

## Who was H Courtney Archer?

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**ABSTRACT:** Harry Courtney Archer's (1918-2002) article on architecture in New Zealand published in *The Architectural Review* in 1942 is recognised as part of the rich collection of publications that shaped the discourse about Modern architecture in this country (Clark & Walker 2000). On the face of it, Archer was an unlikely contributor to the discussion on New Zealand's architecture and proselytiser for Modernism: he had lived most of his 23 years to date in small rural towns, before the war, working in his father's flour mill in Rangiora and during the war moving between pacifist rural communities in the South Island.

In this paper, I consider Archer's 1942 article, his sole contribution to architectural discourse, in relation to his personal background, asking where and how Archer formed his views and how he came to expound them in the journal the New Zealand architects of his generation acknowledged as "the bible" of contemporary architectural thought. I also analyse his article beyond its brief figuration of the New Zealand timber tradition as "frank" and therefore a source for the local manifestation of Modern architecture, by reflecting on his writing in light of his personal experiences, his avant-garde friends and his commitment to socialist movements.

Courtney Archer's 1942 article in the *Architectural Review* was one of the first articles on the emerging New Zealand Modern architecture to be published internationally. It was written by a young man who had no formal training in architecture, whose working life had been restricted to the sphere of agricultural industry and who was probably living at the time of writing in a run down bach in a small horticultural community in the upper South Island, which, even by New Zealand standards, was far from the centres of architectural development. After the war, Archer spent eight years working in China, most of that time working alongside Rewi Alley, and Archer is most commonly recognised publicly as Alley's "right hand man" and is remembered for being one of the

figures who contributed to Alley's public unveiling as a homosexual.<sup>1</sup> This apparent incongruence between Archer's life and his single contribution to architectural discourse begs to be investigated: who was Courtney Archer?

Archer's is one of a handful of articles on national architectures that appeared in the *Architectural Review* during the first half of World War II and it is distinct in that group for being written by someone not formally trained in architecture.<sup>2</sup> It is formed from two

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<sup>1</sup> Cameron "Rewi Alley's assistant" p D9; Brady *Friend of China*.

<sup>2</sup> Archer "Architecture in New Zealand" pp 52-58. Articles appeared on architecture in South Africa (August 1940); Slovakia and Hungary (November 1940); Ceylon (September 1941), Canada (April 1941), Japan

parts: the body of the text, which places New Zealand architecture within a broad history of New Zealand's European discovery and colonial settlement and development, and a large number of illustrations, both photographs and architectural drawings, with extensive captions providing architectural details and descriptions of specific examples of historic and recent architecture. The text roams over New Zealand's social and economic history and also its geographical environment, climate and natural resources. Archer outlines the battle for influence over New Zealand society as stemming from either side of the Atlantic: with British-influenced agricultural and social customs eventually being subsumed by American technology and

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(October 1942), and the Soviet Union (November 1942).

business models. Architecture also reflects these influences: rampant European historicism and more recently the brash, bold confidence of American Neo-Classicism. These imports are contrasted with the concept of an early distinctive New Zealand architecture. Like the archetypal New Zealand man it was frank, straightforward, sound, economical, simple, of the land, and made best possible use of the available resources. This early start had been lost, and was only recently being revived by young, contemporary architects, providing results that were "apt to serve as a foundation on which to build in the future."<sup>3</sup>

Archer tells what is now a familiar story – the story of young contemporary architects weaving a garment from two opposing strands: European Modernism, ideas from the centre, and the notion of New Zealandness, the local tradition. Archer's personal history puts the origins of these ideas into a fresh perspective, a perspective deriving from Archer's lay status in architectural terms, a factor that draws into play his life experiences: his unusual schooling, his connections with the artists and thinkers of the Cambridge

Terrace group, as well as his pacifism and socialist beliefs.

This article came from a young man of 23 who had lived most of his life in small rural towns in the South Island. Born to the owner of a flourmill in the north Canterbury town of Rangiora, Archer was at first educated locally at Rangiora High School from 1933-35, when it was under the radical headmastership of James Ernest Strachan. Dissatisfied with Strachan's liberal approach, Archer's father moved him to Waitaki Boys' High School in Oamaru to finish his secondary education. These polar experiences of a liberal, ideal social environment and the traditional values of the public school system characterised by a rigid and unimaginative syllabus together with authoritarian discipline, gave Archer an early and life-long "realisation of the real values of a democratic society." He paralleled his experience with WH Auden, who said: "The best reason I have for opposing fascism is that at school I lived in a fascist state."<sup>4</sup>

Archer's formal full-time education did not extend beyond secondary schooling, and his

desire to pursue architecture as a career was thwarted by his father, who encouraged him to seek a job with the Wheat Research Institute before working at the family flourmill.<sup>5</sup> It was probably the alternative curriculum at Rangiora that informed the approach Archer took in writing his article for the *Review*. Strachan had introduced his "organic curriculum" at Rangiora in 1926; it "included a central core of science, technology, fine arts and sociology. It was, in part, intended to inculcate social skills such as critical thinking and citizenship."<sup>6</sup> Under the organic curriculum, every research topic was subject to a structured analysis that placed the area within context under the headings of science (in particular, natural resources), technology, history and sociology, and literature, drama and art. All these lines of enquiry feature in Archer's article, which expends a large chunk of column inches on describing New Zealand's economic and social history and geographical conditions. Rangiora High School may also be where Archer first encountered ideas about Modern architecture,

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<sup>5</sup> Cameron, Pers. Comm. 16 November 2008; Raymond, Pers. Comm. 30 November 2008; Willmott, Pers. Comm. 18 November 2008; Cameron, Courtney Archer Oral History, CA13A.

<sup>6</sup> Openshaw "Strachan, James Ernest 1883-1973" n.p.

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<sup>3</sup> Archer "Architecture in New Zealand" p 56

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<sup>4</sup> Hollow *We Remember* unpaginated [no. 35, Courtney Archer]

as under the "History of Literature and Art" syllabus in the Fine Arts Department at Rangiora, students were not only taught about "The Cathedral Builders" or the Renaissance but were also introduced to "Modern Schools of Art" and "Modern Architecture."<sup>7</sup>

Sometime after he left school during the late 1930s, Archer came to know the artists and intellectuals who clustered around the pair of studio-flats occupied by artists Rita Angus and Leo Bensemann and Bensemann's companion Lawrence Baigent at 97 Cambridge Terrace in Christchurch. Jill Trevelyan suggests Archer may have met them via Angus' sister Jean, who was closer in age to Archer, but the connection may have come through the ardent pacifism Archer shared with Angus, Bensemann and Baigent and made them members of the Peace Pledge Union, or even their mutual passion for Chinese art.<sup>8</sup> A voracious reader and earnest

<sup>7</sup> Strachan *The School Looks at Life*

<sup>8</sup> Trevelyan *Rita Angus* p 92. Angus, Bensemann and Archer were all fascinated by the Overseas Loan Exhibition of Chinese Art that toured New Zealand in 1937. Curated by Captain G Humphreys-Davies for the National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum, it "filled" the Robert McDougall Art Gallery in Christchurch and Archer visited it as often as he could. Cameron, Courtney Archer Oral History, CA1B.

thinker, Archer would have been strongly drawn to the Cambridge Terrace flats as they became "that famous meeting place" for artists, writers, intellectuals and musicians in Christchurch during the late 1930s.<sup>9</sup> Archer participated in many of the wider group activities, including joining the folk dancing trope founded and led by Francis Shurrock the School of Fine Arts sculpture teacher, of which Bensemann was also a member. Those who gathered at Cambridge Terrace and "Shurrie's" house read widely, hunting out books and magazines on all and every subject matter that fascinated them, and discussed all manner of topical, cultural and political issues.<sup>10</sup>

When war broke out and conscription was introduced in June 1940, Archer's deep commitment to pacifism led him to appeal for consideration as a recognised conscientious objector. He was fortunate: the Canterbury Appeal Board was one of the most sympathetic in the country, it allowed nearly 35 percent of appellants unconditional exemption up to December 1943, twice or three-times the figures in other provinces.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Fred Jones quoted, Trevelyan *Rita Angus* p 78.

<sup>10</sup> See Trevelyan *Rita Angus* especially p 92.

<sup>11</sup> Grant *Out in the Cold* p 126.

As his father was unable to reconcile himself to his son's stance, Archer was forced to leave his home and his job at the family flourmill. Archer took what he called "a middle line," choosing to travel to the upper South Island to take up seasonal employment as a horticultural labourer, which classified as "non-essential" to the war effort was an acceptable choice for a pacifist.<sup>12</sup> He arrived in the Nelson region in late 1940 or early 1941, picking tobacco on Herbert Helm's farm at Pangatotara. In February 1941 he was joined by Rita Angus, followed shortly by Chrystabel Aitken and the three friends soon formed a close-knit group. Angus wrote: "We have been fortunate in being able to talk out in the fields next door and believe me, quite a lot of seditious subjects too."<sup>13</sup>

As the article for the *Review* was written in 1941, Archer may have started writing while at Pangatotara, living in a dilapidated one-room asbestos bach.<sup>14</sup> Angus described their

<sup>12</sup> Cameron, Courtney Archer Oral History, CA1A.

<sup>13</sup> Rita Angus letter to Betty Curnow, April-May 1941, quoted, Trevelyan *Rita Angus* p 110.

<sup>14</sup> The line "last year New Zealand celebrated the centenary of British rule," indicates the article was written in 1941, see Archer "Architecture in New Zealand" p 56.

situation to Betty Curnow on a rare day off:

I am writing this in the clover field, "Arcadia," our asbestos bach (two rooms) with an orange painted roof is a little to the southeast of me. Courtney & I have taken the table outside & the antique leather chairs so we sunbathe too. He clanks away on a typewriter, in his own words, "taps expertly" ... the valley is glorious, breathless. "Arcadia" is in a clover field, and five calves. In the next field is Wai-woo, where Courtney lives in splendid isolation. His bach is one large room, at the moment is in a sad chaotic state of redecorating. We are kalasmining [painting] the walls and so far have only half finished one wall ... The valley is fertile and rich in colour, the Motueka river runs alongside the baches ... Courtney and I built a break water this morning wading knee deep in icy water. I have moved away from the typewriter & can now view Courtney as part of the landscape. He accentuates the character of this particular valley by wearing only khaki shorts, and a straw hat, a feather in the band is all that is needed to complete this New Zealand landscape with its odd Tyrolean character.<sup>15</sup>

If Archer was not at Pangatotara when he wrote his article, he could only have been at Hubert Holdaway's farm at Upper Moutere. Sometime after autumn 1941, Archer joined the group of pacifists, humanitarians, conscientious objectors and military defaulters who sought sanctuary at Holdaway's farm. In

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<sup>15</sup> Rita Angus letter to Betty Curnow, April-May 1941, quoted, Trevelyan *Rita Angus* p 110.

1942, Holdaway and his wife Marion donated the farm to formalise the Riverside Community as a co-operative where Christian and non-Christian pacifists could live and work on a communal basis. Archer wrote:

I was attracted to the community for a number of reasons, some no doubt selfish and some perhaps altruistic. By electing to do farm work I could determine somewhat my livelihood during the years of conscription. Otherwise the Manpower Board could have directed me to suitable work, "suitable" in their eyes. I was attracted to the idea of an agricultural community aiming at self-sufficiency from reading a number of authors such as Huxley and Borsodi, a far-sighted American economist who in the 1940s advocated self-sufficiency as a means of obtaining economic security and personal well-being, in a world where governments were taking over the control of people's lives. I was attracted towards Buddhism and a synthesis of religious thought that Aldous Huxley called the Perennial Philosophy, and Gerald Heard elaborated as a form of neo-Quakerism. So although Riverside was a Christian community ... I had little or no difficulty in working and living within the small group.<sup>16</sup>

At Riverside Archer met fellow conscientious objector Bruce Godward (1916-92), an artist and teacher who could not keep his job in a state school because of his pacifist stance. Educated at the School of Fine Arts at Canterbury College, Godward shared

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<sup>16</sup> Quoted, Rain *Community* p 17.

Archer's interest in architecture and it seems likely the two would have discussed the *Review* article at length in the "primitive ... little shack on the roadside" they shared at Riverside.

A tumbled down shack or an asbestos bach seems an unlikely if somewhat suitable habitation from which to wax lyrical about the virtues of a simple, economical pioneer tradition. This idea, and indeed, much of the architectural content of Archer's article, was acquired from Paul Pascoe, either directly from discussions with Pascoe, for they were friends, or from Pascoe's contributions on "Housing" and "Public Buildings," published as part of the centennial pictorial survey *Making New Zealand* the previous year.

It is uncertain where and how Archer and Pascoe met. Archer's friends Jean and Fred Jones lived in Pascoe's Clifton cottage, probably shortly after their marriage in 1940 until they moved to Greymouth in 1943. This was the same cottage purchased from the Pascoes for Rita Angus by her parents that same year.<sup>17</sup> If that connection had not brought Archer into contact with Pascoe, one

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<sup>17</sup> Trevelyan *Rita Angus* pp 140-141.

of Pascoe's recent large projects probably did. At Rangiora Strachan had pursued the concept of a large community centre serving both the school and the wider community since April 1935. Plans were originally prepared by the Architect of the Canterbury Education board but as these were found to be too expensive, a joint School Board and citizens fundraising committee commissioned a new design from Paul Pascoe in 1939. It was accepted by the Department of Education and Pascoe was officially appointed architect in May 1940.<sup>18</sup> The new concept was daringly Modern: it was to be constructed in concrete, made extensive use of colour and each of the separate functions was given distinct architectural expression: the circular discussion room to hold School Council and other round-table meetings, a library with a broad sun terrace for reading, joined by a semi-circular covered walk-way which met at a two-storey lobby which gave access to a long hall that terminated in a projecting stage house. Even if Archer was not on the joint committee, as a member of a prominent and wealthy local family and a past-pupil and with his strong interest in Modern New

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<sup>18</sup> Gunby *Rangiora High School* pp 126-127. Paul Pascoe Scrapbooks 1:30.

Zealand architecture, he was certain to have had some involvement in the scheme. Drawings of the community centre featured in both the "Public Buildings" issue of *Making New Zealand* and in Archer's article.<sup>19</sup> The two certainly became close enough friends for Pascoe to share his nascent designs with Archer, including his early designs for a new modernist departmental building at Canterbury College; Archer wrote from China in 1945, "I was very pleased to learn that Paul's designs for the physics block at Canterbury College have been accepted. I like the design very much – I saw it in the early stages – and possibly it has been improved since then. I would like to think that that is the beginning of ... a new era in Christchurch architecture – but I am doubtful."<sup>20</sup>

Part of Archer's article directly reproduces text from "Houses" and nearly all of the illustrations in the *Review*, are identical to those John Pascoe selected for *Making New Zealand*.<sup>21</sup> It would be a mistake to simply

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<sup>19</sup> "Public Buildings" *Making New Zealand* p 15; Archer "Architecture in New Zealand" p 58

<sup>20</sup> Courtney Archer letter to Bruce Godward. 24 November, 1945, Courtney Archer Papers.

<sup>21</sup> Compare "Plans were economical and straightforward, materials were put to the best possible use, construction

dismiss Archer's ideas on New Zealand architecture as derivative of Pascoe's, however close the content between the two publications. Archer was presenting these concepts within a wider understanding of New Zealand's development and history and a broad social, economic and geographical context. Archer's socialist view comes across in this broader analysis: he understands that cultural and social life is directed by those who control the economic life of the country. Those who produced the simple early architecture were the earliest settlers, in particular farmers and land-workers closely associated with agriculture. Architecturally, things began to change for the worse when the economy began to be dominated by the "rapidly increasing business class created by

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was sound and careful craftsmanship was much in evidence. The limited resources of money and materials gave the early work a simplicity which is lost to much work of later periods" (Archer "Architecture in New Zealand" pp 53-54) with "Plans were economical and straightforward. Materials were put to the best use. Construction was sound, mouldings were hand worked and careful craftsmanship was much in evidence. Above all, the early buildings had a simplicity which is lost to much work of later periods. The limited resources of money and buildings materials gave no opportunity for mass-produced frills" ("Houses" *Making New Zealand* p 10).

the needs and control of the products of agricultural production and the growth of industry."<sup>22</sup> The sad result was the adoption of European historicism in the architecture of most commercial and public buildings. In contrast to Archer's ardent socialism, politically Pascoe only ever considered himself "pale pink" later turning to "pale blue."<sup>23</sup> Within the context provided by the *Review* article, Archer's adoption of Pascoe's view takes on a new significance: by elevating a straightforward timber tradition as good architecture, Archer elevates the people's architecture, and "the people" are the true source of culture for all good socialists. If Archer's socialism had been sparked at Rangiora High, it was flamed by his introduction to the Left Book Club by his housemaster at Waitaki Boy's.<sup>24</sup> It is not certain whether Archer attended the Rangiora or the Christchurch branch of the Left Book Club but he was certainly an omnivorous reader of Victor Gollanz's socialist titles and he counted several notable local socialists amongst his friends, including Winston Rhodes, lecturer in English at Canterbury College and key figure in the *Tomorrow*

<sup>22</sup> Archer "Architecture in New Zealand" p 53.

<sup>23</sup> Pascoe, Pers Comm. 24 November 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Cameron, Courtney Archer Oral History, CA1B.

newspaper as well as the Christchurch branch of the Left Book Club.<sup>25</sup>

In the lead up to the centenary of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1940, the history of New Zealand was subject to growing attention and ideas around cultural nationalism were developed and discussed amongst the establishment as well as the avant garde. Archer's desire for an architecture commensurate with the development of New Zealand's own character echoed the creative efforts and thinking of his circle of friends. Rita Angus's landscape painting was becoming associated with the expression of a sense of New Zealandness. *Cass*, painted in 1936 and one of Angus's most important works to date, embodied this search and was included in the National Centennial Exhibition of New Zealand Art. Trevelyan writes:

Rita came to realise that she had achieved something exceptional with this work. The picture came to be a talisman with her, a symbol of what she was capable of, but it also expressed her commitment to painting in New Zealand and celebrated her attachment to a particular place. *Cass*, she wrote, "expresses joy in living here."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Tey, Pers Comm. 24 November 2008. See also Barrowman *A Popular Vision*.

<sup>26</sup> Trevelyan *Rita Angus* p 68.

Two other friends of Archer's explored similar ideas around national culture: poets Allen Curnow and Denis Glover, the latter also interested in the exploring the idea of a New Zealand typography.<sup>27</sup> Like many of his generation with an interest in the development of a local, Modern culture of the people, Archer failed to address the potential contradictions and conflicts within his vision.<sup>28</sup>

It is likely that Archer submitted his article to the *Architectural Review* as an unsolicited piece which he had written as an unfettered way of pursuing his previously thwarted interest in architecture. The journal did assess and publish unsolicited articles and Archer was perhaps emboldened to write and submit it because of Pascoe's inside knowledge of The Architectural Press, as Pascoe had worked there as a draughtsman to the *Architect's Journal* and the *Architectural Review* for eight months in 1935.<sup>29</sup> Archer's article appeared in

<sup>27</sup> See also Peter Wood's discussion of the formation of an ideology of architectural nationalism in New Zealand that emerged in the 1930s from the friendship between ARD Fairburn and Vernon Brown, Wood "...from teat-jeak to quidnunc" pp 80-85.

<sup>28</sup> See Barrowman *A Popular Vision* especially p 234.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Pascoe Scrapbooks 2:63.

the *Architectural Review* when the journal was negotiating the difficulties of a wartime operation. The Architectural Press relocated to a large suburban villa in Cheam for the duration of the war, although until 1942 the *Review's* editor, James M Richards continued to work from his flat in London and a room at the *Review's* printers, Eyre and Spottiswoode in the city. Organisational problems were only half the difficulties, while the *Review* continued with reduced pages to save paper, "there was little of the usual material to fill it with: few new buildings were going up and not much was coming in from abroad." Now there was space for less-likely material: "theoretical studies of various kinds... and for architectural history."<sup>30</sup>

Archer continued to participate in communal life at Riverside for three years, leaving in May 1944 with fellow members George and Bertha Cole to join Henry Tozer's community near Ōtorohanga.<sup>31</sup> He did not stay there long however, as he soon obtained a job as a journalist on the *Grey River Argus*, working alongside his good friend and fellow pacifist Fred Jones. In 1945 Archer was one of a small

<sup>30</sup> Richards *Memoirs of an Unjust fellow* p 141.

<sup>31</sup> Rain *Community* p 20; Cameron, Courtney Archer Oral History Biographical Information Sheet.

group of New Zealanders accepted to join the Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU), an international Quaker-based humanitarian aid organisation working in war-torn regions of the world. It was Archer's opportunity to serve those at the mercy of military action in a non-combative role that met his humanitarian concerns and pacifist views. He left New Zealand on 24 May 1945 and arrived at his posting to a hospital in Qijing, China in July. Here Archer more than fulfilled the FAU policy of "go anywhere, do anything": he acted as anaesthetist, acting manager of the hospital, architect for a new hospital wing, engineer of drainage systems, and later Finance Officer for the FAU in Shanghai, before being seconded to work alongside Rewi Alley at the Bailie School in Sandan.<sup>32</sup>

Archer's interest in architecture continued to be stimulated during his time in China, and it was the people's architecture, the Chinese vernacular that most captured his attention. He did not find time to write the article on Chinese architecture he hoped to produce and instead wrote long, detailed descriptions of local building materials and techniques in

<sup>32</sup> Cameron *Go Anywhere, Do Anything*. See also letters to Bruce Godward, Courtney Archer Papers.

letters to Bruce Godward and was rather taken by what he saw: "The Chinese roof seen against the sky is a lovely sight and I am sure I will never feel the same about flat roofs again."<sup>33</sup> His appetite for the new architecture was also tainted by its recent manifestation in Shanghai in the mid-1940s:

building raced up to 15 or 16 floors – not in the neo-gothic grandiose style of imperialism but in the hard austere pattern of capitalism everywhere – mere warrens to beget money and more money ... The Chinese business men are determined to show that they are as good at the capitalist game as the Europeans and the Government is there to support them as the pillars of society.<sup>34</sup>

He also asked Godward to keep him up to date on things architectural:

Please keep me informed on the architectvtural [sic] front – I feel very much out of touch on such matters. I hope to come home via USA and if I do so will have the opportunity to see some new work. However this depends on the prospect of a loan of money from the family. While I am not an admirer of USA culture in general it is true, I think, to say that the centre of culture has shifted to America.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Courtney Archer letter to Bruce Godward. 24 November, 1945, Courtney Archer Papers.

<sup>34</sup> Courtney Archer, letter to Bruce Godward, 16 October, 1946, Courtney Archer Papers.

<sup>35</sup> Courtney Archer letter to Bruce Godward. 25 March,

Godward clearly fulfilled this request, as Archer later wrote from Sandan:

someone sent me, was it you, a copy of a little book on architecture in NZ published in Auckland – very nicely printed and illustrated with an article on Wellington cathedral. Many thanks – and I should like to see some other copies. How is the *Review* these days, I do think the *Forum* is much more exciting.<sup>36</sup>

Archer's shift to the Bailie School altered the course of his life; instead of returning to New Zealand after two years with the FAU as planned, he remained in China working with Alley as his "right hand man" until "filial piety" brought him back to Rangiora in 1953 to take over the family flourmill from his ailing father.<sup>37</sup> Emboldened, perhaps, by his design experiences in China, on his return home Archer set about designing his own house on a two-acre section on the edge of Rangiora. Despite his affection for Chinese architecture, Archer recognised that the values he had espoused over a decade earlier were still the most appropriate response to the local conditions and traditions. Running east to west, the long narrow rectangular form

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1946, Courtney Archer Papers.

<sup>36</sup> Courtney Archer, letter to Bruce Godward, 11 May 1947, Courtney Archer Papers.

<sup>37</sup> Cameron "Rewi Alley's Assistant" p D9.

under a mono-pitched roof recalled recent work by both Pascoe and Plischke, with its deep eaves and its full glazing to the north open to a long terrace, and it is possible that Archer did consult Pascoe during the design's development.<sup>38</sup> The planning could only be described as simple and economic: the main door beside the garage opened to a large living space filled with Plischke-designed furniture. Generously proportioned French doors gave access to what later became a large garden with Chinese inflections. A wide chimney divided the living room from the kitchen with a bathroom tucked behind, to the north of which was a single bedroom. Here Archer displayed some innovation, with the chimney constructed from a mixture of exposed concrete block and stone, years before such conscious aesthetic use of utilitarian materials became commonplace in Canterbury. Subsequent extensions in the form of sunrooms, extra bedrooms, an enlarged kitchen, a second garage and a studio/workshop added incrementally from the 1960s-1980s were entirely sympathetic. Part of the distinct character of the Archer House stems from its use of colour: all the timber panelling used on the exterior walls of

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<sup>38</sup> Pascoe, Pers Comm. 24 November 2008

the house and for the garage door was painted in the colours of De Stijl, the red, blue and yellow planes recalling the inter-war work of Theo van Doesburg.

Courtney Archer's contribution to New Zealand architecture was modest: one brief article providing a broad history and context for architecture in New Zealand up to 1940 and at least one distinct yet unrecognised contribution to mid-twentieth century domestic architecture in Canterbury.<sup>39</sup> These contributions, however, serve to remind us that ideas around architecture in this country in the mid-twentieth century were not restricted to those in architectural circles and that those amongst small bands of intellectuals with wide-ranging interests were also looking to a distinct, Modern New Zealand architecture to fulfil personal and social needs for cultural expression.

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<sup>39</sup> Archer may have designed other houses for friends: his partner Chen Tan believed Archer designed a house on a Wellington hillside and his sister, June Raymond, understood he designed another house in Rangiora for a friend. Tan, Pers Comm. 15 November 2008; Raymond, Pers Comm. 30 November 2008.



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