"Picture This": Advertising and Image in the New Zealand Architectural Journals in 1965

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ABSTRACT: Throughout the 1960s advertising content in New Zealand's two leading architectural journals increased dramatically. In the case of the *NZIA Journal*, what was a staid professional publication without advertising in the 1950s, by the end of the 1960s carried significant advertising material including advertorial covers and the first colour centre pages. While not changing so dramatically, *Home and Building* nonetheless significantly increased the visibility of its advertising content over the same period. This research presents the findings of a comparative analysis of commercial advertising imagery found in the pages of *Home & Building* and the *NZIA Journal* for 1965. Throughout the 1960s the dominant publications dedicated to the activities of architects and architecture in New Zealand were the periodicals *Home & Building* and the *NZIA Journal*. From the point of view of advertisers it is important to emphasise that these periodicals were not market competitors. While the *NZIA Journal* was a professional journal published by the New Zealand Institute of Architects, *Home & Building* was published under the auspices of the NZIA, and consequentially the content differences between the two reflects a conscious effort on the part of the NZIA to distinguish between two different readerships. To a large extent this is reflected in the advertisements contained in each. The *NZIA Journal* shows an appeal on the part of the advertisers to architects as building professionals with its bias towards products and systems of construction. By contrast *Home & Building* advertising content tends to be directed towards a client market with a marked appeal to spaces of occupancy. This is exactly what we might expect to find; the professional journal directed to the work of the architect, and the more populous one appealing to potential clients. Consequentially much of the advertising content reflects this distinction. However what is less clear is the degree to which the advertising content either followed or directed this ideological editorial difference. In making a comparative analysis of the advertising material found in the pages of these two dominant forums attention has been given to the manner in which advertisers may have actively contributed to redefining the roles and responsibilities of "architect" and "client" during this period of 1960-70. I suggest that the NZIA may have had less control than it might have imagined over the nature of influence its two premiere publications were having on New Zealand architects and architecture in the 1960s.

Through the 1960s the dominant New Zealand publications dedicated to the activities of architects and architecture were the periodicals *Home & Building* and the *New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal*. However, from the point of view of advertisers it is important to emphasise that these periodicals were not market competitors. While the *NZIA Journal* was a professional journal published by the New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA), *Home & Building* was published under the auspices of the NZIA, and consequentially the content differences between the two reflects a conscious effort on the part of the NZIA to distinguish between two corresponding but different readerships. It would be generally correct to say that *Home & Building* appealed to people interested in improving their domestic spheres while the *NZIA Journal* was aimed at professional architects. They were, in this sense, complementary periodicals. *Home & Building* prepared the market while the *NZIA Journal* served it, and to a large extent this is reflected in the advertisements contained in each. The *NZIA Journal* shows an appeal on the part of the advertisers to architects as building professionals with its bias towards products and systems of construction. By contrast *Home and Building* advertising content tends to be directed towards a client market with a marked appeal to spaces of occupancy. This is exactly what we might expect to find; the professional journal directed to the work of the architect, and the more populous one appealing to potential clients.

Originally it had been my intention for this paper to conduct a comparative analysis of the advertising content of these two journals with the expectation that I would find contrasting value systems in the advertising content.

However I was not able to do this for two reasons.

Firstly, while there are degrees of difference between the two journals there was a much greater crossover of kind, and this was mirrored in the advertising content which often appeared in both simultaneously. At least in 1965 it did, which brings me to my second problem. Where the holdings of *Home & Building* were available to me bound in their entirety, those of the *NZIA Journal* were not. With the exception of the year 1965, all the other issues of this decade had had their advertising material removed prior to binding. Why this might have been done is worth considering. The logistical implication of including the advertising material for shelving is one concern. Reading through the dates the volume for 1965 stands out as significantly larger in thickness.

So was this simply an archival protocol that 1965 slipped through? Perhaps, but it seems convenient that the advertising material could be so easily removed without affecting the passage of the journal unduly. This point is apparent when comparing *Home & Building* where the advertisements appear throughout the journal and thus are not easily removed without interrupting the journals continuity or integrity.

Might it be then that the advertising material was considered too offensive for inclusion in an archival context: good enough for selling a magazine but too lowbrow for a professional journal? Well, if this was the case, then it was a division made by the editors of the journal. Evident in the volume for 1965 is a parallel page numbering system that distinguishes between the advertorial content and the editorial content. Indeed, the pagination of the editorial content runs across a year of issues so that with the advertising removed binding produces a linear volume of approximately 400 continuous pages.

Instead I have turned to the advertisements themselves to find clues to the way in which the advertising content might have contributed to, or reflect, wider perceptions of architecture at this time. I hope that this might reveal something of the an undercurrent to the practice of architecture in New Zealand in the 1960s.

In 1965 the cost of a full page advertisement in the *NZIA Journal* was £24. That I know this is not due to scholarly detective work but to an advertisement in that journal for Garand Metal Windows that says so. With a satirical wit bordering on the cynical the copy leads with the question "Do architects read advertisements?"[1] This is a pertinent query for a vendor but it is equally applicable to a historian of New Zealand's recent architectural profession. *Did* architects read advertisements? And if so, what might that reading have been? The Garand makes for an interesting study from this point of view. In an imagined Socratic dialogue between interviewer and architect it is determined that architects are not fooled by the rhetoric of contemporary advertising copy. They do not need to be told that a product is good as the contingencies of practice have informed them whether an item is successful or not. They have no need for the specifications as they have these on file. Indeed, they "know many of them by heart."[2] Furthermore architects are wary of the advice of "experts." Architects are simply humble professionals discharging their responsibilities to the best of their abilities. All they require from Garand then is a reminder in every issue that the product is still "going strong." With this in mind the advertisement

[1] "[untitled]" (1965) p 35.
[2] "[untitled]" (1965) p 35.

ends with a mock-up of the preferred advertisement: the product name followed by the supplier's contact. In every way a no-nonsense and, dare I say it, *honest* product endorsement.

A new Garand advertisement appeared two months later in the December issue. With a prescient gesture towards postmodernism this one featured the copy determined to be that most preferred by architects, this time professionally rendered in all its simplicity. On a positive note the Garand advertisements bestow a degree of critical engagement onto the reader. In order for the dialogue between the two advertisements to be appreciated the reader is assumed to at least take notice of the advertising content, and that they are in all probability a repeat peruser of the journal. However, at the same time there is a reductionism at work that emphasises familiarity, routine and conditioning. Here I suggest is the principle ethos of advertising for architects in New Zealand in the 1960s: good honest endorsement for good honest practice in all its modest glory.

In *Walden*, Thoreau wrote that honesty is found in making. If we want dwellings that speak of honesty then we must be prepared to not only design but also build our domestic edifices with our own hands and then we, like birds, might sing while we make our nests.[3]

Fortunately for architects, Thoreau's point never really caught on with the wealthy or privileged who have continued to prefer that others dirty their hands in search of poetic idealism. Yet the morality of honesty that underpins Thoreau's position is never far from the surface in architectural practice in New Zealand in the 1960s. Bill Toomath's tryst with Nikolas Pevsner over a carport post is now the stuff of postcolonial legend,[4] but I suspect it had more to do with morality than architecture. In defending uncomplicated architectural solutions in a new land Toomath makes a case for protecting "new-ness" against the corruptions of an older and more weathered culture. Versions of this argument can be found throughout the writings on New Zealand's developing nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s[5] although ARD Fairburn wrote of New Zealand as early as 1934 that it suffer from a dark cloud of earnestness caused by distance: "If we must be influenced from abroad (and we must), then let us see to it that our search is not led astray by prejudice and snobbery. Let us exercise intelligence and honesty."[6] We might even simply reduce this to "intelligent honesty" in summary of New Zealand's post-war search for national identity. In architecture this became manifest in an ethos of utilitarian pragmatism.[7] In short, good honest buildings.

Architectural honesty, I propose, is very closely related to, if not synonymous with, common sense. The fussy-ness Toomath finds in a European detail is dishonest insomuch as it cannot be defended as the most logical solution (although, as I have already mentioned, this is realised with a context of pragmatism). For New Zealand architects common sense has become, like sight and hearing, a basic biological requirement for sensory completeness, and the advertising in the *NZIA Journal* and *Home & Building* reflect this.

For example the case for specifying Pinex

[3] Thoreau *Walden*.
[4] See Clarke "The Elusive Canon of New Zealand Architecture" pp ii-vii and Skinner "Niki Down Under" pp 102-110.
[5] For an example from painting see Brasch "A Note on the Work of Colin McCahon" pp 337-338.
[6] Fairburn "Some Aspects of N.Z. Art and Letters" p 218.
[7] See Wood "Watershed" pp 72-80.

Insulating Board is an empirical one: "a heat retaining factor 50% greater than semi-insulating wall-boards. Can save you £12.10.0 to £160 annually on heating bills."[8] Panelwood: "no drying – no jointing – no thicknessing – no sanding."[9] Harco Incinerators make rubbish disposal easy.[10] Sylon sliding doors make every inch count.[11] And so it goes on as the professional obligations of the architect are overtly defined as the art of cost savings, economising, efficiency, and ease. Cooper Durastay friction window fittings promise not to budge in even the strongest winds even as they open with one finger: "No fiddly catches or brackets, nothing ugly or unsightly to spoil the view."[12]

It has been observed that dirt is merely matter out of place.[13] In a similar way I see the common sense of the architect acting to ensure rational order so that architectural dirt – the unsightly, the spoilt – is suppressed beneath conservative ordering. This is apparent in full page advertisements for Gibraltar Board. The first leads with the moniker "architects are reluctant to rely on hearsay."[14] Underneath a portrait depicts said architect gazing thoughtfully off the page as though professionally weighting the integrity of information he has received. Male, middle-aged, balding but clean shaven with self-consciously practical glasses, he is the personification of responsible decision-making. Here is an architect who will not rely on gossip or rumour and his spectacles signal his ability to see through idle talk.

In a latter variation of this advertisement Gibraltar offer the recommendation that clients too are reluctant to rely on hearsay.[15] It is accompanied by a drawing of an architect pointing to a model in front of his three clients. They are in various states of despondency. It is easy to imagine that the architect has been forced by razor-sharp inquisition to indicate the places where hearsay has occurred in the proposed design. Again spectacles are to the fore as instruments for testing truth and honesty. Satisfied that the architect's tardiness has been exposed one of the clients is removing his.

In an obvious way glasses speak of vision, and therefore envisioning. This is useful to some degree in depictions of architects but there are two more effective ways of showing that architects can be visionaries. In a full-page endorsement for Giant brand paint the architect firstly assumes an elevated distant gaze, and secondly he is placed in front of that object of architectural imagining, the architectural drawing. The telephone adds to the image of the architect as a professional conduit between aspiration and realisation. Decisive to the establishing this relationship is the self-confidence of the architect. As Coxe has written:

> success in architecture [requires] the sure conviction of professionals in what they are about, and the ability to lead clients through the inevitably difficult professional process with assurance and comfort. Clients clearly want this behavior from their professionals.[16]

But self-confidence, and confidence in the work of others, are never far from each other in architectural practice. The reputation of the architect depends upon the predictability and reliability or goods and services. Architects have become, in the words of Martin Pawley,

[8] "[Pinex Insulating Boards advertisement]" p 21.
[9] "[Panelwood advertisement]" p 29.
[10] "[Harco Incinerators advertisement]" p 25.
[11] "[Sylon advertisement]" p 18.
[12] "[Cooper Durastay advertisement]" p 13.
[13] Mary Douglas cited, Cousins "The Ugly (1)" pp 61-64.
[14] "[Gibraltar Board advertisement]" (February 1965) p 8.
[15] "[Gibraltar Board advertisement]" (March 1965) p 8.
[16] Coxe "Why Do Architects So Often See Themselves as Victims?" p 111.

selectors of materials and components, which in turn has ensured that advertising material is directed towards architects. Pawley continues:

> Even if architects have ceased to design buildings from the inside out in the Modern sense, as long as they continue to choose key components and finishes they will remain in effect "licensed specifiers," with powers and responsibilities similar to those of medicine who prescribe drugs.[17]

So, the architect as prescriber, or perhaps pusher? As Derrida has observed, the difference between cure and poison is a semantic one.[18] This is apparent as ambivalence in the visionary gaze of the architect: is it that he is rapidly weighing design decisions, or is he desperately searching for an idea?

I would emphasise at this point that I say "he" with some assurance. As Paul Hogben has identified in Australia's architectural journals of the same period, the architect is a middle-aged man:

> The architect [is] pictured explaining a drawing in the context of a harmonious exchange between himself and his clients, who have always been depicted as the willing and passive subjects of the architect's authoritative gestures and gaze.[19]

New Zealand's journals are no different. Indeed they may be worse as I can find only one advertisement in 1965 where an architect is discussing a project with a female client, and even then I suspect it is her husband.[20] One reason for this segregation may be that it suits advertisers to have a market audience of proud domestic workers who navigate an outside world through their appliances and husbands. This seems especially true of *Home & Building*. In an advertisement for Waitomo Portland Cement a woman hugs a seated man with the caption "Give HER a patio this year."[21] The uppercase emphasis on "HER" does little to disguise the patronizing condescension in the marketing strategy. "SHE" will no doubt be endlessly grateful to HER thoughtful MAN for the prospect of a concrete patio.

Isolation of woman to domestic scenes of approval and placation is universal through both journals, and Waitomo Portland Cement is by no means the worst. As we might expect kitchen appliance manufacturers lead the charge for female appeal, but the products directly marketed to woman extend to all aspects of the interior environment. The domestic goddess is invited to "DISCOVER!" their 2-piece ensemble stove as though it were a fashion find.[22] Pearls have never looked so good in the kitchen, but then there are bathing suits in the office. "Too cool for sunbathing but MORE RELIABLE THAN SUNLIGHT" leads the copy for Imperial Chemical Industries, "specify PERSPEX"[23] Accordingly a woman poses in a corporate office complete with sun glasses, hat and beach ball.

A more disconcerting feature for the Briton 1100 concealed overhead door closer features a woman glancing towards a doorway with distrust while the banner leads with "all you see is the door close."[24] Reminiscent of a Hitchcock film, the door has developed a mind of its own. Suspicious, the female occupant draws her left arm away from the encounter with technology well beyond her technical know-how. The homemaker knows

[17] Pawley *Theory and Design in the Second Machine Age* p 5.
[18] Derrida *Dissemination*.
[19] Hogben "100 Years of Advertising" p 21.
[20] "[Kent Central Heating advertisement]" p 2.
[21] "[Waitomo Portland Cement advertisement]" p 10.
[22] "[NEECO advertisement]" p 20.
[23] "[Imperial Chemical Industries advertisement]" p 22.
[24] "[William Newmans and Sons advertisement]" p 21.

what she likes, and she knows what she wants, but she may not be up to knowing the "how" of the modern home.

However where children appear female figures become invisible as mothers rather than women. An appeal for the Harvey New Shape Bathroom Ware shows a bathing child playing with toy boats. The headline reads "the admiral's mother means business"[25] although the expression on the toddler suggests this battle has already been lost. Even at two the male controls the home.

In another Harvey feature a mother is turned back into a woman by removing her from the home. This involves depicting her having a bath in an open field. In the foreground are the condiments of bathing luxury: salts, brush, animal skin and scales. In a concession to decency - or perhaps the sun - she is wearing a hat. Beneath, a schematic profile shows the ergonomic relationship between the female form and "the new five-foot-six bath you must see."[26] I am not convinced about the comfort of this fit but the advertisement suggests these compact tapered lines are exactly what "she" wants. A bath so fine that it has displaced the house altogether.

These are painfully sexist advertisements by today's standards but the degree of gender exploitation overall is not so great as one might expect, and at times an attitude that could almost be described as pro-active is discernable. Fisher Decramastic leads with the claim from a wife that "He listened to me and he's glad he did."[27] This is perhaps a bit misleading, as the text expands:

> Like a good wife should, I left all decisions about the roof of our new home to my husband, insisting only that it be Fisher Decramastic Tiles and the colour should be red. While my husband enthuses at length about Fisher Decramastic being the only tile with a mastic coating that can claim 12 years' proven performance (doesn't run in heat, chip or crack in cold) in New Zealand ... and other things which are ho-hum unless you're a man.[28]

Okay, only a small victory for female emancipation, but it does highlight a growing recognition that women represent an important market group. When this wife is ready to burn her bra she might like to take advantage of the Novasan Model 65 Sanitary Incinerator.[29] Modern and compact in "clinical" white enamel finish the Novasan 65 has caught the attention of a modern woman who, it appears, is taking note of its performance specification. No doubt it will come as a relief to her to know that one Novasan 65 can accommodate seven toilets, and later she might demand of her husband that one be installed in the bathrooms she frequents. This is one of the few advertisements to adopt feature colour printing although it is not clear whether the use of bright red is a designed to reinforce the product's functioning or is simply a default.

By 1965 colour advertising had been established but its application was limited. The *NZIA Journal* offered mono-colour over printing, but both the *NZIA Journal* and *Home & Building* mostly used dedicated feature advertisements that required a higher quality paper which in turn dictated how the advertisement could be used. *Home & Building* strategically used these constraints to their advantage by utilizing full colour front and back cover pages. The result was a blurring between advertorial and editorial content, particular with regards to the cover. Through

[25] "[Harvey advertisement]" (March 1965) p 24.
[26] "[Harvey advertisement]" (February 1965) p 28.
[27] "[Fisher Decramastic advertisement]" p 34.
[28] "[Fisher Decramastic advertisement]" p 34.
[29] "[Robat-Avon Industries Ltd advertisement]" p 55.

1965 *Home & Building* covers featured venetian blinds once, Foldoor twice, Riccarton Carpets four times, and Amalgamated Brick and Pipe five times. The back page repeatedly featured an advertisement for Gibraltar Board that would, I believe, still attract attention today. The *NZIA Journal* was more coy about the role of colour imagery. Through 1965 the cover assumed a neutral face, often depicting a featured building, and was kept free of promotional material. The back page was a monotone advertisement for McSkimming Industries. Where colour was used, as in the Novasan 65 example, it was done sparingly in the form of a block tint over printing. Within a context of back and white imagery this technique carries graphic impact, but the more important distinction that would emerge in later years was a distinction between the popular appeal of *Home & Building* (recently renamed *Home & Entertaining*) and the professional servitude of the *NZIA Journal* (which would become *Architecture New Zealand*). By 1965 this separation was already apparent in the former as a colourful confusion of advertorial and editorial, and in the latter as a sombre and responsible information service.

One of the more disconcerting uses of colour by *Home & Building* was their room-of-the-month feature in which an invited designer constructed a demonstration in order to display the latest in interior décor. Not only was this published in all its garish glory in the pages of *Home & Building* but it was also displayed publicly, and one version was toured nationally. Of course none of this would have been possible without the generous provision of material and objects from commercial suppliers named in the features as "participants."

By far the most expansive use of colour was by Pilkington Glass. In a series of double page adverts that appeared in both the *NZIA Journal* and *Home & Building* throughout 1965 colour imagery heighten the graphic effect of an object reflected to infinity in perfectly formed Pilkington Glass mirrors. The general theme was one of market dominance. In one a globe "reflects" the international breadth of the company. In another a stone bust brings a classical tone. In a third an astroglobe calls attention to technological advances. However these are only secondary points. The important message is that Pilkington advertisements are expensive which in turn suggests their product must be valuable and successful.

Pilkington was probably quite right in committing to expansive colour advertising at this time. Glass was on the rise as a building material, as evidenced in a 1966 issue of *Home & Building* which featured an anonymous advertorial proclaiming the "fascinating money-saving facts about glass houses."[30] But there is in these advertisements an element of overkill for a manufacturer that dominated the marketplace. They are modern and technologically advanced advertisements - like the product they represent - but they risk appearing arrogant and domineering, which might not be appropriate to a modest people. Advertising is about competition not the publicity of monopoly manufacturers.

Curiously the most competitive advertising area in 1965 was not in construction materials or furnishing products but shelving, with each manufacturer edging out another for a market niche. Steelcase shelves required only a mallet for assembly.[31] Futura shelving was developed specifically for library requirements.[32] Lundia shelving offered the warm and pleasing appearance of timber.[33]

[30] "[untitled]" (1966) p 9.
[31] "[Steelcase advertisement]" p 31.
[32] "[Harvey Futura advertisement]" p 23.
[33] "[Lundia advertisement]" p 10.

Dexion was so strong you could build in it.[34] Multiplex shelving was the solution to your storage problems.[35] It appears that in 1965 we had much that needed shelving.

Conversely DANSKE MØBLER furniture advertisements stood apart from other advertisements in product and marketing. The standard advertisement featured a drawing of one of their products above lettering that looked like it was done by a ten year old who was instructed to take great care. The result was unique, homely, and distinctly modern in its clarity and appeal. Much like the furniture it must be said.[36]

However, the differences in advertising content between *Home & Building* and the *NZIA Journal* are best illustrated by rival cement companies: Wilson's Portland Cement and Golden Bay Portland Cement. Wilson's approach through *Home & Building* was unabashedly nostalgic. Under a drawing of a colonial swagger a summary history lesson tells the tale of Nathaniel Wilson who took up walking on medical advice, and along the way developed an interest in hydraulic lime.[37] In contrast to this the Golden Bay advertisement promotes the use of their product to build a nuclear research facility in Wainuiomata. With a confidence in atomic technology only possible during the Cold War they claim "unfailing protection from the radiation caused by the Van de Graaf Particle Accelerator."[38] I am sure this was reassuring at the time to the population of Wainuiomata but today such references are more likely to create revolution in the suburbs.

So, one product, two periodicals, two advertisements, two approaches. And the winner? In hindsight, Nuclear acceleration as it happens. Wilson's was the first portland cement producer in New Zealand, having begun in 1886. Golden Bay did not start manufacturing until 1910 but by 1982 their market strength was such that they were able to purchase Wilson's production line outright, and in 1986 they quietly stopped producing under that name.[39]

It would be irresponsible to trace responsibility for these developments back to 1965, but it is interesting to view the advertisements with this in mind. However inappropriate it may seem today, Golden Bay's association to nuclear technologies in a professional journal makes more strategic sense than evoking nostalgic sentimentality in a domestically focused journal. Concrete, after all, is a heavily industrial material used structurally rather than aesthetically. By comparison *Home & Building* excelled at appealing to a client base interested in fixtures, fittings and finishes. But in 1965 the future lay in technological advancements, and advertising needed to reflect this if it was to be successful. Sentimental appeal has no place in a society contemplating space travel and atomic energy even if it does fire a cultural indicator.

This essay has taken a broad look at New Zealand's architectural advertising in 1965. I believe that there is much information for

[34] "[Dexion advertisement]" p 65.
[35] "[Multiplex advertisement]" p 27.
[36] "[DANSKE MØBLER advertisement]" p 54.
[37] "[Wilson's Portland Cement advertisement]" p 12. In 1965 it is hard not to find comparison in this account to the successfully publisher AH Reed whose walks through New Zealand had become common knowledge through his popular books.
[38] "[Golden Bay advertisement]" p 48.
[39] CCANZ "Brief History of the Cement Industry in New Zealand" unpaginated. The brand Golden Bay Cement now dominates the New Zealand market under the ownership of Fletcher Challenge.

others to glean from such an approach. However, in my next research project I intend to explore the architectural impact of atomic particle accelerators in the New Zealand suburb.

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