from the prior design investigations. Celebrating the virtues of superficial facadism by echoing Walter Benjamin’s call for architecture to “eschew the optical in favour of the tactile”. This approach critically subverts a common trope of facadism, which is to keep change hidden behind a stagnant facade. This same criticality is applied through OMA’s Fondazione Prada, where the facade of the historic building is engaged with in a critical manner. By contrasting and juxtaposing the material and textures of both the existing and the new, the users experience of the entire complex is subverted. Textural and formal investigations are specifically examined through the vacant gap between the modernist apartment block and arts and crafts shops on Moxham Avenue. Fig. 70 and Fig. 71 are both explored specifically in isometric to explore this, as the medium allows for the texture and form to be manipulated in detail. Subverting the traditional role of the stoic facade, into a more interactive component of the street. Fig. 70, recedes away from the street, allowing for a more passive interaction with the block in a new interstitial space at the blocks front door. While fig. 71 uses a more subtle manipulation in brick to indicate a subducting entrance to the block.

Fig. 67 - 69
Wall Sections
Hand drawn
Fig. 70
5 Moxham Ave intervention,
Hand Drawing,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 71
5 Moxham Ave intervention,
Hand Drawing,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 72
5 Moxham Ave intervention,
Digital Drawing,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 73
Moxham Ave elevation studies,
Digital Drawings,
150 x 190 mm
Fig. 76
Facade studies,
Digital Drawings,
50 x 50 mm
Fig. 77
1 Moxham Ave intervention,
Digital Drawing,
83 x 64 mm
Fig. 78
1 Moxham Ave interventions,
Digital Drawing,
49 x 73 mm
Fig. 82
Intervention studies,
Digital Drawings
Fig. 83
Existing facade of Hataitai,
Photograph,
150 x 207 mm
Threshold

Every intervention made sits within an existing field of spatial and legal boundaries. The next series of pencil vignettes (fig. 85 - fig. 87) specifically focus on these junctions between buildings. The process of intervening in these spaces could not be achieved with any degree of accuracy, through typical means of urban design. Prescriptive guidelines and massing strategies are unable to deal appropriately with the collisions of architect and planners’ intentions.

In this specific site there are a variety of thresholds with vast variations in level of privacy and function. Fig. 85 investigates the spatial opportunities between the modernist apartment and the ‘realm bar’. Creating a small private courtyard beneath the level of the entrance of the apartment. The drawing explores visually an extension of the tight feeling which existed on the site and accentuates this through shadow and ornament detailing. Fig. 86 deals with a gradual level change which is currently occupied by a car park. The intervention emphasises this threshold change with a deliberate level change. Managing a spectrum of privacy levels from the private entrance into the apartment, to the semi-public corridor through the realm to the large courtyard in the centre. Fig. 87 explores similar notions further south of the block, exploiting sizes and variations in tiling to indicate a very deliberate threshold between a more public and more private courtyard.

Fig. 88 continues these same notions but brings the richness of material to the interior through a primary stair. Recognising the direct interaction occupants have with a stair. By intervening in the interstitial thresholds, the existing buildings can be accessed and experienced in a different manner. MVRDV’s unifying ring project provides a more dramatic approach to dealing with the thresholds of historic buildings (Fig. 84). The scheme opts to engage formally with each threshold whether existing or not. In doing so, it preserves the existence of each intervention on that site, but also intentionally disrupts their legibility as individual buildings. A tactic towards appreciating the difference created by preserving a block rather than an individual building.¹⁴

Through a variety of interventions in the interstitial spaces of this block, this scheme consciously investigates the role of the surface. Manipulating it to alter the users experience of the preserved buildings, without physically touching them. The scheme develops a notion that the intensification of the block can occur through a sensitive adaptation of the principles, processes and practices of the ICOMOS charter.

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Fig. 85
Realm courtyard,
Hand Drawing,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 86
Courtyard intersection,
Hand Drawing,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 87
5 Moxham Ave intervention,
Hand Drawing,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 88
Realm Stair,
Digital Drawing,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 89
Review one,
Photographs,
18.05.18
Aggregate
A not so Silent Intervention

A not so silent intervention takes a more critical view towards the preservation of Hataitai’s town centre. Leaning more heavily on critical theory from Rem Koolhaas, Bryony Roberts and Friedrich Nietzsche. This scheme actively engages the elements of historic value, treating them as a typology which can be more proactively integrated into a hybridized whole. By inserting the singular, but complex program of a suburban library, new formal fragments aggregate with the existing collection of buildings. Threading through the existing fabric and expanding the spatial opportunities of the suburban block. Still remaining consistent with most of the ICOMOS principles. The scheme directly questions the value in monumentalism in a suburb so early in its urban development. Proposing that buildings of historic value should play a more active role in the urban progression of the block.
Fig. 90
Hataitai branch library,
Digital drawing,
100 x 100 mm
Typology

The diverse collection of buildings that populate the town centre in Hataitai are preserved as a “good example of architecture” from a specific era. Spatially efficient for the demands of that period. Currently with no indoor public space in the suburb, the centre needs an introduction of public infrastructure which can accommodate a rapidly growing city. Directly applied, the ICOMOS charters do not encourage the growth of indoor spaces within the town centre itself. This aggregate scheme proposes how the principles of retaining existing fabric can integrate with the addition of new spaces in and around the existing buildings.

By digitally preserving the entire block, the scheme can intervene beyond the two-dimensional realm. New spaces are threaded through the existing buildings, interlocking typologies of urban scale buildings with the existing rural buildings. Each intervention responds directly to its neighbour, allowing the scheme to remain dignified and humane in scale, rooted in its place and pressing a more metropolitan character. This hybridisation can be seen most clearly through section and the digital interior renderings. (Fig.92)

The approach to interlock typologies of new and old, has been explored in a variety of ways, to deal with preservation on an urban scale. Herzog and de Meuron’s Caixa forum, the Mosque-Cathedral of Cordoba and the Atrio Hotel by Mansilla + Tunon all attempt to spatially interlock new additions with an existing architecture. (fig.109-111) The approach rebels against Charles Jencks claims of a revival of postmodern facadism. A trope seen commonly through the 1970’s coinciding with an introduction of new urbanism principles towards heritage architecture. Schemes which aimed to contextualise buildings, while hiding more of the generic development typical of late capitalist societies. The aggregate scheme fights this trope by the very inclusion of all the sites “messy vitality”. Aiming to contribute to an existing urban palimpsest in a manner consistent with the current urban grain. Rather than applying a fictitious tabula rasa, behind the facades of Moxham Avenue.

Fig. 91
Decramastic tiles,
Digital drawing,
150 x 84 mm
Program

The climate of Wellington city hinders the success of public outdoor spaces, while indoor public space is in short supply. Currently catered for through banal malls and confused cinema complexes there is a need for quality indoor public space. Spaces of worship often go beyond simply satisfying spatial requirements but encourage higher spatial literacy through their richness of material and quality of light. 50% of Hataitai identify as secular, a statistic which is growing by 1% each year. This scheme investigates how a space for knowledge, can provide greater spatial literacy. The scheme is defined by two large courtyards in the north and south of the block. Each is entered via the two empty slivers in the existing street frontage. Around each of the courtyards, are commercial space consistent with what currently exists on site. A small auditorium is introduced at the south of the site, enclosing the courtyards from the neighbouring homes. At the centre of the block, the “Realm” bar is reconfigured as a mixing chamber for the library. Additional library spaces then snake through the complex, changing in height and width dependent on the existing structural plan from the buildings below.

Fig. 92, 93, Moxham Elevation & Section
Digital drawings
relationship with historic architecture, opposed to applying an antiquarian view towards anything old. Schemes such as ‘Partition’ by Dogma are similar in their approach to existing traditions surrounding building use and occupation.(fig.114) Where ‘Partition’ is more absolute in its separation between new and old, aggregate is intentionally more ambiguous. Aligning with the formal ambiguity that exists on site. Both schemes seek to establish a new ordering system of spaces based upon the patterns of the existing buildings. Creating a tension between architectural continuity and urban scale social transformations. Critical urban scale transformation is consistent with schemes such as Ville Spatiale by Yona Friedman, Frankfurt-Romerberg reconstruction by Candilis Josic Woods and The Continuous Monument by Superstudio.(fig.112-115) Each scheme explores urban scale preservation, with varying levels of autonomy form their existing environment. Aggregate applies a similar criticality to its existing architecture, however, differs in the level of spatial integration it has with the blocks existing grain and materiality. The schemes interlocking of forms directly changes the users experience with the existing preserved architecture.(fig.95) Constant movement between new and old allows for new forms of indoor public space, unattainable had the site been wiped of the existing buildings.

Fig. 94
Courtyards,
Digital drawings,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 95
Auditorium and crush space,
Digital drawings,
100 x 100 mm
LEVEL: -1
1. Entrance/Crush Space
2. Toilet
3. Cafe
4. Realm
5. Apartment
6. Stair
7. Auditorium
8. Reading Room
9. Mixing Chamber
10. Foyer
11. Workshop
12. Service Lift
13. Youth Library
14. Youth Library

LEVEL: 0
1. I.T
2. Media Library
3. Outdoor deck
4. Magazine/loud space
5. Apartment
6. Media Library
7. Youth Library
8. Youth Library
9. Mixing Chamber
10. Retail
11. Workshop
12. Service Lift
13. Capital E
14. Study Space
15. Grocer
16. Scallop Bar
17. Loading Bay
LEVEL: 1
1. Youth Library
2. Workshop
3. Admin
4. Mixing Chamber
5. Foyer
6. Admin
7. Capital E
8. Non-fiction
9. Grocer
10. Quiet Study Space

LEVEL: 2
1. Non-fiction Library
2. Gallery
3. Courtyard 1
4. Courtyard 2

Fig. 96 - 103
Isometric and orthogonal plans,
Digital drawings
Fig. 104 - 108
Perspective sections,
Digital drawings
Fig. 109 - 111
Atrio Hotel, Caixa forum and Mosque-Cathedral, Precedents, Stitching, elevating, cannibalising
Fig. 112 - 115
Ville Spatiale, Frankfurt reconstruction, Partition and The Continuous monument Precedents, Hovering, spreading, separating and stretching
Fig. 116
Collage A,
Paper collage,
120 x 90 mm
Fig. 117
Collage B,
Paper collage,
120 x 70 mm
Fig. 118, 119
Existing & Aggregate,
Photograph,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 120, 121
Block & Blocks,
Digital drawings,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 122 - 124
Hotel Fouquet & Aggregate 2.0,
Digital drawings
Block

A suburban shift from rural to urban architecture, requires a shift in scale and corresponding unit of measurement. Common urban design uses the unit of a block to comprehend an urban environment. (fig.120) Currently, Hatatitai’s organic growth has occurred at the scale of each individual building. The schemes primary aim is to investigate how a shift towards an urban block might occur, given the centres preservation as a "collection of diverse buildings". By spatially interlocking typologies, there is a new opportunity for a collaborative authorship, while conserving resources. Colin Rowe is among architectural theorists that have identified the shortcomings of ‘totally planned’ urban environments. Highlighting the rarity at which plans are carried out in their totality, more often leaving the city as a collection of partial opportunities and ultimately immense destruction.16 This scheme follows a similar sensibility towards relishing the inevitable collisions of architectural intentions. Rather, creating a collage or an aggregate of various intentions from various authors. The scheme adds and curates this aggregation, allowing for a more sustainable urban growth pattern. The stealth collages (fig. 116,117) exaggerate this relentlessly hybridised world. Re-imagining an urban environment where every intervention could be the subject of future sampling and remixing.17

The Hotel Fouquet scheme by Edouard Francois is an urban scale preservation project that directly critiques the integral values of the typical Haussmannian block it is surrounded by.(fig.122) It dissolves the interstitial spaces between buildings by casting their ornament directly onto its cast concrete facade. Recognising that it is the form and scale of the block that define it. Francois’s facades are then able to express their own freedom of penetration, dependent on where they are programmatically needed. The spatial interlocking of buildings allows the block to grow with urban demand, while preserving the character of the Haussmannian block. Typologically transforming the buildings rather than disguising their changes behind the typical tropes of postmodern facadism. The aggregate experiment tested a series of smaller iterations that explore how the centre might be designed from the scale of the block, inwards. (fig. 121) This process highlighted existing tensions within the discipline between the radical eclecticism exemplified by Charles Moore and Robert venturi and the orthodox purity of Mies van der Rohe.

“How do you acknowledge the past without being enslaved by it? How do you tie in the future without erasing the past.”
Fig. 125 - 127
Interior and exterior,
Digital drawings,
150 x 65 mm
Fig. 128
Review two,
Photograph,
30.08.18
Hataitai’s first draft at a town centre organically grew through the early 20th century. Its diverse collection of rural buildings adequately served the population of the time. The suburb is now amidst a significant shift from its rural beginnings into more urban forms. Its collection of rural buildings needs to shift into urban blocks. Little Old Urbanism is the final design response to the question of how a collection of buildings can be preserved while still adhering to the standard unit of the city: the block. It is not done through massing or top-down planning, but by responding to the tiled realities of what is being preserved in this town centre. By stretching a single decramastic tile around the entirety of the block, the scheme can intensify the footprint, fill the gaps and unify the whole. Proving that a suburban shift from building to block in Hataitai’s town centre can be achieved by augmenting a single roof tile.
Fig. 129
Tiled thresholds,
Physical model,
100 x 100 cm
Floor

Public buildings and public spaces act as anchor points for people to orientate themselves in urban environments. They provide an essential release from everyday activities and can be both a stage for life or a source of inspiration. The stretch scheme recognises the importance of ground plane for providing common ground for anyone. The scheme aims to ‘thicken’ the ground plane, emphasising the tangible oddities of the site, as well as the intangible social and legal relationships. (fig. 132) The ground plane improves circulation through the block by recognising the spatial opportunities available by treating the block as a singular footprint. (fig. 133) The two courtyards in the north and south of the site provide generous urban reading rooms, allowing the public to find shelter to meet or an urban escape to retreat. The ‘stage’ space which bridges the two courtyards, utilises the specially sprung floor or the Realm tavern. Re-imagining the space as an open mixing ground to become a literal translation of Aldo Rossi’s metaphor for the city. This purity of purpose was explored through the remodeling of Aldo Rossi’s Teatro del Mondo. Exchanging the timber walls for clear acrylic, further distil the floating pavilion to its core idea as a theatre for life. (fig. 131)

The Open Quarter scheme by the AHO and GSAPP (Oslo school of architecture and Columbia University), presented a practical interpretation of the more radical schemes previously discussed by Yona Friedman, Candilis Josic Woods and Superstudio. The two schools combined to explore how the Oslo government block might preserve its existing architecture, post the terror attack on July 22, 2011. (fig. 130) Choosing to not touch the buildings themselves, but rather monumentalise the buildings through the enhancement and extension of the ground plane. Adding in garden atrium’s, office space and overall better circulation through the government block. The scheme uses the complexities of a site with pre-existing conditions and conventions, to allow it to become accessible for all. This same sensibility is taken through with the stretch scheme, adopting learnings made from the stitch scheme and applying them to the entirety of the block. This process allows the block to form new typologies of public space for Hataitai, re-imagining how the typical suburban town hall might perform today.

Fig. 130, 131
Open Quarter & Teatro del Mondo, Precedent & physical model
Fig. 136 - 138, Tiled thresholds, Digital drawings, 75 x 75 mm
Fig. 139
All spaces & transition spaces,
Digital drawings.
Each of the different threshold boundaries are diagrammed here to display the unique set of boundaries which exist on site. The transition spaces, consist of stairs and corridors which allow access through the site. The primary stair sits within the apartment building in the centre of the site, providing a unique vantage point of the block within the existing building.

Fig. 140
Entrances & Private space,
Digital drawings.
The new interventions into the block double as entrance spaces. The Waitoa road entrance is open access keeping the larger courtyards purely public. It also allows for vehicle access and to service the backs of the retail and food outlets. The Moxham ave entrances consist of one open access at the northern end and two closed door entrances for the library. These align with the pedestrian crossings, providing a route around the existing intersection. The private space is the small entrance threshold to the private apartment.

Fig. 141
Public spaces & Foliage space,
Digital drawings.
The public spaces added to the block allow the street edge to blend inwards. Based primarily around the urban reading rooms which blend the threshold between indoor and outdoor, private and public. The foliage space to the south of the apartment block provides necessary visual blocks into the quieter courtyard and viewing amenity for the residents and members of public alike.

Fig. 142
Enclosed spaces & The Stage,
Digital drawings.
The enclosed spaces on the ground floor are primarily existing structures, with the addition of one public bathroom. They consist of the existing foursquare and retail spaces. The 5 Moxham ave is converted into half a street facing apartment and half an interior facing cafe. The stage uses the existing sprung footprint of the realm bar, previously dance hall.
Fig. 143, Rear public corridor, Physical model, 100 x 100 mm
Fig. 144,
Secondary stair,
Physical model,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 145,
Apartment ground floor,
Physical model,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 146,
Apartment and library facade,
Physical model,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 147, South corner entrance, Physical model, 100 x 100 mm
Fig. 148, Primary stair, Physical model, 100 x 100 mm
Fig. 149, Strömkajen & Decramastic wall, Hand drawn, 70 x 113 mm
Hataitai town centres heritage listing, prioritises the protection of the facades that line Waitoa Road and Moxham Avenue. Protecting only these, in compliance with the ICOMOS charters doesn’t encourage their active participation in the urban growth of the centre. Sentencing these elements to a prescribed future of stasis, while future changes are forced to remain hidden behind them. The stretch scheme works initially with the four gaps present in the teeth of the block. (fig. 157-161) Using each gap as a programmatic opportunity to enter the library. The visual intent of each intervention however, provides a direct critique towards notions of a single-era heritage future. Directly engaging in an urban palimpsest by operating within each gap, opposed to replicating its neighbour. The scheme stretches and augments the existing materials across the new facades, responding directly to the contextual needs of the intervention. Intentionally replicating the ‘thin’ facadism as an urban tool with contemporary additions, adding to the existing palimpsest of additions and alterations. Critiquing the single-era heritage the current heritage listing prescribes.

Strömkajen by Marge Arkitekter is a ferry terminal in the foreground of the Royal castle of Stockholm. (fig. 149) The contemporary addition to the waterfront remains hidden in plain sight through its deliberate use of an unconventional building material. Clad entirely in brass metal sheeting, a material commonly used for the miscellaneous additions to older buildings. The material allows the building to sit comfortably amongst its historic neighbours, displaying a unique take on urban preservation. For the stretch scheme, the new facades respond to their role as a wall and a facade. A visual communicator to the suburb. The facades act as the only tangible edge for social, political and economic factors that are intangibly forced on the urban environment. The new facades on Waitoa Road and Moxham Avenue consciously replicate this thin approach to facadism in Hataitai.

Fig. 151
Facade anatomy,
Digital drawing.
385 x 180 mm
Fig. 152
Waitoa facade intervention,
Digital drawing,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 153
Moxham library entrance and apartment facade,
Digital drawing,
100 x 123 mm
Fig. 154
Moxham shops and library facade,
Digital drawing,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 155
Moxham foursquare and courtyard entrance,
Digital drawing,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 155
Moxham shops and library facade,
Digital drawing,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 156
South Library Facade,
Digital drawing,
100 x 100 mm
Fig. 157 - 160
Moxham Library entrance anatomy,
Digital drawing,
65 x 65 mm
Fig. 161 - 164
Waitoa intervention anatomy,
Digital drawing,
65 x 65 mm
Fig. 165
Library corner entrance anatomy,
Digital drawing,
145 x 65 mm
Fig. 166
Moxham Avenue elevation,
Hand drawing,
2100 x 800 mm
Fig. 167
Decramastic tiles,
Photograph,
100 x 100 mm
Roof

Protected under Hataitai’s heritage listing are three fibre cement parapets, one concrete apartment building and one decramastic roof. (fig. 166) The site already contains the messy vitality that Robert Venturi yearns for in his book ‘Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture. The primary aim for this final scheme is to resolve the difficult whole. By stretching the preserved decramastic roof of the existing foursquare across and around the entire block, the scheme proposes a shift from individual buildings to a singular block in a specifically Hataitai manner. Driven by the shortcomings of the previous two experiments, the whole is unified through use of hierarchy. Utilising the existing points of inflection and symmetry, the stretched roof provides the necessary level of hierarchy to the overall composition. Visually tying the “collection of diverse buildings” together, through a means prescriptive guidelines or massing processes would not have allowed for. This was achieved through a process of sorting through the preserved elements of the block. (fig. 151) Picking apart the role each element has in the rhythm of the street and interspersing them with new additions. (fig. 171, 172) The decramastic roof remained the anomaly on the site and was therefore optimised to become the primary element on the site. Bernard Tschumi’s Le Fresnoy Studio, applies a similar tactic to preserving a leisure complex from the 1920’s. By introducing a new envelope to the site, the added visual hierarchy coalesced disparate buildings into a singular centre.

For the stretch scheme, the roof provides the visual hierarchy necessary, while spatially allowing an urban block to emerge within almost all the constraints of the ICOMOS charters. Retaining the existing fabric and complying with the existing forms, colours and materials. The scheme justifiably exceeds the existing scale of the block, a necessary jump for a rural centre in its second draft of urbanity.

This design investigation opens the discussion for the tensions surrounding the difficult whole in public architecture in New Zealand. New Zealand’s domestic architecture shares similarities with the tension discussed by Venturi between himself and the orthodox modernists that preceded him. The polarities can most clearly be seen when comparing the “sugar cube” architecture of Ernst Plischke with the more “brown bread” architecture of Vernon Brown. More contemporary examples remain between Fearon Hay and Gerald Melling. Both styles refer to modernism, one more freely excludes problems of site and context, while the other more deliberately opts for inclusion. The stretch scheme deals with the difficult whole by attempting to curate the pre-existing elements on the site. Doing so with a singular, ironic, neo-PoMo decramastic roof. With design intent to add more orthodox purity and mitigate the moments of desired contextualism used in the aggregate scheme.

Fig. 168
Roof skylight,
Physical model,
65 x 80 mm

Fig. 169, 170
Hataitai context & Block
Isometric,
Claycourt model & Digital drawing
Fig. 171, 172
New and old elevation &
Moxham rhythm elevation,
Digital drawing,
360 x 50 mm
Fig. 173
Long section
Hand drawing, 2100 x 800 mm
Fig. 174
Review three,
Photograph,
07.12.18
Conclusion
A Question of Character

The three schemes presented, explore a variety of approaches towards the intensification of the Hataitai town centre, while still retaining its existing fabric. Each of the schemes examines a specific sensibility towards preservation in the area and explore this through multiple methodologies and levels of criticality towards the ICOMOS charters document. The following essay presents the findings from this research. Highlighting a need to preserve the intangible elements of urban sites undergoing significant growth. The need for urban scale preservation to address both the detailed realities of the site as well as the complexities of an urban project. Finally, the acknowledgment that the preservation of Hataitai’s block is not just a question of existing fabric, but also a question of character.
Fig. 175
Waitoa Road tiles,
Photograph,
150 x 190 mm
The Hataitai town centre is still in its teething stages of urban development. The diverse collection of buildings and additions have laid the foundations for the grain of the fringe suburb. However, the quality of architecture and quantity of public space are limiting the urban possibilities of the region. It has been the aim of this body of research to explore what a second draft at an urban environment might look like in Hataitai. One of the primary conditions which each design experiment engaged with was the heritage listing of the commercial centre. The heritage listing was given as the area has a “good example of buildings from its period”. Ensuring the unique rise in development over the inter-war period is evident throughout the future of the town centres history. This form of preservation, however, threatens to scrape away any opportunity for developments to actively engage in an urban palimpsest. The urban shift required in Hataitai, and many others around the country, questions the relevance of the ICOMOS document guiding their growth. The document is written primarily in the spirit of the Venice charter, where the preservation of monuments and sites is in much greater abundance. Primary principles on the retention of fabric are more directly linked to their reasons for conservation. In the case of New Zealand suburbs needing dramatic urban growth, a focus on the retention of their rural architecture does not ensure the preservation of historic value. This is seen most clearly in the Aggregate scheme, where retention of fabric and addition of new form does not result in the preservation of historic value. The rusty parapets and wobbly awnings may remain, but if they are overshadowed by a multiplicity of new forms and spaces, there is no sure way to protect the quality that makes the centre worthy of preservation. A major finding that arose from this scheme was that the New Zealand ICOMOS charters do not adjust enough to the relative youth of our built environment. Given the change that is required in New Zealand, in contrast to the cities of Italy or Austria, there needs to be greater guidance towards the preservation of the intangible.
Fig. 177
Moxaham avenue elevations
Digital drawings & Hand drawings,
800 x 2400 mm
Hatiletile

The two preceding design experiments, Stitch and Aggregate, explored how the thesis question could be approached specifically through either surface or form and through processes of analogue or digital. Both schemes, however, approached the preservation of the block through detailed scale. This was a design hunch which stated that the preservation of an urban block could not be achieved through the typical urban design process of prescriptive guides and urban massing studies. This remains true with the final design response, where the stretching of the decramastic tile roof allows the scheme to respond to both the urban needs of the block and the preservation needs of the individual buildings. This was a design decision that resulted from a critical combing study of each individual preserved element. However, a key finding that emerged from the two initial schemes was the value in the block as a unit of measurement. Both schemes successfully retained the fabric of the existing buildings, however their interpretations of new public space did not result in the most efficient use of the entire block. Massing studies in the latter iterations of the aggregate block provided the spatial clarity that the block required to successfully move from individual buildings to an urban block. This resulted in a more generous approach to space on both the ground floor and the library floors above. Appropriately providing clearer foundations for another hundred years of urban palimpsest to occur. The approach to begin with a detailed study of the block, ensured the eventual scheme would not fall into the typical tropes of postmodern facadism. By directly engaging the existing fabric through polar schemes (stitch and aggregate), the resulting design can interlock new and old in a manner that does not attempt to hide the centres urban growth behind the preserved facades. By stretching a domestic absurdity across entire block, the scheme can both abide by the complexities of an existing urban site and respond to its future growth demands.
Hataitai Hall. In future known as THE REALM.
The finest dance hall in town. The home of good dancers and beautiful music. Five minutes from town. Tram stops at door.
Late tram, 12:10.

Special attractions for Saturday Night:
Mr. David Devitt presents Miss Gladys Smyth,
In her Beautiful Balloon Dance, Cheerie Beerie Bee.
Followed by special novelties too numerous to mention.

Miss Phyllis Bates’s Yale Blues Class, 7 to 8; subs, 1s, ladies free. Latest music by the mascots.
Specially sprung floor, velvet finish.
Level of intervention
Low intervention
This chart dissects each of the precedents used in this body of research. Each scheme deals with modern day preservation and apply a critical view towards how it may be conceived beyond typical measures. Each scheme deals with an urban scale preservation, similarly to the thesis. They are scaled here from lowest to highest level of intervention with their design context. This is a useful tool to place the design experiments conducted. The aim for the Stretch scheme is to sit comfortably in the centre of this graph.
Character

Each of the three design schemes have investigated the preservation of the Hataitai town centre, with varying levels of compliance with the New Zealand ICOMOS charters. Each intervention and iteration aimed to balance the tension between the ICOMOS principles and adding enough public space to the town centre. Through this process, the design engaged in an existing tension within the New Zealand architectural discipline between an inclusion of ‘messy vitality’ and ‘orthodox purity’. The problem of the difficult whole became evident through the tool of the street elevation, which was used throughout the research as a yardstick for visual cohesion between the diverse existing building facades. What becomes evident with each iteration, succinctly catalogued in fig. 177, is that the criteria to retain the existing fabric does not stretch far enough to ensure a retention of historic value. This problem is fleshed out within the aggregate scheme, where the design remains deeply rooted in context, humane in scale and retains all the existing fabric yet does not maintain the quality of the existing town centre. This body of research suggests this is because, the preservation of historic value, when undergoing necessary change, is not simply a question of existing fabric. Rather it is a question of character.

While this is a difficult quality to quantify, this research portfolio is a representation of how this character might be preserved in this context. By directly engaging in the urban palimpsest of Hataitai, the research directly critiques the ethos of single-era heritage. To intervene, I have carefully sorted through each preserved element as a method of understanding the qualities and combinations which give the town centre its character and street rhythm. Through process of stitching and stretching key elements, the interventions can treat the town centre as a continuous fabric. This approach to urban scale preservation is not the tabula rasa urbanism of the 1920’s nor is it the new urbanist facadism of the 1970’s. By applying the urban unit of the block, through detailed interventions based off the character of the existing context, the design actively proposes a second draft of Hataitai’s town centre. The implications of which have led to question how a collection of rural buildings might shift towards a coherent urban block.
How do we intensify Hataitai’s town centre and provide more public amenity, while preserving the character of the existing fabric?


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LITTLE OLD URBANISM
A SUBURBAN SHIFT FROM BUILDING TO BLOCK