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The Myth of the Matter: Parallel Surfaces of Seismic Linings
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Abstract
The structure/ornament discussion remains active territory within architectural history and theory. It has long been a site of vigorous positioning that often serves as a telling gap between historicism and modernism. The accretions of this dialectic have become an institution of our architectural predilections, documenting a tendency to pit one against the other and our impulse to declare absolutes about the value or dominance of one over the other. While Pugin sowed moralistic tones to our discipline’s use of ornament and structure, he did so in the context of refurbishing the necessity and presence of ornament from a historical and cultural perspective. Through the virtues of economic, social and political events, this living myth, has been seamlessly reconfigured and retold. Contemporary architecture flaunts its allegiance to rational thought and empirical processes in a plethora of naked structure and thin surfaces. Questions persist regarding the nature of ornament and decoration in these efficient constructs. Despite the lure of contemporary architecture’s technological prowess and neglect for ornament, an impetus remains to retell and reinterpret this particular architectural myth.

This paper recognizes the inconsolable nature of this dialectic in the form of a research-by-design project, a form of research recognized for its ability to query ideas, and even form ideas, simultaneously between praxis and theory. The project, an existing historic landmark, requires earthquake strengthening to protect its building fabric as well as its inhabitants. The existing building is a curious artifact of historic and contemporary stances on the subject of architectural origins and historic principles of style and taste. Augmented by verifiable conditions of structural engineering and the architect’s troubled romance with beauty, the project proposal reconsiders the myth between ornament and structure and re-presents it as a rivalry of parallel surfaces.

Introduction
It is necessary to understand myth not as fable, fiction, or illusion but rather in its original sense as that which is the most real. In this sense myth, unlike history with its necessary intellectual detachment from matters in the present, is a living presence supplying models for human behaviour and, by that very fact, giving meaning and value to life. “It is the eternal present of the mythical event that makes possible the profane duration of historical events.”(1)

Much like ornament, myth has been relegated a less than prominent role in our profane life, bearing the brunt of positivist thought and empirical decision-making. In the context of architectural design, though, myths as progenitors of the most real, are resurrected, mined and constantly retold. In some cases they become the vehicle for weaving new stories. In others they provide the sustenance from which to imbue form with meaning. And still in others, they embrace the multiple facets or lineage to architectural history. In architecture, it remains unclear whether the profane historic events are equally privileged moments chronologically charged as multiple myths or,
that in their collective, myths point to a single origin. What matters about either of 
these views, or any other, is that myth matters. The return of origins is a constant of human development and in this matter 
arboriculture conforms to all other human activities. The return to origins always 
implies a rethinking of what you do customarily, an attempt to renew the validity of 
your everyday actions, or simply a recall of the natural (or even divine) sanction for 
repeating them for a season.

What follows is a discussion of an architectural myth in the context of a research-by-
design project. Retrospectively, it was not until the project was nearing completion 
that the design team recognized the reconstruction or refurbishment of an 
arboricultural myth masquerading as both subject and object. In fact, in our attempt to 
analyse the site, the existing building and its history it proved to be the theoretical 
material of our work. This paper attempts to recounts the catalysing aspects of 
arboricultural myths from which this building and its redesign borrow. There are 
memories in the building’s history when facts pose equally as truths and falsehoods. 
There are aspects to our building design where conventional logic or conservative 
notions of tradition are not easily applied. Myth’s living presence is maintained 
throughout the design process and represented in the final proposal. A respectful 
search both solves the structural upgrade of a locally cherished building and 
demonstrates our speculative desire to enunciate ornament and interiority 
commensurate with structure’s physical and technological authority. Hence the 
presence of mythical histories emanating in the building feed a new design proposal 
and yield another contribution to the structure/ornament debate.

In our approach to the building and problem of strengthening, we examined several 
known seismic systems, for both exterior and interior use in both steel and concrete. 
However, all were rejected in favor of a means by which the building might offer 
possibilities contained in its own self, rather than have a structural solution imposed. 
Careful scrutiny of the existing building and its documentation, including descriptions, 
status value and cultural importance revealed many possible positions and 
complexities. What was seen as authentic was perhaps derived from nineteenth 
century pattern books. The significance of the library is undermined by the absence 
of books. The historical value of the building was subverted by an earlier radical 
method of preservation and remedial restoration. In effect, our project subjected the 
building to deconstructive criticism.

A Matter of Fact
As an ‘old’ brick house, Turnbull House sits uncomfortably on the edge of urban 
Wellington amongst high-rise government buildings and commercial retail centres. 
This site is protected as long as it retains its 1991 historic landmark status. Despite 
the commercial pressure that surrounds it, the existing building is unique to this city 
and this country, most notably for the architect’s virtuosity at producing each of his 
buildings in a different style, the successful importation of a European style into New 
Zealand, and the rarity of finding masonry buildings in high earthquake activity 
regions.

Built in 1917, Turnbull House was designed by the architect Thomas Turnbull for the 
merchant trader Alexander Turnbull. Except for this building venture and their 
common passion for books, there exists no relation at all between client and 
architect. Although designed in a Classical style, the architect eventually settled on a 
mixture of Jacobean, Scottish Baronial and a hint of Queen Anne. Such an event 
was not uncommon, having precedent in Pugin’s re-design of the Houses of 
Parliament, and occurring during a period when architects regularly sought pattern 
books and engraved illustrations of exemplary work. Both Turnbulls had book
collections that contained many architectural pattern books and treatise, including Scottish Architecture of the sixteenth century. Their pages are well worn.

Comparing the content of these books in the presence of the existing revivalist building exposes a number of questions that point to the tangled quagmire of historicism, renovation/conservation, style and taste. What were the origins of this building? What are the architectural values at play in its design as well as its current rendering? What conditions of honesty or authenticity prevail? Does the existing building suggest a particular approach towards its renovation and seismic upgrade?

Like many landmark buildings, Turnbull House has witnessed several changes and renovations in its relatively short life. Turnbull occupied the home/library for only a year before he died. Afterwards his collection and the structure that housed it were donated to the City of Wellington. The collection swelled through private donations, testing the cataloguing system and the original organization of each room. Consequently, in light of an archival nightmare and the wealth of public support for its historic stature, the city turned ownership over to the Department of Conservation and all books were relocated to the National Library as a special collection. The presence of these books figures prominently in the Conservation Report. However, the absence of the books left the building hollow and without seeming purpose.

Guidelines for the preservation of historic buildings generally favour hiding or disguising material that is extraneous to the period. Authentic details are coordinated in the belief that accurate description will deliver truth. Interior finishes and furnishings are used to fix the historical moment of the building’s significance. It is in the nature of interior linings, especially those equated with interior decoration, to be moveable, unfixed and impermanent. These qualities run contrary to the tenants of architectural truth that privilege permanence and monumentality over the minor artefacts and notions of everyday life. But in a country far removed in time and space from its inspirational origins, lacking the crafting skills of fine interior detailing and finishing, in a building now divorced from its original purpose several times over, it is not surprising that the physical artefact of the building pronounces such dishonest tones of artifice. It is a poor imitation, a cousin, second or thrice removed. Previous conservation and strengthening efforts did not attempt to breach this gap, nor is there evidence that the renovation continued to participate in building upon its own architectural myth. Wall plaster was removed and replaced with drywall. Ornamental plaster ceilings were removed and replaced with smooth flat surfaces. Timber panelling was removed and replaced without care to sink finishing nails, to align joints or accommodate new mechanical or electrical systems. Large glass doors to the library bookcases were lost and shelving never reinstalled. New partition walls were inserted to accommodate office needs. Library stack rooms were converted to storage. Wall colours were limited and chosen to ‘match’ new carpet. Stairs were blocked off and new openings formed between rooms. While the exterior benefited from extensive reconstruction of its gables, roofing and down spouts, the building interior became a victim of an economic imperative.

One significant factual element of this situation remains to be noted: the authority of structural engineering to verify, test, and calculate physical truths. No evidence has been uncovered to date to indicate that Turnbull House’s original design and details benefited from any special seismic consideration. The 1950’s seismic upgrade of this building removed the precarious gables, parapets and fireplace chimneys, only to have them rebuilt in the 1990’s restoration. Following guidelines set out by Historic Places Trust and ICOMOS, all strengthening measures were hidden within the
building fabric out of sight. While contemporary architectural values place great merit in the power and visual prominence of exposed structure, earlier refurbishment of this historic building wrote another version of honesty and truth that highlights the image of historic style. On the surface these transformations build a case of falsehoods or untruths about the building's heritage. They place doubt on the Library's founding dedication towards “the search for truth” and its regard as “the nucleus of our most important collection of material relating to New Zealand.”(7) Their accumulative effect constituted a building myth, one that was living and perhaps representative of the eternal quality of myth-making in general.

The Means of the Matter
Architectural drawing affects what might be called the architect's field of visibility. It makes it possible to see some things more clearly by suppressing other things: something gained, something lost. Its power to represent is always partial, always more or less abstract. It never gives, nor can it give, a total picture of a project, so in consequence it tends to provide a range of subject matter that is made visible in the drawing, as opposed to all the other possible subject matter that is left out of the drawing or is not so apparent from it.(8)

Numerous book volumes previously belonging to the architect Turnbull lay strewn across the table. Their covers belie a time when leather and marbled paper were the fare of noble gentlemen readers. Which of these books did he study in his attempt to rekindle or revive a former architectural style? Mirroring his own actions, we became acutely aware of the theoretical gap we were attempting to leap and in responding to the dictum to “design for and of our times” our loyalties and allegiances were jostled between historic ancestors and contemporary heroes.(9) Our modernist-trained eyes surveyed the etched plates of plans, details and rendered elevations, all the while resisting the temptation to reduce their beauty to awe of labour and craft. The drawings themselves were things to behold: the fine silver thread lines, the infinite strokes that describe a range of shadows, the obsession to deliver spatial quality and construction equally, the effort to delineate interior decoration, and the marvel to explain the techne of profiles and mouldings. Our lust for these drawings and the world they suggested provided the impetus for the design and in our library, liberally we dwelt.(10)

Our understanding of the building as both bachelor home and study, negotiated as a series of separate rooms with individual characters, reflected another era when buildings were arranged as a circuit of rooms. Designed in this manner and avoiding any expressed centrality, each hermetic room opens to the next. We were particularly struck by the manner in which the original library, complete with books, enveloped the room. Particular to this discussion is historian and theorist Robin Evans' essay on the developed surface.(11) The gift of this essay to the project was in the form of identifying the social and architectural condition of room, furnishings and ornament at the beginning of the nineteenth century.(12) This essay points to a method of representation that was intricately involved in the design presented and its generating idea. However modern or influenced this interpretation is by contemporary architectural theory and design methodology, it hinted at an ordering of the project which previously had seemed to be a collection of unrelated bits and pieces. It diminished the fear of acting to fill up the Modernist tabula rasa with frivolous historicism or commercialized historic imaging. “Conventionalists may seek to escape from arbitrariness by grounding practice in an ongoing tradition; but we moderns have become too reflective, too critical, simply to entrust ourselves to what has been. No longer are we willing to repeat what has been done, just because it has become part of tradition. At the same time we are not satisfied with departures
from tradition motivated only by subjective whim."(13)

**Seismic Linings**

The structure/ornament debate has been a constant to and fro in which each vies for recognition as the dominant expression of architectural meaning. In the writings of many architectural theorists since antiquity, there is a clear notion that despite referring to the past their concerns are primarily, if not exclusively, the fabrication of new building. However, the subject of our enquiry, an existing historic building, already has both structural load-bearing integrity and decorative qualities. They are mutually active in an ‘honest’ manner, both contributing to the presence and sensation of the architecture. Although structurally sound, the load-bearing brickwork will not withstand the intensity of shaking from a large magnitude earthquake. It requires seismic strengthening to absorb that moment of intensity, allowing shock waves to circulate through it or pass across it. At all other times it provides no structural contribution to the building. Does this moment of intensity pose technical and conceptual architectural possibilities?

Completely redundant until an earthquake strikes, this seismic strengthening is unnecessary for the everyday well-being of the building which has its own structural integrity in relation to gravity. Since it only takes on a structural relation to the building during a quake, it must function ornamentally at other times. In this way it seems to be neither permanently structure, nor permanently ornament, and therefore stands outside the stratified structure/ornament dialectic and must be treated differently.

But what is the nature of this moment of intensity?(14) The existing building could be thought in relation to the idea of body (in the Deleuze and Guattari manner), with its organs divided and stratified into parts including arranged spaces, structure and ornament. To understand it as a body without organs (BwO) two things need to occur. One phase is the need for the “fabrication of the BwO, the other to make something circulate upon it or pass across it.”(15) But, we recognise that Deleuze and Guattari’s primary discussion of the BwO is made in relation to the corporeal body and that a building is inanimate. It requires a guiding hand, just as the mistress ties, sews, binds and lashes the masochists body constructing a BwO under such conditions that it “can no longer be populated by anything but intensities of pain, pain waves.”(16)

The seismic body without organs is constructed initially by cutting, bolting, welding and screwing a second surface across interior walls. Covering and restricting the existing surface, it is pierced by openings. A second phase is its subjection to shaking. What emerges in the making of the seismic BwO, is a body that can only be occupied by intensities of shaking, shock waves. It desires the aftershock.

Nostalgia did not linger long in this project. Technical evidence reinforced the decision to develop a scheme that was almost exclusively oriented to spatial and surface conditions of the interior. Numerous schematic engineering strategies were developed architecturally. Calculations on the length and diameter of bolts reaching through the external brick veneer to the bearing wall expelled any notion of strengthening from the exterior. An exterior oriented design would result in significant damage to the existing brick work, large sections of steel or masses of reinforced concrete overpowering the gem-like quality of the site and the lingering requirement to still renovate the interior surfaces to accommodate face loads. Clearly this was a sign to step inside. Acknowledging our modernist blade informed by the Derridean cut, we deemed that once again the entire interior finishes in the building would be removed. Their future was one of speculation: auction, museum
display or kindling. Our task became that of interior structuring. The project, inspired
to seek out means of architectural expression in earthquake strengthening of historic
buildings, took a theoretical swerve: it sought an art-form "in a structural-symbolic
rather than a structural-technical sense."(17)

Enter/Entre/Entiere/Inter
Pass through the stucco portico and enter. The manner of brick upon brick nestled
around stucco lintels and sills is left behind in the thickness of transgressed poche. It
gives way to an equally articulated interior room wrapped in plain modulated
paneling, that firmly places the work in the Elizabethan or Jacobean manor. E. M.
Barry in his Lectures on Architecture, suggests this is a period not of "true artistic
character," being without sculpture and painting, but is the "decoration of masons,
plasterers and carpenters."(18) Walls were handed over to the carpenter and
covered in "constructed decoration," from floor to ceiling. This form of decoration is
argued as "giving dignity and beauty to the forms of construction," rather than
'beautifying,' an ill-proportioned structure with applied decoration.(19) There is a
clear concern for propriety and elegance.

"In our remarks upon Elegance, it is clearly laid down that English taste amongst the
superior orders is averse to rich or sumptuous effects. Elaborate adornment, -- such
is the national creed,-- is almost invariably vulgar, and at the best, barbaric.(20)

The building originally included two functions, the residence and the library.
Separated by a bearing wall running both longitudinally and vertically through the
entire structure, both parts were accessed from the entry hall. Numerous flights of
stairs negotiate level changes on either side of the wall, demarcating shifts in function
purposefully built into the architecture. In the mind of an engineer, this constitutes a
core wall, a shear wall, from which stems additional lateral bracing. In the mind of an
architect, especially one looking at the sanctity of rooms and their individual interior
expression, this is but one wall of four in the entry hall.

The science of structurally strengthening this shear wall suggested a strategy much
like bolstering up, holding in, corseting. From shear wall to shear wall, a new screen
is introduced and hovers parallel to the old plastered brick wall. Panels of water cut
steel plate are welded onto standard sections framing the perimeter. Steel is
honestly represented as metal work.(21) In his discussion of the productions of the
ancient gold and silversmiths, Pugin notes that there construction and execution is of a
"metallic character." Formed in thin plates of metal the ornament is produced by
"piercing, chasing, engraving, and enamel," actions that are peculiar to metal.(22)
Although the wall has been structurally altered to accommodate its moment of great
intensity, the modifications serve foremost as a visible tell-tale sign of that impending
moment. The brutaleness of thick steel against the delicate scale of the room is held in
check by a pattern of painted timber moulding which echo the original panel framing.
One recalls Damisch’s description of Viollet-le-Duc’s “visible framework, the tracery
of ribbing and salient features which were thrown over the masonry like a net.”(23)
These timber profiles prop open the perforations, declaring the efficient removal of
structurally excess material. Lines of seismic resistance are visibly evident through
the feint sandblasted diagonals. As a planar form of strapping they echo Jacobean
leaded windows and tracery freeing the non-structural central space to be eroded.
This space is allowed to follow its true course as ornamental embellishment, in which
delicate patterns of timber moldings, echoing the original panel framing span the
ovoid perforations. A delicacy is engaged in relation to the brutality of the thick steel
plate. Situated opposite the main entrance door, this surface treatment heralds the
strategy of the project: to insert structure as a parallel surface in the form of
ornamental lining, to approach each room respective of its former uses, orders and
presences, to represent it in kindness to its current function, to operate between, across and in tandem to the theoretical offerings and historical precedents laden in this building’s physical fabric. These intentions manifest themselves in the technique of the developed surface interior drawing.(24)

**Parlor/Pallor/Paler/Parle**

In the spirit of proper social graces, another room, now acting as a makeshift parlor, opens off the entry hall. It is a room quite different from the Entry Hall. One only need to open the door for the full effect. “For that degree of difference to flourish in adjacent spaces they have to give very little of themselves away before the moment of entry. To preserve their precious identity, so easy to dilute, they are forbidden to mix. They are therefore experienced more vividly as a temporal series than as a spatial series.”(25) Originally used as a Study, this room formed a transition space between the privacy of the residence and the even more private and secluded book collection.(26) Recent alterations have re-named this room as an Ante Room; a room coming prior, before or in front of another probably more significant room.(27) As the Library can only be entered by passing through this ‘ante-chamber’ it currently serves as the room in which visitors are welcomed with a spot of tea on their way to a meeting in the adjoining space.

To share morning tea with this Ante Room dressed in its new seismic lining is to witness the extreme in which this project developed the notion of structural ornament. In this room three systems are at play: firstly the perforated shear wall continues across the wall surface now resembling wall paper rather than timber panelling. The perforations have taken on more figuration and the repeat of the pattern has morphed to reflect a new module sympathetic to the room’s individual proportions. Here gigantic floral patterning fills-up the spaces between diagonal strap lines, echoing Pugin’s Floriated Ornament in which the flat plain is ornamented by “leaves or flowers drawn out or extended so as to display their geometric forms on a flat surface.”(28) The etched and sandblasted steel is simultaneously voluptuous in its curvaceous arcs and slightly aggressive in its sharp terminations. These pistillated flowers shadow the existing plaster wall surface in full structural regalia. Bolt heads punctuate the reality of this pretty cladding’s fixing, announcing its attachment and reliance on the existing wall. Secondly, a steel and timber moment resisting frame cuts across the bay window dividing the room in the manner of a rood screen. And finally, a double panelled stressed skin presents a down-scaled and more diminutive repose in the surface of steel. Structural elements have been completely usurped and ‘feminized’ by the ‘wall paper’ pattern. Its seismic strength is further foiled by surface perforations in which lie fleecy wool batts. While the new structural system resists earthquake face loads, the room’s acoustic properties are softened. Between these two ‘papered’ walls resides the space of the room, a space wholly reserved for the occasional setting of tea.

**Library/ Livre/ Libris/ Libra**

A slightly more ornate existing timber door swings into the adjoining room. Framed on either side by new vertical steel sections, it punctures the shear wall. Opening off-centre it appears as an accident of planning, privileging neither bay window nor fireplace. It is an unceremonial entry from the side, off-centre, side stage left. In keeping with our desire to express the strengthening and confront the emptiness of the library without books or shelves, we removed all joinery except for the fireplace wall.

Left intact as an echo of Semper’s notion of hearth, and Pugin’s use of relic, the geometry and proportion of the fireplace wall panelling were used to set datums and rhythms for the room. After careful scrutiny of the existing surface, these purposeful lineaments were offered up towards a new seismic lining.(29) New steel mullions
diligently trace the rhythm of the original panelling. The modernist expression of ultimate construction truth is consecrated in the tolerance of material detailing, and building on centre-lines commemorated in single profile bronze strips. Naked steel surfaces are clad with timber moulding, not to disguise or deceive, but to activate a dialogue amongst several historical stances on ornament and structure in the moment of a contemporary architectural work. Lying within the ornamental timber work and resembling decorative inlay, the steel mullions await their seismic calling. They remain decorative until the shock wave instigates a moment of intensity.

Despite the rich theoretical potential of this refurbished room’s material detailing, its strength lies in how the new fabric facilitates a spatial condition of prepared-ness and anticipation that Robin Evans calls “apprehension.” Once dubbed the Library, this room is currently called The Reception Room yet functions as the primary meeting room for local institutions and community groups. By all accounts this is the building’s most historically significant interior space. Archival photographs depict a stately room, perhaps a ‘manly’ room, where the spatial enclosure is constituted by a lining of scholarly book volumes secured within glass-fronted cabinets. The existing furnishings are few and deliberate: at one end a single table floats on the arabesque carpet and a pair of high-backed leather chairs consort at the other. As The Library, the room exemplified its function, but did so in a manner of servitude. The physical matter of walls and other surfaces, both retain the room’s activities and yield to their authority:

“...it was total design of an enveloping surface, the empty space within which was left undescribed and untouched. Nevertheless, anything that could be pulled towards this enveloping inner surface of the room would be absorbed into it, or flattened against it as if some centrifugal force had thrust it out and pressed it there. Use of the developed surface induces facile, specious, superficial architecture that sucks as much of the world as it is able into its flatness.”

This architectural phenomena, illuminated by Robin Evans, eludes the dialectic range of interpretations on the honest expression of function by either Pugin or Modernists. The Library’s design, and hence this project’s refurbishment of it as a Meeting/Reception Room, diverts from the visual primacy of fitness of purpose or apparent illustration of utility. Instead, it suits those criteria by way of collapsing the memory of the bookshelves and panelling into a denser, flatter surface in order to ‘clear’ the space for a number of potential modes of inhabitation, most of which organize themselves according to traditional social customs of exchanging information and conversation. As new surface linings add seismic integrity to the building, the tradition of panelling instigates a new form of surface ornament. The lining, however, subjugates its identity as object to hold in and hold back the interior spatial clearing. The occupation of the room and its multiple variations of inhabitation has necessitated a special envelopment. As in its representation, the room is waiting for something to happen, something of great intensity and magnitude.

At Bay/Abated
On the north face of the building, a bay is attached to each half of the building compositionally attempting to resolve the inherent division in the buildings social and spatial arrangement. Structurally though, they are the weakest part of the building and are likely to collapse under a sizeable earthquake. To resist damaging movement vertical steel sections were introduced. Their location and number prompted their reconsideration as columns, pilasters or neo-gothic rib vaults in the tradition of those styles half-way between gothic and classic. The design of these elements, as in all the work, was conducted in relation to a range of inspirational...
models laid out across the table. Although we employed a different analytic technique to Turnbull, it is likely that he to devoured the many of the same books. In either case the work situates itself in what Porphyrios calls the "contemporaneity of the work."(34) Whether attempting a faithful mimesis of tradition, or allowing the work to 'drift' in the manner that Derrida describes the aimless drift in language (iterabilite), there is a clearly evoked distance between the original and the modern. Porphyrios further elaborates this discussion:

Out of the interplay between 'drift' and repetition each form acquires its unique itinerary. Art is situated exactly at this midpoint: art deals neither with origins nor with creation ex novo but with the distance traversed between the model and its modern repetition. It is precisely this distance between the model and its imitative repetition that art quite consciously confronts and builds deliberately into the artefact. Art points to a dependence on the models that it conditionally overcomes so that it may formulate its own modernity.(35)

In the tiny space of the bay window stand four elements charged with this very dependence. They are not figured enough to be reminiscent of caryatids, columns, jambs, mouldings and buttresses nor are they industrially crafted enough to remember Miesian chromium-clad steel sections. Building on Porphyrios' two-fold manner of material metaphor, their material and detail declare an intervening parallel condition witnessed in Brolin's comparison of Pugin's original statement on honest expression of materials and parallel condition witnessed in Modernist attitudes on the same subject.(36) Industrial steel is exposed. The abstract purity of their right angle plates are tarnished by their welded seams. Turned, sanded and stained timber is attached to steel without embellishment or visible sign. Stopping short of the floor line, they are not to be confused as load-bearing. Timber fleshes out naked steel webbing and dresses its face.(37) Both materials maintain a modernist value of honesty in that they do not pretend to be another material nor do they battle their individual constructional properties. In this case materials are used to express their inherent and rational properties: standard steel sections are used for achieving the smallest and strongest section and timber is used to achieve the second property of ornamentation when not subject to shaking. They co-exist democratically and within acceptable propriety of material technique.(38) Whilst their overall form, their formal qualities, call out a heated historic and stylistic discourse, it is their difference that refuels a rivalry between ornament and structure.

The four pilasters are sequestered from the adjoining Ante Room and Reception Room by a curtained threshold formed by a doubled panelled frame. As a necessary seismic addition this 'moment resisting frame' is designed to extend across the walls of the room, enveloping its space with a new lining. The curtains form a voluted yet generally continuous surface to complete the wholeness of the larger space. In turn, the bays attain a discreteness of space and character. "A concatenation of interiors of magnified individuality dispelled any sense of latent sameness; each room its own little empire of activity, allusion and colour; each a totally encompassing enterprise."(39) The columns enjoy a space duplicitous in nature; an intimate space ancillary to a private interior but ultimately integral to the building's external relationship with the public sphere. The draped proscenium darkens the room for conference presentations.

Pin/ Bolt/ Boss/ Stud
The decision to develop an interior proposal did not eliminate exterior treatment. While the building's original design was inspired by an architecture built when walls were thick, solid and load bearing, its construction adopted the techniques practised in the everyday contemporary architecture of New Zealand in 1917. As a result,
inner brick bearing walls were separated from outer facing bricks by cavity construction. Neither the 1955 nor the 1990 conservation documents confirm the existence of wall ties. In the spirit of honouring and protecting the physical fabric of the building, primary development of the interior could neither deny or negate the existing exterior.

The polished stainless steel external studs cover bolts which tie the exterior brick veneer to the inner load-bearing wall. Each regularly spaced shiny surface catches sunlight and mirrors the external world. As a visible sign of the interior strengthening they act as decorative embellishment that does not attempt to revive the past but again critically evaluates the role of the boss or disk as a covering and marker for a junction or fixing point. In reading the building as an architectural body turned inside-out, they explicate the insertion of the seismic lining. Unlike biological constructions of body from bones to flesh to external dermis that Michelle Serres speculates upon, this new structural intensity works from the inside as an inorganic second form of support.(40)

**Drawing from the Matter**

There are many precedents in previous centuries for revivalism or historicism in the visual arts....Previously, this relationship was based on reverence, rivalry, or didacticism. For example, Renaissance artists acknowledged their debt to classical antiquity, but aspired to surpass it. In the Gothic Revival of the nineteenth century, we find a relationship in which architects and artists sought to extract a moral lesson from the past....The desire to pay homage to past masters. Learn from them, denigrate them, continue with their traditions, beat them at their own game, or use their work to condemn the present gives way in the revivalism of the mid- and later twentieth century to a preoccupation with style.(41)

The advancement of architecture in relation to the opposition of structure/ornament relies on the establishment of an origin as an expected foundation. Whether based on a discourse that establishes an architectural image or an idea that is ‘merely plausible,’ it effectively becomes a plausible myth. In the structure ornament debate there are many plausible myths, and they are revived from time to time. Oscillating between these myths architecture has traditionally revived ‘styles’ as support for particular political, social, and economical positions for which structure and ornament is presented. In the course of this design research a number of myths were uncovered, many laying outside the main discussion on ornament and structure, including the role of the true and authentic in architecture. For example Gilbert Scott discusses revivalism as a “revival of our national [English] architecture,” synonymous with a deep-seated revolution of the human mind, rather than pervading fashion.(42) Revivalism, in its various manifestations, carries with it a desire to resurrect, reinvent or regurgitate ornament alongside this “craving after the resumption of our national architecture.”(43)

The research project does not concern remaking in a historical style, nor does it seek to resolve the debate, but finds itself embedded in the tradition of both and therefore becomes part of Eliade’s ‘living myth.’ Revivalism is one means by which originary myths on architecture are made eternal. However, in drawing from this tradition this project offers another layer of complexity to the debate. Seismic strengthening as a necessary structural addition to the building, stands outside the traditional structure/ornament debate around load-bearing buildings. It is a contemporary response to a history of spectacular shaking. It is necessarily dependent on a shock wave to circulate on and through it, stimulating a structural response from what is otherwise ‘decorative ironwork.’ Both structure and ornament is at play.
We can begin to surmise that structure and ornament are traditionally played out in relation to gravity and meaning, sense and sensibility, as a 'rivalry' of parallel surfaces. And despite the best endeavours of postmodern thinkers, this position remains. The injection of seismic strengthening opens another position, one that introduces necessary structure independent of the building’s everyday structural integrity. But, in its everyday activity seismic strengthening has no structural property and remains to a large extent ornamental. A shock wave forces the appearance of structure whilst absorbing all ornamental characteristics. Ornament persists under both conditions, seismic activity and stability, whereas structure only under seismic activity.

Endnotes


7 Cochran, * Turnbull House, Wellington, Conservation Plan*, 29


9 “THE HONEST EXPRESSION OF THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES--Modernist: The character of one’s time can be captured in the design of an object or a building, and the designer has an intuitive understanding of what that character is. Pugin: Acting on this principle [that the style of a building should correspond with its use], different nations have given birth to so many various styles of Architecture, each suited to their climate, customs and religion.” (Brent C. Brolin, *Architectural Ornament, Banishment and Return*, (New York; , W. W. Norton and Company, 2000); 94.

10 See: List of all Books and Periodicals Received by Victoria University Library from the Estate of the Late John Urie Turnbull, Esquire, February 1938, (Victoria University, Wellington)


12 The work referred to by Evans dates from 1720’s to 1810’s. See Evans, in ibid.


14 For this discussion we do not wish to keep ‘faith’ with Deleuze and Guattari, but
intend to use and work with the material in order to develop theories and propositions that they do not. Further it is not our intention to map body with building but again to work with the ideas. We know from the work of Deleuze and Guattari that it is possible to find moments of intensities in various bodies, but only when each is constructed as a body without organs (BwO). The BwO being a body that does not reject organs but is opposed to the structure or organization of bodies “the body as it is stratified, regulated, ordered and functional.” See Elizabeth Grosz, Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism, (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1994), 69.


16 Ibid., 152.

17 Gottfried Semper, The Four Elements and Other Writings, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Hermann (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1989), 249.


19 Ibid., 94.


21 “THE HONEST EXPRESSION OF STRUCTURE-- Modernist: The structure of a building or an object should be emphasized, not disguised. Pugin: “Pointed Architecture does not conceal her construction, but beautifies it.” “[T]here should be no features about a building which are not necessary for convenience, construction or propriety.” See Brolin, Architectural Ornament, Banishment and Return, 94.


24 "In descriptive geometry, folding out the adjacent surfaces of a three dimensional body so that all of its faces can be shown on a sheet of paper is called developing a surface...It became a way of turning architecture inside-out, so that internal rather than external elevations were shown." Evans, “The Developed Surface: An Enquiry into the Brief Life of an Eighteenth Century Drawing Technique,” 126.

25 Ibid., 131.


27 Ibid., 3.


30 Hartoonian, Ontology of Construction: On Nihilism of Technology in Theories of
Modern Architecture, 76.

31 Evans, “The Developed Surface: An Enquiry into the Brief Life of an Eighteenth Century Drawing Technique,” 129.

32 Ibid., 134.

33 “THE HONEST EXPRESSION OF FUNCTION-- Modernist: The purpose of the object or building should be apparent from looking at it. Pugin: It will be readily admitted, that the great test of Architectural beauty is in the fitness of the design to the purpose for which it is intended, and that style of a building should so correspond with its use that the spectator may at once perceive the purpose for which it was erected....The external and internal appearance of an edifice should be illustrative of; and in accordance with the purpose for which it is destined.” See Brolin, Architectural Ornament: Banishment and Return, 94.


35 Ibid., 140.

36 “It is a metaphor that alludes to the associative value springing on the one hand from the very nature of materials qua matter, and on the other from the particular technique with which they have been treated.” See Demetri Porphyrios, Sources of Modern Eclecticism (London: Academy Editions, 1982), 50.

37 "the denial of reality, of the material, is necessary if form is to emerge as a meaningful symbol," and "high artistic development also masked the material of the mask" Semper, The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings, 257. These statements have been further interpreted in Harry Francis Mallgrave’s introduction as, "The Greeks, however, enshrouded their solid columns with these decorative forms - the forms becoming, in effect, artistic symbols articulating and masking the column's static role, while also denying its material basis." Semper, The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings, 39

38 “THE HONEST EXPRESSION OF MATERIALS: Modernist: One material should not pretend to be another- also known as being true to the nature of the material. The physical characteristics of a material should determine the techniques used to work it and the appearance of the final product. Pugin: Even the construction itself should vary with the material employed, and the designs should be adapted to the material in which they are executed.... Moreover, the architects of the middle ages were the first who turned the natural properties of the various materials to their full account, and made their mechanism a vehicle for their art.” See Brolin, Architectural Ornament: Banishment and Return, 94.


42 George Gilbert Scott, Personal and Professional Recollections, (London, S. Low,
Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1879), 10

43 Ibid., 11.