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Interior Design

Nanette Cameron

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## **Foreword.**

***Nanette Cameron: Interior Design Legend*** is being launched on the occasion of the exhibition ***Nanette Cameron: Objectspace Master of Craft*** at Objectspace. The **Masters of Craft** series tells the stories of New Zealand craft and design practitioners whose practice is distinctive, enduring, influential and redefining of tradition. At an early stage when we were formulating the series we asked ourselves the question ‘what is a master’. In the context of Nanette Cameron we might also consider the question, ‘what is a legend’ because that is what Nanette Cameron is after a 50 year career in interior design.

Nanette Cameron started working in interior design in Auckland in the 1950s. By the 1960s she was part of a small and developing group of practitioners that formed the first interior design professional association. Then her career took an interesting turn and she began to focus on teaching and writing about interior design, both activities she found she enjoyed and had aptitudes for. Her courses, that began in 1967 and in 1975 became The Nanette Cameron School of Interior Design, have graduated thousands of students and pre-date tertiary interior design tuition in New Zealand. The existence of an active and large alumni organisation—The Nanette Cameron Guild of Interior Design—evidences the scale and quality of her teaching.

Nanette’s approach to design is one that integrates an interest and awareness of contemporary art and architecture, environmental and social issues with individual and social development. This approach aligns with a contemporary view that interior design is inherently an

interdisciplinary practice, being a dialogue formed by architecture, art, fashion, film, engineering, history, literature, photography, philosophy, product design and textiles. While Nanette Cameron’s role within interior design has principally focused on teaching and journalism she has been a conspicuous and constant advocate for contemporary art and design which has connected her with a wide range of creative professionals in both New Zealand and Australia. Through this engagement she has expanded the fields of interior design practice and criticism, acknowledging good design emerges from an understanding of contextual matters beyond ‘surface treatments’ of subject matter.

The interdisciplinary nature of interior design itself and of Nanette’s practice has been well served by the interdisciplinary curatorial team of Katie Lockhart, Kirsty Cameron and Vivienne Stone who have worked very hard to create both the exhibition and accompanying publication. I want to thank them for their work for Objectspace and the enhancement of New Zealand design discourse. I also thank Dr Rachel Carley for her insightful assessment of Nanette Cameron’s contribution to New Zealand interior design development and to oral historian Megan Hutching who interviewed Nanette prior to Nanette taking ‘pen to paper’.

This project would not have been possible without Nanette Cameron’s own participation. On behalf of everyone who has worked on the project I would like to record our collective thanks to Nanette. For all of us it has been a privilege to work with a legend.

PHILIP CLARKE, DIRECTOR

## **Curatorial Statement.**

Over the 50 plus years that she has been active as a teacher, interior designer and arts advocate Nanette Cameron has pollinated her world with new ideas and trends and inspired thousands of students who have enrolled in her interior design courses. She’s an example of what social theorist Malcolm Gladwell calls a Maven. One of three types, identified by Gladwell in his book *The Tipping Point*, of people who create social change. Nanette is an information specialist with her finger on the design industry’s pulse. She’s been a significant contributor to the creation of an Auckland milieu that allows the work of architects, designers, artists and the creative industries to be appreciated and supported by its local community. Nanette, alongside others, has visibly changed the face of Pakuranga and its cultural facilities.

As a curatorial team our challenge has been to create a show and publication that would give an insight into Nanette’s enthusiasm and love of design, and that would also provide an indication of the depth of design knowledge she’s spent many years acquiring and sharing.

Collectively we decided the best approach to presenting Nanette’s mastering of her craft was to concentrate on three main elements: showcasing her Glenmore Road home of 50 years as an example of her interior design practice; exploring her teachings and their subsequent effect on individuals and the New Zealand design community; and documenting her work over the years as both a stylist and writer for New Zealand home and design magazines. These three elements are explored both in the exhibition and the publication.

One of the exciting aspects of the show’s development has been teaming Nanette and Katie Lockhart alongside each other to create The Blue Room. Despite the approximately 50 year age difference they share many passions and sensibilities. Designing the room—the main feature of the exhibition and a playful homage to Nanette’s favourite room at her Glenmore Road home—has also demonstrated Nanette’s natural curiosity about the new.

The kindness with which people have contributed towards the making of this exhibition has been an opportunity for all involved to reciprocate something of the generosity we’ve each received from Nanette over the years. Nowhere is this more evident than architect Sue Hillery’s large scale model of Glenmore Road. Documented in the book and an important part of the exhibition her model brings some of the beauty and wonder of Nanette’s Glenmore Road back to life.

We hope that we’ve been able to convey something of Nanette’s teaching, and her enormous passion for practitioners making interesting work. Nanette’s continued passion and energy, her ongoing Maven behaviour around design practice and teaching have rewarded her at 86 years of age with an enviable vitality and generosity of spirit.

To that spirit one would need to add: eat a lot of salad, drink wine and don’t let anyone lift or carry anything for you. If we could bottle Nanette’s essence we would be wealthy but we are much wealthier for knowing her. Thank you Objectspace for this wonderful opportunity.

KIRSTY CAMERON, KATIE LOCKHART, VIVIENNE STONE



## Reflections

### Pakuranga.

#### on Glenmore Road

**N**anette Cameron's house in Glenmore Road Pakuranga was her residence for over 50 years. It is the definitive statement of her practice as an interior designer, reflecting her passion for architecture, art, design and gardening and how these elements combine. Nanette Cameron and her daughter Kirsty Cameron talk with designer Katie Lockhart about Glenmore Road.

*/KL/:* How would you describe the type of home that you like to live in and its subsequent interior?

*/NC/:* **Well I do like a contemporary house, and if I were in a position to build I would build a very modern home. For the interior I personally favour a mixture of old things, that have meaning and a past, but I really am excited about really great contemporary design... most probably it would be more modern with accents of older pieces.**

**On one of the Australian tours I remember visiting a home that was rich in possessions and the owner saying that it was her dream to have a very modern, simple uncluttered house. But what could she delete from her life without pain? She realised that she would be much happier to keep it as a lovely dream, that way she would never lose it. I feel similarly.**

**My interior would not be strongly patterned and although I do really enjoy colour it is whether it is going to be appropriate or not, what the spaces are. Actually I think you can use colour more successfully in an older home. Also a garden is very much an integral part of a house and the house and garden should be planned in harmony with the colours of the interior as the great Frank Lloyd Wright believed. Colour to me is paramount in the garden and the garden would bring colour into the home.**

*/KL/:* I feel lucky enough to have visited Glenmore Road whilst you were living there, was it considered avant-garde for its time?

*/NC/:* **Well it had stages in its development as it was originally a sharemilker's cottage which had a very plain, bare exterior with one plum tree in the garden. My husband had been married before and they had carried out some alterations on the cottage, and these alterations were attractively done, as Douglas and his former wife both had very good taste, although he was colour blind... as quite a few men are!**

**I guess once architect Rex Mason extended the house, it was unusual for the area but it didn't give that appearance from the street as we kept the cottage frontage as it was. Initially Rex said, "bowl the old house" but Doug was adamant that it remain, so remain it did. In hindsight it was the best solution, the house retained its history and a large part of its charm was how the old living part of the house seamlessly moved into the design of the new contemporary wing.**

*/KL/:* At the time that you were altering Glenmore Road what would you say the typical interior design approach for a home at that time would be?

*/NC/:* **I have to say it was pretty mundane in Pakuranga, the largest house in the district was full of expensive poor reproductions of antiques, mock everything. The houses in Pakuranga were all built at once because it was a new area. I was collecting for a charity in the seventies and as I covered my allotted streets, I thought that if another front door opens onto a beige Berber carpet I will scream. The 1970s were a decade for natural, earthy colours. Bolt after bolt of brown dralon velvet upholstery fabric was sold. The practical brown covering on the furniture melded into the practical Berber flooring. Although colours have come and gone New Zealanders have retained their addiction to beige.**

*/KL/:* Did your time working in Hurdley's present you with interior design solutions for Glenmore Road that you feel you might not have been exposed otherwise?

**/NC/:** Yes it really did. It is hard to separate things as I had travelled and I had a read a lot. But Hurdley's, yes, certainly had influence. When I first started there the firm specialised in soft furnishings, the fabrics were really lovely, many quite traditional. Antiques were very popular and our clients were mostly in Remuera and the eastern suburbs where attitudes were more conventional. Derek Hurdley had a discerning eye and a broad appreciation.

**/KL/:** I know that your husband Douglas already owned Glenmore Road before you were married, how did you feel about that?

**/NC/:** It didn't bother me, as I liked the way it was, I approved of it. And it didn't really need changing. The living room was really a beautiful room, and I kept the deep green walls.

**/KL/:** When you were ready to renovate what was your brief to architect Rex Mason?

**/NC/:** Well it was most probably that I like the contemporary and remember saying to him that I am choosing you because of what you have done in the extensions to your own home, which I found very exciting. It was also was an older home which he had extended for himself and his wife Sally, and their then three sons, later to become four.

The first great architect I knew about was Frank Lloyd Wright and subconsciously he was an influence, although I cannot pinpoint an exact part of my home that directly relates to his buildings. Of course the beauty and daring of Fallingwater has always captivated my imagination but it is a far cry from suburban Pakuranga. Frank Lloyd Wright and I shared an appreciation of Japanese architecture, so it was most probably a melding of these two that was subtly behind my inspiration.

**/KL/:** And landscape designer Harry Turbott?

**/NC/:** I think that Rex knew him and suggested him. Also Doug's sister Lois was married to Bill Manchester, the plastic surgeon, and his niece Nan, an artist, was

married to Harry Turbott, so there was a family connection of sorts. By that time I had created a garden with a softly curving boarder round the perimeter of the section and it was full of seasonal colour.

 **D**oug loved horse racing and we did go to many country meetings—we didn't have children then and we had a sociable time with our friends, drinks and food from the boot of the car. So the weekends we were home I would buy a couple of boxes of plants and dig them into the ground, extending it each time. Because it was a generous section, I planted a large rose garden where the pool is now. That garden was really to provide flowers for the house, as I loved bowls of roses in the home.

As the surrounding green belt got subdivided and new buildings went up, Harry had the concept of building mounds in the front and then planting the trees on top of them to give us privacy and cut out the view of all the new construction opposite. The pool, which one of Doug's friends said was an indulgence, was an extravagance but such an imaginative beautiful extravagance. I have always advocated that if you commission a designer because you have faith in their ability, and you accept their design, you should not whittle away at aspects of their concept. You will only regret it. I didn't ever dream he was ever going to give us a pool like that. We said we wanted a rectangular shape, certainly not curving, nothing as wonderful as it was!

**/KL/:** What sort of interior were you hoping to achieve? What was informing you? Did you look at magazines? Any particular interior designers work? Visit any particular residences that particularly inspired you?

**/NC/:** I think it was more that there were certain things that I loved such as the grass paper wallpaper and I have always loved fabrics and texture. I don't know that I had a totally planned scheme... more that

I went with the house and the feel that I wanted. There were certain elements such as the fireplace that existed and it would have been a very big expense to change, it was clinker brick, which would not have been my choice, but it was a great generous fireplace that took generously sized logs and really warmed the room. I think the best way to describe it, is that it all just evolved. There have been many rooms by designers I have admired, designers such as David Hicks, Eileen Gray, Marion Hall Best and others.

**/KL/:** A Japanese bathroom is the brief that I would give to an architect for my house. Had you been to Japan at the point you asked Rex to design you such a bathroom?

**/NC/:** I did show Rex an illustration, most probably the tub had to be made a little shallower than a typical Japanese one to be practical. I hadn't been to Japan but I had read about it. I loved the Japanese concept of Shibui, which is built on the principle of following nature, and creating richness with texture, but understated colour. I definitely did not want a box for showering, but an open space and I wanted to include a garden as part of it, private but with access to the outside.

**/KL/:** Once the renovation was done, was the outcome as you imagined it to be?

**/NC/:** Oh yes. In the end it was a softer look I guess, more of a home and less of an architectural monument than if we had started from scratch. As a plan it worked very well. The original living room did not get any sun, only a bit of early morning sun but then again it wasn't a room that was used in the day. The other living room off the kitchen was bathed in sun and that was the room that was used through the day.

**/KL/:** Was there a good variety of options locally for the various finishes you selected or did you import things as well?

**/NC/:** We did have to import the tiles, most certainly the milky white glass mosaic tiles

in the bathroom I can't remember where we got those from, and the Welsh quarry tiles in the family room and kitchen. We imported these as there was very little selection but I knew that I wanted tiles in these areas and I think Rex might have had said that he had seen the quarry tiles and that they could suit what we were looking for. Hurdley's brought in the grass paper wallpaper and there was a wide choice of beautiful fabrics.

**/KL/:** I remember seeing the Japanese grass paper wallpaper in your lounge on my first visit to your home and promptly wallpapered my apartment at the time with something quite similar. Was it considered quite an unusual selection for the time?

**/NC/:** The grass paper was just beginning to be used in a few very special places, so it was quite an unusual selection for the time. And the grass paper was up in our house for 40 years! I bought it from Hurdley's along with the fabrics for the couch and the curtains. Obviously as well as Hurdley's having a very good selection it was economical for me.

**/KL/:** When I visited Glenmore Road two particular things made a great impact on me. One was the dining room with its black lacquered ceiling and black lacquered table contrasting with the naturalness of the seagrass wallpaper. It felt minimal yet warm, which is a combination that I love. What was the process of selection that you went through to building this room's interior?

**/NC/:** I guess again the grass paper lead the way, because I wanted to keep the continuity from the living room, as they could become one space by opening up the wide folding cedar doors, in fact they were mostly opened. Rex had designed the handsome cantilevered shelving with hidden brackets in the family room and knew I wanted a shelf rather than a cabinet in the dining room. After discussion we settled for a glossy black formica shelf. This ended up used for the display of treas-

ured objects and not for serving. Why put practicality before beauty?

I also really loved lacquer, I had seen Marion Hall Best use a lot of lacquer in her Australian interiors and I asked Ronald Cox and his partner Tim Edwards to do it for me, a new experience for them and which they did superbly. It was a deep greeny black, two pot lacquer and very, very glossy.

I saw a small round table in a tiny new design store in Parnell and thought that if it could be made larger to seat eight, it would be perfect, as I wanted a round table. The young architect, a woman, who had designed it, said that it was and we settled on a black lacquer finish. The concept of the table was very clever, by incorporating the legs as part of the table top, not only did it enhance the appearance but it was practical. I have always loved bentwood chairs even though they are not the most comfortable. They were more café chairs then so most probably they were considered an unusual selection, and they were also lacquered black. I loved this room, it would certainly be my favourite room in the house.

/KL/: The other thing I remember clearly was the bank of kitchen cupboards with somewhat decorative hinges and a peeling varnish exterior. I loved them and their repetitive size. Did you design these for a particular function?

/NC/: **Well this wall of cupboards was not a lot to do with me as they were already there when I moved in. I did refinish them as they were blonded wood which, during the renovations were stained a darker colour. Because of the under floor heating, the paint crackled, but unevenly, more at the top and the bottom, creating a highly individual effect, which could never be replicated. The cupboards were not deep enough to be practical and also they went right to the ceiling in the kitchen which gave them a better appearance, but of**

course the top ones were out of reach and ended up storing junk.

/KL/: You had no carpet in the house, only tiles and wooden floors. Why was this and how did this feel in winter?

/NC/: **No there was no carpet, I had Indian rugs in the three rooms in the front of the house, and they were a cotton pile rug made in India. In the end the pile had disintegrated so I turned them over, the backs of the rugs had an appealing woven texture.**

I didn't want any carpet in the house, which was quite an unusual decision at the time. The tiles in the living area were a rich russet brown. There was little choice in tiles then but I continued liking them even though later there was a wider selection available. White marble tiles would have been my choice for the main bedroom but cost ruled that out so we settled for white vinyl tiles with an inset border around the perimeter of the room.

Originally the back passage and the children's bedrooms had polished particle board floors later to be covered with a coconut sisal in a herringbone pattern. Under floor heating was in all the new rooms of the house, with the exception of the children's rooms. It was originally inexpensive to run, but that changed later and needed discriminating use. With curtains or roman blinds the house felt cosy in winter and cool in summer Originally the living room had a natural linen fabric that was the same as the curtain and blinds, glued on the walls. A sloping timber tongue and groove ceiling added warmth and character to the room.

/KL/: Did you amass your collection of art, furniture and objects over time or did it all happen when you renovated?

/NC/: **It definitely gradually evolved. The Cesca chairs designed by Marcel Breur in 1925 came back on the plane with me from our first Interior Design Tour to Australia. It was in Muldoon's time and New**

Zealanders couldn't get anything imported so we all went crazy in the Sydney shops. I bought these chairs in 1977 and apart from recaning them they have stood up to many years of hard use. I would have liked to have bought much more art if my circumstances had allowed it. The Eileen Gray table that I treasure was also an Australian purchase.

/KL/: How many years did you live in Glenmore Road? Did you find that the interior constantly evolved?

/NC/: **I lived there for about 50 years! Mostly the interior stayed as it was, I changed the curtains, and we redid the original bathroom, nothing major but little bits here and there. The Len Castle pottery, of which I had a considerable amount, remained on the family room shelves. At the end of every year my classes would come to the house as a finale and there was quite a lot of polishing done in preparation, and a thrust to do some rearranging of accessories.**

**I** have always said to students that in most rooms only one arrangement of major furniture is successful, but smaller articles and accessories need refreshing in their placement and grouping to keep a room alive, I must live up to my ethics. The pool enhanced with lighting, was always the tour de force.

/KL/: When you left Glenmore Road how did you end up feeling?

/NC/: **I felt much better than I thought I would. I had talked before Doug died—he was ill for a long time—of selling and buying a warehouse in the city. My brothers and sisters came and painted the house to help me get it ready for market and then my son Johnny had an accident, so I had to put selling the house on hold.**

Years later it was a major decision to sell, I really loved the house but it was far too big for just me. Kirsty and Sue

(Kirsty's partner at the time) came to live with me to help pull it back into order so that it could be sold, as although I tried, with the School and other commitments, every two steps I took forward, I slipped three backwards!

Once it was sold I was so immediately delighted to be living in the centre of things, to be able to walk to the city, to the Art Gallery, the cinema, the harbour, to the vitality of Ponsonby Road and all its restaurants. I enjoyed the noise of the city and moving to a town house with the proximity of neighbours. Especially as the square of town houses I am in, are built around a shared common.

/KL/: What or who helped you choose your current home?

/NC/: **Kirsty! She found it for me, as she knew that it was important to have somewhere to go as soon as Glenmore Road sold and Freemans Bay is such a good area. In fact I bought the town house from a great woman, who had done my course some years ago and gone on the Australian tour and was also a chef, so it dispersed good vibrations. The only times I really miss Glenmore Road are when the cherry trees and magnolias are in spring blossom and later the colour of the cherry trees and maples in the autumn. I do not miss the pool for all its beauty, the maintenance of it, and the cost became oppressive. However it had been a source of great pleasure for many years.**

Curious as to how Nanette's house and passions have imprinted themselves onto her daughter, Katie Lockhart asks Kirsty Cameron some questions.

/KL/: When you were growing up, what was your perception of Glenmore Road as a home? Were you aware that the interior was of Nanette's creating?

/KC/: **Glenmore Road, once the additions by Rex Mason and the landscaping by**

Harry Turbott were finished, was a home for the whole neighbourhood. That's how it felt as a kid. There was a palpable excitement about the house, not because we thought it was a 'show home', but because it loved and welcomed life and people, children and parties. It was an inclusive house and even though Nanette paid much heed to the day-to-day decorating of it, flowers and the like, the house was very robust and not precious. Absolutely not a china cabinet. There was a sense of playfulness. You could walk through the house straight out of the pool and it didn't matter if the quarry tiles or the cork floor got wet. Our Mikasa dinner set was constantly falling on the tiled surface but it also didn't matter.

The house suggested playfulness from top to toe. An attic designed as part of the addition provided an alternative for doll play and escape from boys, and also gave us instant access to the flat roof, superb for jumping off into the pool when we needed more excitement than the floating decks and bridge provided. The house wound itself around the garden, with doors leading out of every room, so games of hide and seek were long, exciting and often tense.


Harry Turbott designed an A-frame playhouse with two levels in it and the simple triangular shape evoked and became a tepee, a doll's house, a raft, a tent. Out the front of the house, to cut off the suburban development happening around us, he created mounds covered in aqua ground cover, planted with camellias and silver birch, with paths of cut bluestone running through them, perfect as islands in the middle of a sea, that you couldn't step off for fear of dragons and pirates. At night the silver birches were lit from below and the drama was heightened.

In the weekends and holidays we would spend the day in the pool, only getting out for lunch that Nanette would hand out through the kitchen window to

us. On Sundays it would often be cheese and pinwheel scones that she and I made together, and that a gang of us would wolf down at the big wooden table. Then we'd be back in the pool. At night we'd fall into bed exhausted.

The bathroom with its large glass window and brick wall checkered with gaps and covered in wisteria, tempted you as your curiosity grew, to spy on adults showering, and challenged the idea of the bathroom being a private space. Outside the bathroom was a concrete circle filled with white pebbles, that echoed the interior circle of the shower, and we would lie in it dressed up, and imagine we were being transported to other planets.

Nanette read books on modern mothering and she believed that you should climb trees, ride in trolleys and break your limbs as kids. I had two broken arms before the age of five. Nanette's teaching was etched within the house or grew out of the house and while nobody really used the word back then, there was an organic give and take between her life experience, her reading, her styling and teaching. So we were very aware of Nanette's work or perhaps better still, her passion.

 Glenmore Road became a mecca for our friends and Nanette's influence as a woman and a mother, definitely inspired my girl friends at a young age to think outside of the box. She made something else, something less conforming, seem possible.

We went to lots of house visits with her, stimulating houses, of which my favourite still is Tony Watkins' house in Karaka Bay. I remember it as a series of individual room/buildings where you had to go outside to reach another room, and they just seemed to belong there on the steep land. I've always longed to go back. We were models in photographs taken

by Rees Osborne for articles that Nanette wrote on bedrooms, or shag-pile carpet. Architects that Nanette admired were household names and models of room interiors would sit around at home, seeming evocatively like 'pop' dolls houses... I remember one I loved was complete with shiny bright yellow vinyl cushions. I made a project on Frank Lloyd Wright in primary school and cut up one of Nanette's best books. Nanette told us there was good taste and there was bad taste... yes, we were aware. Her passion was pervasive.

/KL/: Can you recall any particular times when the interior of the house might have been celebrated or that Nanette showed a sense of pride for what she had created?

/KC/: Every year the interior design classes would come to the house for an end of year party. Nanette and I would scrub and clean the whole house. The Christmas tree each year would be a new large branch carefully selected and painted either glossy white or orange and stood upright in a bucket of concrete, decorated with simple round balls and stars made of translucent beads—modernist decorations. The house tingling, doors open to the night, the pool lights on, everything perfect, a set piece... and the women would arrive with this sense of excitement.

A few weeks later our large extended family would come for Christmas Day, strip off tee-shirts and dive bomb straight into the pool with Nanette's Father, our beloved Grandfather Sandy Sumpter, presiding over the event in his Chinese smoking jacket. Inevitably he'd have a poem he'd concocted, plus a dollar, for each of his 26 grandchildren.

Nanette hosted some New Zealand Association of Interior Designers' parties and I remember late at night, a friend and I hiding under the table tennis table (which replaced the A-frame play hut) watching the guests have swimming races up and down the pool. The pool, dramatically lit

with underwater lighting, the music and the gaiety made adulthood seem sophisticated, naughty and exciting.

/KL/: After spending years living in the city you and your then partner Sue Hillery moved back to help Nanette get the house ready for sale, how did your relationship with the house change during this time?

/KC/: It was Sue's idea to move to Glenmore Road and she sold me on it. One of the reasons for her was because she loved the house and knew it really needed a lot of energy. She could also see that Nanette needed some energy too. Sue is an architect who also loves being hands on. Glenmore Road needed love.

I remember as a young child going to Karangahape Road in the middle of the night, on an adventure of Nanette's plotting, with family friends who owned a truck. The council was pulling up the old roadblocks so as to lay tar seal, and as they tore them up, we filled the truck. These became the courtyard outside the family room, and 30 years later when Sue and I moved to Glenmore Road, the blocks, being wooden, were pretty wrecked. In combination Sue and Andrew Greenslade re-laid the whole backyard, casting the edges in detailed cast in situ concrete.

The experience of the house as an adult was to take pleasure in the play of light; the luminosity of the quarry tiles, dawn reflected in the glossy ceiling of the old living room, the 40-year-old Japanese maples at dusk. As the house thrived again with another cycle of inhabitation, and the attention it was given, it made me understand fully that houses are live entities that respond to love and care.

To try to preserve the house in some way I shot a film there, a story that uses the house and its contents as a ready-made, a story which acknowledges the light, the relationship of the inside to the outside, and the life lived.

KATIE LOCKHART



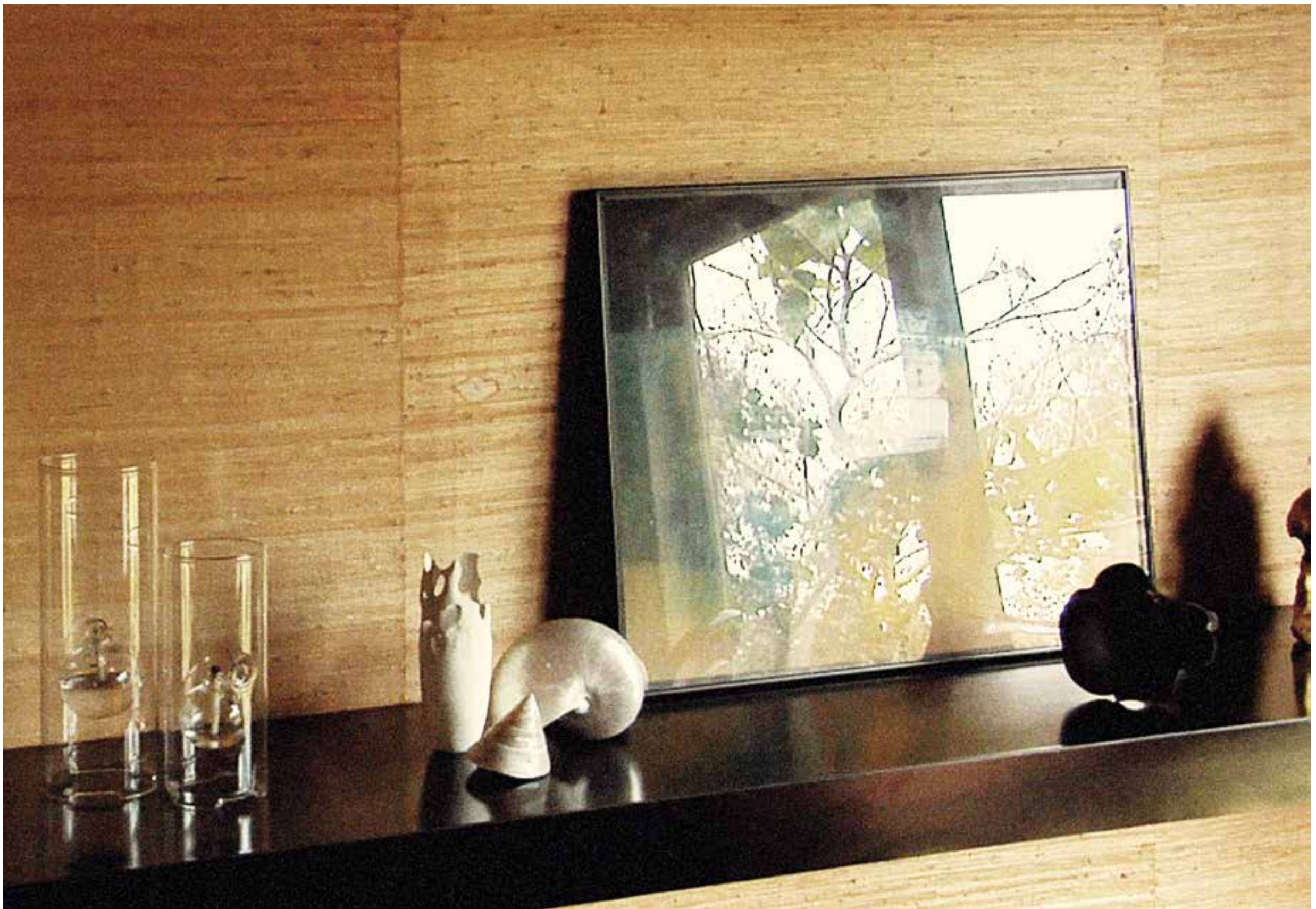
FIG. 23. *Projet de base*  
samitane no. 30, France  
1914. Watercolor on paper  
Les Arts Décoratifs, Paris, inv. no. 658



FIG. 24. *Composition abstraite diagonale*  
(*Abstract Diagonal Composition*) no. 1735,  
France, 1925. Gouache  
on paper. Private collection





























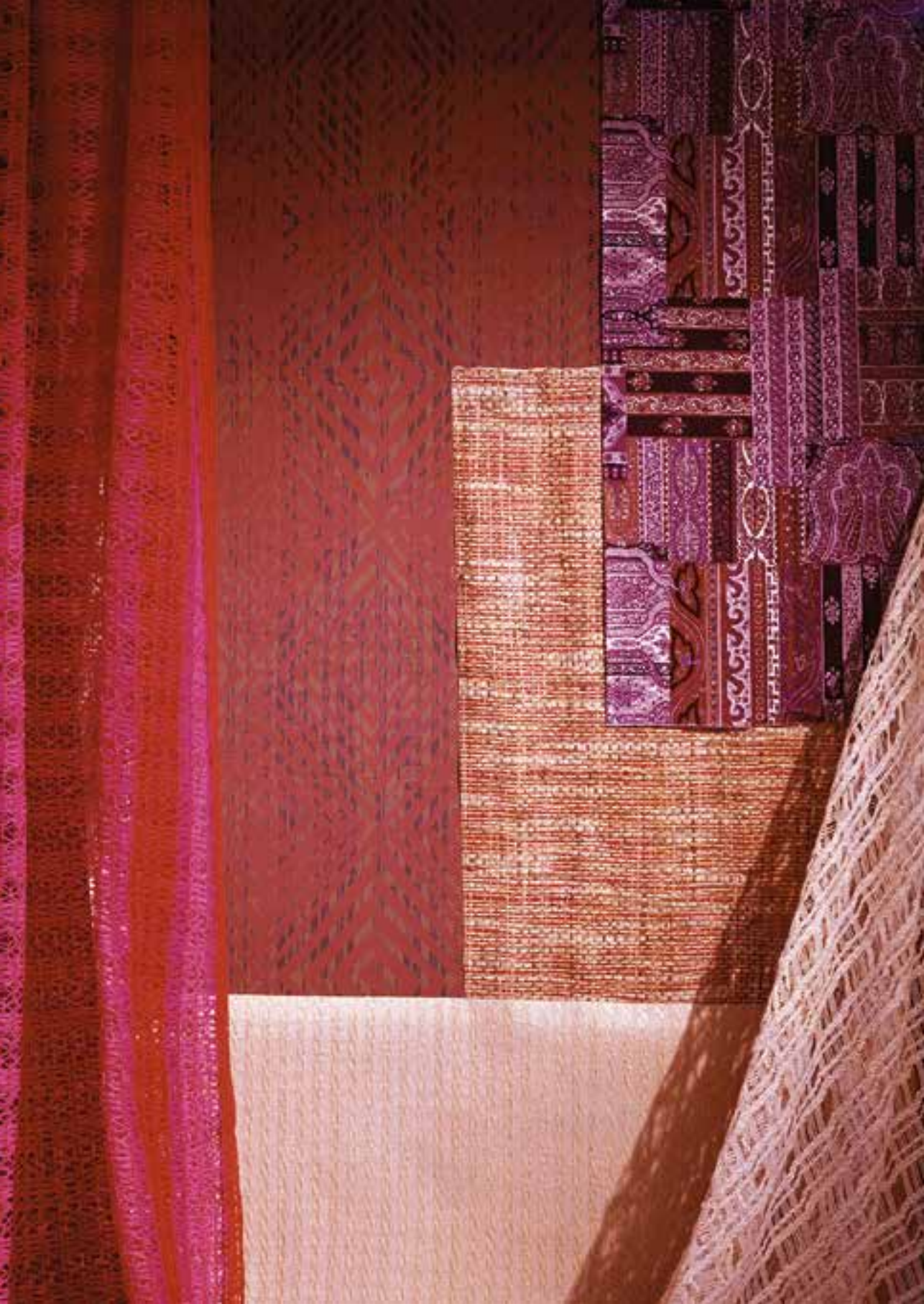



















Nanette Cameron

and the

Development of Interior Design

in New Zealand.

## Interior Dramaturgy

 On the 17th October 2012 I attended a class on textiles with Nanette Cameron at Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts in Pakuranga. The class began with each of the 15 students standing up and introducing themselves. Many women began by saying how many children they had and then stating why they had chosen to enrol in the course.

What followed was a lecture by Cameron (without any notes) that demonstrated her formidable skills as a design educator finely calibrated over 47 years. Textiles were discussed by setting two colourful design protagonists in relationship to one another: American Jim Thompson and Australian Florence Broadhurst. We were told that these two designers both died under mysterious circumstances. Under Cameron's direction a potentially didactic retelling of the history of textiles was thereby transformed into a murder mystery: a narrative in two parts that delineated in keen detail the lives of these two vibrant practitioners and their sorry fates.

Cameron's design research was comprehensive: mixing rich biographical detail with asides that focused upon innovations in technology, issues of social justice within the manufacturing industry and the influence of each designer's work beyond their own discipline. Cameron enumerated the connections Thompson had to Jackie Onassis and the novelist Somerset Maugham and demonstrated how the social, political and cultural milieu in which each designer worked influenced their practice, providing a life-size rendering of their practices in context. Any preconceptions that this course might attend to the history of different forms of interior decoration with little reference to broader contexts were summarily dismissed. We were told about Thompson's changing political affiliations

and advocacy for fair pay for local workers in Thailand's silk industry. We were also given a detailed inventory of his celebrated home and garden in Thailand that Cameron had visited on one of her many trips abroad in search of great design. With Broadhurst we followed her adventures as a dancer in Shanghai, a socialite in London and a celebrated designer in Australia. In 1977, on Cameron's first study tour with her students to Sydney, they visited Broadhurst's illustrious studio. Only a week later she was found dead, her murder still unsolved.

The remainder of the class was practice-based and focused upon identifying different types of textiles and their fitness for different purposes. A vast array of material samples were passed around the class and became tangible catalysts for discussion. As a homework exercise students were required to work in groups to curate a 'fibre table' that contained design research on a given fibre, including its composition, its means of manufacture, its uses and its history. They were encouraged to wear a piece of clothing made from the same material that had a personal resonance for them and tell the story to the class. This exercise invited students to reflect upon the significance of textiles within their own social and cultural contexts, thereby 'activating' history through the application of personal experience to the lecture content. The class demonstrated a student-centred approach to design teaching in line with current best practice teaching pedagogies. After interviewing alumni of the course it became clear that Cameron had been practicing in this way throughout her teaching career, which began in 1967.

Subject to the vagaries of fashion, many interior design fit-outs are ripped out while the architectural carcass remains. Interior design schemes are often less resilient than works of architecture. Many well-known interior design projects are often

recalled through storytelling rather than by photographic prompts (a quick scour of a broad array of architecture magazines will demonstrate that the rich interior life of many buildings tends to be edited out in favour of exterior elevations). Life-size accounts of the occupation of the interior often arise through narrative reconstructions. Cameron renders technicolour visions of frequently extinct interiors. She is a remarkable wordsmith, who captivates her audiences: in classrooms, through her writing for design publications and interior design guild newsletters, in speeches delivered at formal events and by way of informal conversations.

To experience this class was to experience design history in the making. Cameron is a storyteller par excellence, adept at weaving narratives together. By her storytelling she set up a series of critical connections between each designer and the broader network of relationships that sustain and inform their creative practices. In doing this she mirrors her own place in design history: as a pivotal synapse, who, through her teaching, writing and professional development activities, brings together a constellation of design advocates and practitioners who, together with Cameron, have transformed key areas of the New Zealand design, architecture and visual arts communities.

#### The 1960s: Hurdleys, Focus and the professionalisation of interior design

 Cameron has frequently mentioned how dynamic the local and international design climate was in the mid-1950s-1960s.

During this time she worked as an interior designer for Hurdleys in High Street, Auckland City with Derek Hurdley, David Bishop and Colin Martin, citing Bishop in particular as her mentor. She made visits to people's homes, predominantly in the Eastern

suburbs, for interior design consultations. The clientele tended to make conservative choices, limiting the use of the more flamboyant fabrics such as those produced by Marimekko, to children's bedrooms or kitchen spaces. Many rooms featured what became known as 'Remuera Green', a soft green that became ubiquitous with residential interiors found in this area. By contrast, a more contemporary approach to design was occurring in the inner city.

The High Street precinct was the core of the fashion and design industry at this time. A business that was establishing new ground was Focus, an interior design showroom opened in 1968 by John Hughes, Irene Oelsner (a German émigré and graduate of the Bauhaus), and Don Sharp, located on the third level of 246 on Queen Street. Interior designer John Hughes of Martin Hughes comments:

"We set up an interior design company that really broke entirely new ground for New Zealand and that was that. It was an interesting and eclectic mix and that word is often misunderstood but it was... a mix of classic 20th century furniture, some classic antiques of varying sorts, not only English but Chinese and French and European in general and then modern contemporary furniture of that sixties era, both furniture and textiles and wallpapers and so on, some of which was New Zealand produced: hand-printed wallpapers by Bill Mason, screenprinted textiles by Beth and Tony Fox and furniture by Peder Hansen, Irene Oelsner, Don Sharp, Roger Staples and Terry Gill... Focus had an amalgam of ideas happening and even now I still run into people and when they discover that I was involved in Focus they tell me that they used to make pilgrimages there... people went because it was different and very interesting and stimulating and challenging."

Hughes first met Cameron when she interviewed him for an article about the new store for *Eve Magazine*. See image pg.118.

She had begun writing about design and architecture for national magazines. Her articles have appeared in *New Zealand Woman and Stitch*, *The New Zealand Home Journal*, *Thursday Magazine*, *Eve*, and *Cuisine*. Hughes comments:

"We originally met at Focus... She did write a very interesting article... and it contained photographs of Focus really encapsulating its very different approach... I remember it quite clearly. There was a Saarinen table and some Georgian chairs which were William IV... slightly decorative back, and a Sekers plaid fabric in hot pink and orange on the seat and there were people whose jaws visibly dropped when they saw it, it was such an outrageous thing to do... and on the table were two simple speckled green melons and on the wall was a Roy Goode painting and a work on paper by Robert Ellis because we also combined contemporary art—we'd been promoting New Zealand art since 1968 and that was under the influence of Roger Staples who was working with us at that stage."

The description of this room setting, styled by Hughes, demonstrates how each object, piece of furniture and artwork had been carefully curated to show that interior design should be considered as part of a historical continuum, where you look to the past and into the present in order to assemble and artfully arrange expressive interior environments. This care and attention towards positioning interior elements of diverse provenance points to a richness of interior experience that does not require a wholesale abandonment of the past in favour of the contemporary. Hughes' approach reminds one of Cameron's approach to design education. The *mise en scene* he constructed to sit alongside Cameron's review of *Focus*, seems to embody Cameron's own design ethos: to educate individuals on how to utilise a knowledge of design history and contemporary design practices in context

to create rich and variegated interiors fit for particular, unique situations. This position acts as a counter to a one size fits all model that might be seen to be favoured by some contemporary design publications. Hughes identified Cameron's deep understanding of design history:

"Nanette's interest in educating people about interior design really did have a very solid basis of underlying theory and belief and worked really well to help those people really understand what was going on in many ways... there weren't many people who understood the Japanese philosophy of Shibui... but Nanette did and my business partner Colin Martin was another person that did, hopefully I did but not many would have referred to that at that time but Nanette had a very broad aspect on interiors. It wasn't just whatever the latest little thing might be...given that magazines have to sell a new issue every month you know they had to keep the story changing but often in doing that the continuing chain of theory gets lost and people lurch from one moment of excitement to another."

A number of contemporary New Zealand design publications approach the interior and its attributes in a strategic manner. Many homes are 'staged' with pieces of contemporary design sourced from international furniture suppliers, promoting a 21st century version of an international style, an ideal home for living. This restaging of interior experience edits out the particular and idiosyncratic. Cameron's course offers an antidote to this ubiquitous approach to interior experience. Classes require students to make their own, informed assessments of elements of interior design and integrate these into their own environments based upon what they and their families require.

In addition to providing a historical context for interior design, Cameron's course introduces models and principles of design including colour theory, principles of proportion, contrast and rhythm and their

**relationship to interior design. Modules in the course such as the *The Creative Kitchen* and *The Concept of Lighting* signal a move away from primarily utilitarian concerns and design principals to a more experimental and conceptual appraisal of domestic spaces and the material and ephemeral effects that can be created within them.**

**Cameron was to become one of the first members of a professional body set up to advocate for interior design professionals. Hughes observes that in the late 1960s:** “There were other people doing interesting contemporary things and ...people doing classic traditional things: Lois Manchester and Nigel and Gavin of Rees interiors... There was a moment when we all realised we needed a group to speak about us and on our behalf...so it was decided that we would form the New Zealand Association of Interior Designers (NZAID) and that meeting was at Focus at 246 and Nanette was part of that... It was decided that we would go ahead and form that as an incorporated society to look after the interests and promote the profession of interior designers... Then later the industrial designers, the interior designers and the graphic designers all melded and became the Designers Institute.”


**In 1968, not long after the establishment of this professional organisation, Auckland Technical Institute (ATI), now known as Auckland University of Technology (AUT) invited Hughes, Manchester and architect Professor Allan Wild to be part of a committee who would establish the syllabus for the first three year degree programme in interior design in New Zealand.**

**Cameron is a pioneer in her field, establishing her part-time interior design course at Tamaki College in 1967, six years before a formal, degree award had been ratified. Alaine Ingle, course manager and senior tutor at the Nanette Cameron School of Interior Design identifies the context in which the course emerged:**

“Prior to what the universities and polytechnics are offering today, there was generally no formal education (particularly for women) in interior design before the seventies in New Zealand. She could see a great yawning gap for those wanting to learn more about Arts, Design and Culture and she took the courageous step to fulfill this role.”

**Cameron’s students were women who wanted to learn more about design and apply this learning to the interior design of their own homes and gain a broader knowledge of design and architecture in context that could be utilised when they travelled. There was apprehension by some husbands that the course would change their wives. It did.**

#### **Empowering Women in ‘Vim Valley’**

 **ameron’s approach to interior design education seeks to make the personal political. Through lectures, group discussions and field research, she seeks to expand each student’s understanding of what constitutes interior design as a discipline, identifying its relationship to a broad array of social and cultural contexts far beyond the two-dimensional allure of the mood board and paint fan. A personal position on interior design begins to emerge as students apply the knowledge gained in Cameron’s classes to their own specific environments and also further afield.**

**Indeed this is how Cameron wanted the course to operate. Cameron has said that she “had a conscious feeling that I wanted to empower these women.”**When she began teaching in the late 1960s domestic interiors were the primary locus of female production and consumption. The Pakuranga suburb of Auckland gained the moniker ‘Vim Valley’ around this time. The term evokes a sense of quiet desperation: streets full of manicured

**homes, gardens and interiors abraded within an inch of life. The term suggests the excruciating ennui and exhaustion of the bored housewife. Many middle-class women were raising families and did not participate in the workforce. Cameron’s classes provided such women an opportunity to focus upon themselves for a few short hours a week. Women, defined primarily as wives and mothers elected to engage in a design education that was transformative: having an impact on both the individuals that completed it, their husbands and children, and later the wider design, architecture and visual arts communities. Respected interior designer Penny Vernon enrolled in Cameron’s night class at Tamaki College in 1970 and after completing the course worked as Cameron’s teaching assistant for four years. Vernon comments:**

“She opened a door to a new world and I could not get enough of her inspiration. Suddenly I met someone who knew that colour was more important no matter how small the object... she gave me the confidence to start a business 30 years ago... If I had not met Nanette my life would have taken a totally different road and her humility and kindness are two things that stick in my mind.”

**Brenda Higgins, a graduate of Cameron’s course from the early 1980s and president of The Nanette Cameron Interior Design Guild (NCIDG) Committee comments:**

“Every week we couldn’t wait to get there. It was never about what sort of couch to have in a room, it was more about where the house faces, the values of each colour, the scale of the room. We made our own colour wheels so for some of us that was the first opportunity of experiencing colour like that...you can see all the different shades...the value, the depth of colour. It was all hands on stuff. Back then there were very few magazines in New Zealand so if you wanted to know anything you had to go and do this class.”

**Cameron’s teaching practice advocated the use of sustainable design principles in the planning and occupation of the domestic interior in the early 1980s, at a time when such matters were seldom discussed. Higgins observes that for a student project in a kitchen design module of the course “One member of the group was asked to research waste disposals. Nanette was then talking about ecological things and everyone got a real surprise on the day that the student (schooled by Nanette in advance) explored all the different environmentally sound products around conservation.”**

**Ingle believes Cameron’s greatest influence has been “to empower and instill in people (women in particular) her great love of design and have them confidently go out into the world to make a difference to their own and other people’s lives, that has good design impact the way they live, work and play.”**

#### **Structure of the Course**

**The Nanette Cameron School of Interior Design now has over 4,000 graduates. Students enrol in the course to gain a greater understanding of interior design and how this can be applied to their own domestic contexts. The School offers a two-year part time course, with an optional third year. Course contact hours are 2.5 hours a week, plus homework exercises. The first year of the course (Stage One) comprises four modules delivered over four terms. Each module has a clear aim, detailed learning outcomes, course content, and assessments. Modules include *An intensive study of Colour, The other Art Elements*, including line, form, light and space and art principles, and two modules titled *Consideration of the psychological and practical requirements of specific spaces*. The second year of the course (Stage Two) offers four modules**

including *The Concept of Lighting, The History of Design and Furniture, The Creative Kitchen, and The Wonderful World of Textiles*. An optional third year has a focus on field research, including visits to showrooms, factories and studios, often including a talk by an architect or designer. Students who have completed Stage One and enrolled in Stage Two are eligible to attend an interior design tour of Australia organised by Cameron.

### The Nanette Cameron Interior Design Guild and Professional Development

The knowledge gained in Cameron's course is developed and extended upon after graduation through voluntary membership of the Nanette Cameron Interior Design Guild (NCIDG)<sup>-1</sup>. This alumni, currently with 380 members, is actively engaged in a broad array of professional development activities. The Guild is managed by a formidable committee of women who meet regularly to plan events. Many women, such as Dianne Barron, Brenda Higgins and Dale Gamble have been members of the committee for over 30 years, a testament to their commitment to Cameron and her relentless advocacy for and promotion of contemporary design, architecture and fine art within Australasia. Two generations of graduates have sat on the committee: Robin Wylie and her daughter Kim Hamilton. Many other daughters and daughters-in law of alumni have completed the course.

The funds accrued from the entry fees to these events are invested in interior design scholarships at Unitec. In 1991 the NCIDG scholarship was established, providing funds to exemplary students in their final year of study to assist with course costs. Cameron, with the support of the Guild is committed to giving back

to the design community through the ongoing support of the tertiary sector in this way, supporting a programme that offers a formal, degree level qualification in interior design. By doing this she also acknowledges the necessity for formal training within the discipline, recognising and celebrating the diverse ways in which an interior design education (whether formally achieved or studied in a part-time capacity) can transform its graduates. Past recipients of the Unitec scholarships have gone on to work for well-established designers such as Jamie Durie in Australia, David Howell in New York, and Wingate and Farquhar in Auckland.

The Guild also raises significant funds for civic projects, recently funding elements of the interior of Shigeru Ban's Cardboard Cathedral in Christchurch. Through its close association with The Pakuranga Community and Cultural Centre, later known as the Iris Fisher Gallery and now known as Te Tuhi, the Guild has provided funds to support exhibition programmes at the gallery. These exhibitions were *The History of the Chair* (1984), *Fabric Sandwich* (1986) which exhibited the work of celebrated quilt maker Malcolm Harrison, *The Folding Image* (1985)<sup>-2</sup>, *The Folding Image II* (1987)<sup>-3</sup> where the Guild supplied artists with screens to paint upon, *Gate, Door, Lintel* (1989)<sup>-4</sup>, *The Letterbox Show* (1991)<sup>-5</sup>, *Tablecloth* (1991)<sup>-6</sup>, *Dinner Service* (1993)<sup>-7</sup>, an exhibition in collaboration with Studio Ceramics, *The Wallpaper Show* (1994)<sup>-8</sup>, and *Floored* (c.1996), an exhibition of rugs designed by artists in collaboration with Dilana Rugs. In 1999, the Guild sponsored *Light Labyrinth Project* (1999), an exhibition at Te Tuhi by architectural graduate Melanie Yonge. The opportunity to exhibit such an ambitious work assisted Yonge in developing a career as an architectural colour consultant and interior designer, who is now working for ISIS COLOUR in Paris.

### Study Tours

Since 1977 Cameron, with the assistance of Bev Smaill, long-standing Guild member and tireless supporter of the Pakuranga Community and Cultural Centre (in all its iterations) have been organising study tours to Sydney and Melbourne to visit interior design and architecture projects of note. In the late 1970s there were no New Zealand magazines devoted to design so access to information about the latest developments was limited to a few imported offerings such as the Australian publication *Belle*. Given this paucity of information Cameron decided to be proactive and organise trips to see first hand the contemporary design work and architecture being produced in Australia. In the early years some husbands needed to be persuaded to let their wives participate. Higgins comments: "Back then it wasn't usual for women to leave their husbands with the family while Mum went away. If they went away they would go away with their husbands... From the beginning of the first year she would tell them there was going to be this trip at the end of the year and that they owed it to themselves to think about it and do it and you know men go away and women should be able to go away as well because she is very much into making women their own people."

Many Guild members who have been interviewed mention the inordinate pains Cameron goes to in selecting 'room mates' for the study tours to ensure everyone has the best experience possible. For example Sarah Sheild and Annabel Taylor met this way: "We credit Nanette for pairing us up as room-mates for the 2008 Australia Trip—The result being that Paper Room was born." A look at the recent Melbourne-Sydney itinerary in October 2012 is impressive and exhaustive, demonstrating Cameron's vast professional networks in the Australian design community. High-

/1 / The Guild was established by Paddy Naismith, Barbara Brown and Pamela James.

/2 / *The Folding Image* (1985) with works by Denys Watkins, Greer Twiss, Sylvia Siddell, Ingrid Banwell, Paul Radford, Robert Ellis, Carole Shepherd, Pat Hanly, Pamela Wolfe, Graham Snowden, Dick Frizzell, Don Binney, Carol Davis, Ralph Hotere, Stanley Palmer, Jane Zusters.

/3 / *The Folding Image II* (1987) with works by Robert Ellis, Jane Zusters, John Reynolds, Gavin Chilcott, Dick Frizzell, Murray Grimsdale, Malcolm Harrison, Greer Twiss, Colin McCahon, Terry Stringer, Jeff Thompson, Denys Watkins, Pauline Thompson, Mary McIntyre, Claudia Pond-Eyley, Murray Grimsdale, Victoria Edwards.

/4 / Artists in Gate, Door, Lintel, included Para Matchitt, Pat Hanly, Diana Firth, Chris Booth, Don Driver, Michael Hight, Jeff Thompson, Paul Rayner, Graeme Lane, Christine Hellyar, Charlotte Fisher, Biz Dempster, Bronwynne Cornish, Dick Frizzell, Peter Rogers, Anthony Morris, Kura Rewiri Thorsen, Andrew Drummond, Warren Viscoe.

/5 / Artists in Letterbox included Malcolm Taylor, Mal Bartleet, Malcolm Walker, Gary Hunt, Malcolm Harrison, Jeff Thompson, Bill McKay, Sarah McKenney, Warren Viscoe, Andrew Bull, Rewi Thompson, Phillipa Blair, Charlotte Fisher, Jane Greensmith, Joanna Klein, Calvin Collins, Jane Zusters, Pete Bossley, Peter Rogers, Neil Kirkland, Humphry Ikin, Michael Fisher, Richard Priest, Valeska Campion, Pip Cheshire, John Papas, John Reynolds, Gavin Chilcott, Rick Pearson, John Hughes, Rudi Schwarz, Todd Strathdee, Donna Hoyle.

/6 / Artists in Tablecloth included Terry Stringer, Claudia Pond-Eyley, Rodney Fumpston, Jenny Dolezel, Paul Radford, Murray Grimsdale, Barry Lett, John Papas, Carole Shephard, Dick Frizzell.

/7 / Artists in Dinner Service included Richard McWhannell, Phillipa Blair, Denys Watkins, Fiona Pardington, Luise Fong, Dennis O'Connor, Paul Hartigan, John Reynolds, Terry Stringer, Judy Millar, Dick Frizzell, Gavin Chilcott and Ralph Paine, Rick Pearson, Carole Shephard, Jane Zusters, Phillipa Blair, Malcolm Harrison.

/8 / Artists in Wallpaper included Jane Zusters, Gavin Chilcott and Ralph Paine, Richard Reddaway, Terry Stringer, Ani O'Neill, Jenny Dolezel, Belinda Ellis and Kate Upton, Dick Frizzell, Anna Miles, Andrew Douglas.

**lights in Melbourne include visits (including floor talks) to design showrooms such as The Hub, Anibou, Galerie Moderne and Fenton and Fenton, and a visit to the award winning *Cloud House* (2012) by architecture firm MCR (McBride, Charles, Ryan). Cameron had previously taken students to visit MCR's Klein Bottle House (2008), winner of world's best house in the World Architecture Festival, 2009. Other visits included domestic interior design projects by celebrated Australian interior designer Paul Hecker of Hecker Guthrie Architects, with whom Cameron has a longstanding professional association. Embedded in the itinerary are visits to contemporary arts centres including Heide Museum of Modern Art in Bulleen, Victoria, and hospitality venues with laudable design attributes such as Shannon Bennett's *Vue De Monde* (2011), designed by Elenberg Fraser Architects. In Sydney, highlights included visits to The Research House (2005) by John Henry Architects, a visit to Signature Prints, who hand-screen-print Florence Broadhurst wallpapers and textiles, tours of the Roslyn Street Bar and Bistro (2009) by Durback Block Jaggers Architects with a talk by architect Neil Durback, and a visit to the celebrated Rose Seidler House (1948-50) designed by Austrian émigré Harry Seidler for his parents. Further highlights include visits to the award winning *Skylight House* (2011) by Chen Chow Little Architects, *Watmore House* (2012) by Scott Weston Architecture Design, a standing appointment to visit Seidler and Associates offices, and architect Jon Jacka's award winning *Parallel House* (2012). Architect Scott Weston, who has a well-established professional relationship with Cameron, gives his first impressions of her:**

"My first introduction to Nanette was in 1995 and I had just won a design award for Capricorn Childcare Centre (1995) in Sydney. I received a call that a New Zealand

tour group headed by Nanette Cameron would like to have a tour of the project. A tour de force breezed in clad head to toe in designer black with quirky accessories and I was instantly smitten by her exuberance, knowledge and passion for architecture and design. Nanette also complimented me on a tie I was wearing and later that day a tie was purchased and taken back to New Zealand for a friend... I was invited over to Auckland not long after my project *Medusa Hotel* (1998) in Darlinghurst to give a slideshow presentation of my work and every year since then Nanette has made that trip with a Pied Piper trail of students left in her wake all eager to listen and learn from a woman who understands the subtlety and complexity of good design."

**Through Cameron, Weston was also introduced to a client who commissioned him to design a bach at Langs Beach, Whangarei. Sydney-based architect Stephen Varaday regularly participates in Cameron's study tours. He writes about his introduction to her:**

"Nanette contacted me in 1993 after one of my projects was published in *Vogue Living*. It was an inventive renovation of a 40 square metre one-bedroom apartment in Sydney city. I learned that Nanette ran her own interior design school and she would bring groups of her students to Australia once a year for a visit to see as many of the newest and latest projects, products, or works of art that Nanette could find. I was impressed by Nanette's depth and breadth of knowledge and amazed by her incredible enthusiasm. Nanette already knew so much, but she was inquisitive and insatiable when it came to knowing more about architecture, design, art and pretty much all creative endeavours. Over the years Nanette and her group came and visited many of my projects. One year I didn't have a project to visit so the group came to my warehouse studio and I gave a lecture on

my work. My sister, Marika Varady, has her painting studio in the same warehouse and some members of the group bought paintings to take home with them... Nanette has been a tireless advocate for good design in all areas. She has taught many about the importance of good design through basic principles and through exposure to the best examples from all around the world... Nanette exposed her students to the best ideas and examples of interior design and architecture that she possibly could. By organising these tours to Australia she gave her students the opportunity to see and do things they generally would not have been able to do on their own."

**Cameron's impact in a New Zealand context: The production of educated consumers and producers of design, architecture and fine art**

**In addition to pursuing their own projects, many of Cameron's graduates have the design knowledge and resources to become patrons of architecture, design and the visual arts. Knowledge gained in Cameron's classes and the professional development activities of the Guild enable these women to be able to make informed choices about how they and their families would like to live. This in turn makes them articulate clients who can supply architects with detailed briefs about what they require.**

**Some architects have difficult relationships with interior designers. Anxieties arise about despoiling the integrity of the architecture through what may be deemed extraneous or inappropriate occupations of the interior through the introduction of additional colour, pattern, texture and fine art to the architectural object, an object that might be construed as a replete work of art in itself. Cameron's design students are well versed**

**in how to write their own design briefs, articulating what they and their families require from a work of architecture. These design briefs emerge from a course that gives weight and emphasis to interior concerns over architectural matters. This give graduates an opportunity to assist in the making of architecture that arises from a consideration of interior concerns: concerns framed and theorised by Cameron. This marks a significant contribution to the shaping of contemporary architecture within a New Zealand context.**

**An enquiring and challenging client makes for better architecture. As Pip Cheshire, principal of Cheshire Architects observes, "Clients... always get the house they deserve."<sup>9</sup> The architectural community testifies to Cameron's sustained influence. Cheshire benefitted from Cameron's advocacy early in his career, gaining commissions based on her recommendations. He comments:**

"Nanette has fostered a great interest in design generally, be it architectural, object based, materials, colours and spatial. She has promoted an open enquiring interest in design of all types and sought to free her students from dogma or the pursuit of the known, the familiar and the dull. She has also 'trained' a large number of great clients who, by and large, are knowledgeable, open and interesting."

**Pete Bossley of Bossley Architects also acknowledges Cameron's impact on the interior design and architectural communities:**

"Nanette has raised the awareness of, interest in, and professionalism of interior design in New Zealand more than any other person. Her tireless enthusiasm has inspired countless students, as have her regular overseas study tours with groups of interested people... Nanette has tutored a phenomenal number of students, and the really significant aspect of this is that many of them have been mature students who did not necessar-

ily intend to become designers themselves, but as a result of their raised level of knowledge they have become far more discerning clients when they engage architects and interior designers.”

**Architect Malcolm Taylor of Xsite Architects, has been supported by Cameron in a professional context:**

“Personally I have enjoyed many client referrals, the opportunity to share my work in the public arena of Te Tuhi and for the students to visit my home/office. Many productive and inspiring outcomes have come out of the collaboration with Design Guild members. In general they have been a more assertive and inclusive client, many of which have become long term friends and also (provided) the opportunity to strengthen that relationship with repeat projects. This type of client possibly stems from their own serious interest in design. I feel it is due to the way in which Nanette has described the necessity for the clients to also step up to the plate and be more involved in the creative process of creating good homes.”

**Many of Cameron’s graduates productively shape the New Zealand design and art industries from the inside out. Some students want a change of career focus and use the course as a means of gaining entry-level positions in the interior design industry, working in support roles in professional practice: in furniture stores, fabric houses, and art galleries. Graduates have gone on to establish successful careers as interior designers and kitchen designers. Others have set up businesses that supply the interior design industry.**

**Situated within Te Tuhi, Cameron ensures all her students are exposed to contemporary art at the galleries that adjoin her classrooms by integrating visits to the exhibitions into the course structure. As a result, many graduates have gone on to become docents at the gallery and also enrol**

in Lois Perry’s classes on Contemporary art. By doing this, Higgins observes, she is “kindling another interest along the way.”

At Cameron’s suggestion many people within the classes set up art collectives and many have been in operation for decades, such as the Stichbury Group, which has been established for 20 years and began by collecting three-dimensional art, extending the collection into other media including photography. Smaill observes that the exhibitions sponsored by the interior design guild at the gallery “not only brought in much needed funds for the Gallery, but the Guild exhibitions motivated large numbers of students to commence collecting art. The Guild sponsored design exhibitions were an excellent introduction, essentially they made art more accessible to everyone.”

Cameron’s writing

**I**n tandem with her design teaching Cameron has established herself as an erudite commentator on design and architecture in the popular press. Smaill first encountered Cameron through her writing: “In the late 1970s I read a magazine article that Nanette had written about an apartment on Auckland’s waterfront. Nanette’s description of the apartment was quite magical. I felt compelled to find out more about her and subsequently enrolled in her design class, so you could say that I was seduced by her writing.” In discussions with many Guild members it became clear that Cameron goes to extraordinary lengths to share her design knowledge and enumerate her many adventures abroad in search of the most innovative, contemporary design practices. She writes long into the evenings after days jam-packed with house visits to ensure she records her observations in as much detail as possible. The vast number of NCIDG newsletters bear witness to Cameron’s commitment to disseminating

her design research and experience to her graduates. She often provides commentary about how national decisions with regard to architecture, design and the economy impact upon local communities (her Guild members and others). She also delights in celebrating the achievements of her alumni. Her ruminations demonstrate how design and art can become critical vehicles for expanding fields of social, cultural, historical and political knowledge.

Conclusion

As a field of study and practice interior design may be considered as a part of a constellation: one that creates relationships between different forms of cultural production. Interior design theorist Lois Weinthal acknowledges that interior design has an interdisciplinary nature: it is a dialogue “formed by architecture, art, fashion, film, engineering, history, literature, photography, philosophy, product design, and textiles.”<sup>10</sup>

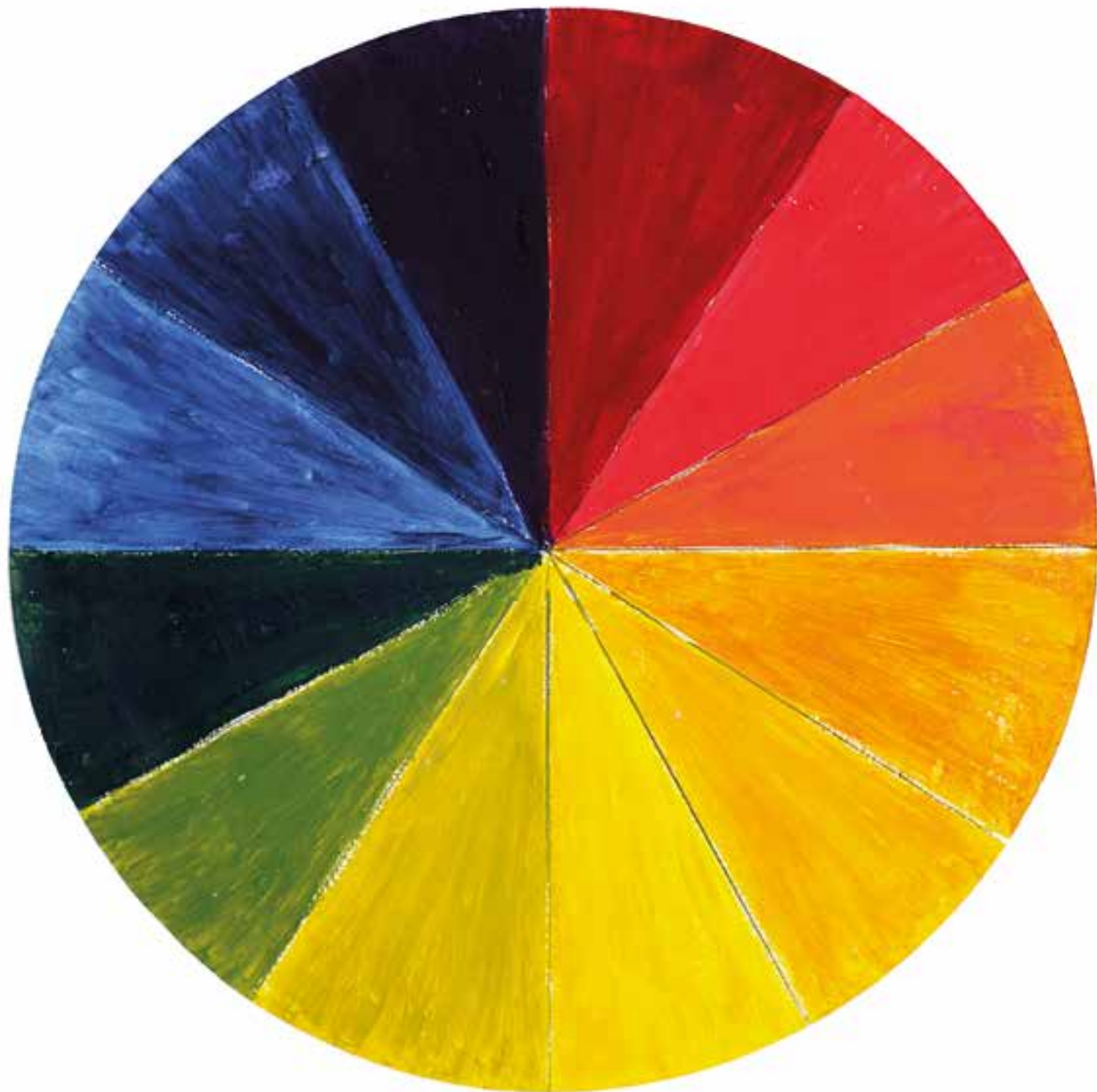
Cameron is an interior design educator, writer, mentor and advocate for design, architecture and fine art within an Australasian context. Her contribution to a constellation of creative practices over a 47 plus year career is substantial. Through her engagement with a wide array of design and visual art activities she has expanded the fields of interior design practice and criticism, acknowledging good design emerges from an understanding of contextual matters beyond ‘surface treatments’ of subject matter. To achieve this level of success primarily through the establishment and delivery of a part-time course is extraordinary. Her thousands of graduates have helped to shape and support New Zealand design and visual art communities, and supported students as they complete professional qualifications in the interior design discipline.

RACHEL CARLEY

/9 / Pip Cheshire quoted in Nanette Cameron “Vernon House: Mondrian in Ponsonby,” Cuisine Issue 3, 1987, p.96.

/10 / Lois Weinthal (ed.), *Toward a New Interior: An Anthology of Interior Design Theory*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2011, p.11-12.





**Blue Room.**

**The Blue Room was created for Object-space by Nanette Cameron and Katie Lockhart as a contemporary homage to her widely admired Glenmore Road dining room. Nanette Cameron discusses her choices for The Blue Room.**

**Yves Klein Blue**

I first encountered the work of artist Yves Klein on a summer visit to my sister in Australia. At the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney there was a major exhibition of his paintings, largely blue, some intensely blue, a colour he patented. While the exhibition was on, the nearby Opera House was bathed in deep blue light at night, a very surreal effect. My next encounter with his blue was when I saw his Table Bleue, a glass table with a thick layer of Klein blue powdered pigment between the sheets of glass. I coveted it but it was wildly beyond my budget. Drikolor have obtained a license to reproduce this brilliant colour as a paint. Now is my opportunity to indulge in the colour.

**Treetops Lamp by Ettore Sotsass**

In 1981 Memphis made a dramatic entrance onto the design world stage when it first appeared at the great Salon de Mobile (Furniture Fair) in Milan in 1981. It was so different so colourful, full of pattern, fun and just a little crazy, that it caused an upheaval of conventional design. You loved it or you hated it. Ettore Sotsass was the guru of Memphis and with other architects and designers—who were of all of the same belief that something had to change—they entered their work in a combined show. Ettore Sotsass designed a number of lights, among them Treetops. I was personally excited about Memphis but I realise that it is maybe hard for someone who did not experience it, to fully appreciate its power at the time. It was lucky that the Treetops lamp in this show was able to be sourced from Art and Industry, because Memphis objects are rare in New Zealand and today command very high prices overseas.

**E1027 Table by Eileen Gray**

Eileen Gray was the first woman to make a strong presence on the design scene, and being a promoter of women I was excited to learn about her. An Irish woman who spent most of her life in Paris, she led a life outside the conventional. This table, designed for the modern house Eileen designed and built for herself in the South of France, is classic, simple, versatile, perfectly proportioned and beautiful; a true design icon. Made of polished chrome and glass it can be easily altered in height. It can take its place in rooms of any period or style. In my own home it brings me great joy.

**Savoy Vase by Alvar Aalto**

This beautiful vase, designed by the Finnish architect, Alvar Aalto, was shown at the Paris 1937 World Fair and has been internationally acclaimed since then. Inspired by forms found in the Finnish countryside its lyrical, curving shape is achieved with a skilled mixture of glass blowing and wood molding techniques. My first vase was given to me, as a thank you gift on an early Australian Interior Design Tour. The vases are equally lovely as an object standing alone, when holding flowers or a few simply shaped fruit. It enhances any object placed in it.

**Painting by Dennis Knight Turner**

I bought this painting from New Vision Gallery in His Majesty's Arcade, obviously before the Arcade and adjoining Brown's Mill were bulldozed down. James Peters had bought the gallery from its instigator artist Theo Schoon. Turner's painting had appeal in its naivety and unframed state. The soft powdery colours I responded to and as it was an early acquisition, the reasonable price also had appeal. Dennis Knight Turner was one of the earliest artists to blend Maori and Oceanic influences. Sometimes the work has hung on a wall, sometimes propped up on a shelf among books and ceramics but it has always been there for me to enjoy.

### Artwork by Josh Blackwell

My taste in art is eclectic and mostly I own New Zealand work. Josh is an American artist. Katie Lockhart, my collaborator for this room showed me Josh's work. It appealed to me for its colour and its apparent light heartedness but underlying that, its important message. It is made of found plastic and wooden threads. I am an ardent environmentalist, with deep concerns for the planet we are fast desecrating, so to make something beautiful out of a discarded plastic bag, often thought of only as a receptacle for dog discs, created an immediate response in me.

### Hex Pendant Light by Resident

This very elegant and different pendant light was designed by Simon James and Scott Bridgens under the banner of their company, Resident. It was a new addition to their range when I visited Simon James Design earlier this year with the Stage III class. We all admired it, and were so pleased when it won the Home Design Competition for 2013. Its genesis was that Simon and Scott wanted to find an innovative way to use an LED lamp. They started with the linear form, cutting up the strip and making it turn corners. They decided on a hexagonal shape after discussion and experimentation, a universal shape and frequently found in nature and one that would resonate with people. They used a diffuser to stop the spotting that goes with LED tube, wanting a warm consistent light. Knowing that the support had to be in the background they searched the world for the thinnest cable. These almost disappear.

### Postmundus Chairs by Martino Gamper

At the round black contemporary table in the dining room at my old home Glenmore Road, I had used traditional cafe style Bentwood chairs with both wood and cane lacquered black. Thinking about what I would use today I was undecided. What was new and exciting in a dining chair? Katie Lockhart showed me a chair designed by Martino Gamper, an Ital-

ian designer and husband of the New Zealand artist, Francis Upritchard. Martino has taken an interest in reworking furniture that has been dumped in the street. He gave himself an enormous challenge to design *100 chairs in 100 days* and these were shown in a large old mid-Victorian house in London. The Postmundus chair is a reinterpretation of the Thonet Bentwood chair and was presented at The Milan Furniture Fair in 2012. Five beech wood branches are curved, three of which are layered forming the back while two serve as the legs. The bentwood legs mirror the back rest to unify the design. When I saw them I thought immediately that they would be perfect, a potent link from the past but bringing a new concept of the classic.

### Custom Made Table with Surface Pattern Referencing Sonia Delaunay's Work

Sonia Delaunay has been an inspiration to me, particularly for her mastery of colour combined with bold geometric pattern. An artist, with a mixed Russian, Jewish and French heritage, she led a childhood of mixed parenting, a great deal of it in the beautiful tragic city of St Petersburg. She married Richard Delaunay, also an artist and their marriage was a happy blending of heart and spirit. Sonia's paintings were rich and colourful; her fashion design was avant-garde for the time and is very proudly wearable today. *Vogue Magazine* in 1925 dedicated a large section to her distinctive fashion designs. There is a memorable full-page photograph of her wearing a bold check coat standing beside a Citroen car painted in matching checks. Sergei Diaghilev asked her to design costumes for Cleopatra to be performed by the famed Ballet Russe, a great accolade. Much later fashion designers have held her up as their icon of design. The striking design on the tabletop is taken from a block printed silk crepe de chine fabric designed by Delaunay in 1927, now in Musee des Arts Decoratifs in Paris.

NANETTE CAMERON













I was born on a wintery evening in Invercargill in the family home, the first child of seven, to my parents, Mary and Howard, on 27 September in 1927, a date full of threes and nines. We moved to Auckland when I was ten. As the family had grown to six, with one more on the way, we could not all fit in the car. My two close sisters and I had a year boarding at a convent, Teschemakers. I really enjoyed the year there although my youngest sister, only five, found it more disruptive. Our grandparents were close, in Oamaru, for school holidays.

We had a happy childhood until our life was drastically disrupted. I was 15 and the youngest, Virginia, only five when our mother died of cancer. After a series of varyingly successful housekeepers my father's parents, together with his maiden sister, left Oamaru where they had always lived and came to Auckland. As we lived in Takapuna, I attended Takapuna Grammar School, and received an accelerated schooling aimed at improving external examination results. This meant I missed out on any art classes but I received a good grounding in the sciences, which at the time girl's schools did not concentrate on. My father was a journalist; I inherited his love of literature and was fortunate to have a brilliant English teacher.

There was never any hesitation about what I would do after leaving school. My mother, Mary, was the second daughter in a large Irish Catholic family who farmed in Windsor, a small town out of Oamaru. The girls' education stopped at the end of primary school, only the boys going beyond that. After two years at home Mary, who felt unfulfilled at home, convinced her parents to let her go to high school. She had to walk a long distance to catch the train to Oamaru, and it was then some distance to Waitaki Girls' High School. Gaining her matriculation, Mary, who was ambitious,

decided she would like to attend university. At that time it was not usual in New Zealand for girls to study at university, but Otago University had just started a home science faculty and was offering generous bursaries to attract students. Mary was accepted and graduated after four years of study. She obtained a position teaching at her old high school. At that time my father was teaching at Waitaki Boys' and, being a good sportsman and tennis player, he was asked to coach the Girls' School tennis team. They met at the school ball and it was 'love at first sight'. Howard came from an Anglican family but, despite opposition from both sides, they were married in the small Catholic Church in Windsor. They moved to Invercargill, where Father began his career as a journalist on the *Southland Times*.

Mother had her seven children quickly and so any hopes of a career had to be put on hold. It was a very happy marriage and ended all too soon. Mary was a great homemaker with a flair for decorating, and I loved the style and colours she had used in our home. I was never deterred from my strong desire to complete what Mother had not been able to do and pursue a career. Father was happy for me to go to Otago University, so in the summer of 1945, with some trepidation, I set off, on my own. The journey involved an overnight train and a day in Wellington, followed by a night crossing on the ferry, finally a day's train ride from Christchurch to Dunedin—a marathon by today's standards.

I had four fulfilling and happy years at University. The science I had studied at school was of great assistance in passing what was called Medical Intermediate, the same course that was required for medical and dental students, involving chemistry, physics and zoology. I greatly enjoyed the challenges of the home design course, and the fashion garments we designed, created patterns for, and then constructed.

As it was a trek to return to Auckland—taking two days and a night each way—I usually had vacations with relations in and around Oamaru. During the winter breaks in my last two years a group of us would take the train to Queenstown for skiing. I enjoyed involvement in the outside activities of the university. In my final year I was Wardrobe Mistress for the Capping Parade and Capping Concert: lots of work but lots of fun. At the end of my four years I was surprised and delighted to receive the Jessie Kinder Prize for being the top graduate in my course. As I had been granted a Takapuna Grammar bursary it was required that I return and teach for two years. I was living at home at this time so it was very convenient.

**A**fter deciding with my friend Joy from Otago days that we must go on the big ‘overseas experience’, I began saving. To help, I made clothes for friends and neighbours. I also got a part-time job at a pottery shop. I had inherited a love of pottery from my mother, who’d collected pieces by Briar Gardner (one of New Zealand’s first female potters), and I used to haunt a shop in Victoria Street owned by Dan Pierce. He had been introduced to studio pottery on a bicycle trip around England after the war. Returning to New Zealand he gave up his accountancy training to open a store, The Art of the Potter. He introduced renowned potters like Shoji Hamada of Japan and Bernard Leach and Lucie Rie, both important names on the English scene, to New Zealand. Dan at that time was a mentor to New Zealand’s greatest potter, Len Castle, who was then a science teacher at Mt Albert Grammar and beginning his career at the wheel. I began to work there on Friday nights, finding it a pleasure, not a job, and I learnt a true appreciation of the art.

BRIAN GARDNER, SHOJI HAMADA, BERNARD LEACH  
LUCIE RIE, LEN CASTLE

To the fanfare of bands and streamers Joy and I set sail for Sydney, both leaving behind a boyfriend, the excitement of the adventure ahead softening any regrets. We had three months in Sydney before we had to leave for England and very luckily managed to talk our way into jobs waitressing at the Australia, the smartest hotel in Sydney. We earned good money with tips. Sailing for England on the *Orcades* we faced six weeks of very busy ship life: the mornings taken up in exercise, with often a change of attire for lunch and another for dinner. The celebrated white cliffs of Dover finally came into sight and before long we stood unsteadily on firm ground again. We trained to London passing the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben, which looked so much smaller than imagined.

Typical tourist sightseeing occupied our first days. We had arranged a bed-and-breakfast stay from New Zealand and were hosted by a friendly, helpful family. On top of the sights, we enjoyed going to the local pub on Sunday mornings, with a pile of Sunday newspapers and glass of English cider. In New Zealand at the time there were no Sunday papers and no pub open on Sundays, let alone a pub a woman could go to.

Our next mission was to look for work. I got on the list for supply teaching, which meant you were on call and went where you were required, mostly if a regular teacher was ill. Before I leapt off the bus for one school I taught at, the driver would announce loudly, ‘End of the World,’ and it felt like it. We moved to a bedsit in a once-elegant old house in Kensington, still with its character and good bones, one of a series built in a square round a shared garden. We were very happy there.

Having decided interior design was my goal, I had looked into taking an interior design course in England; no such thing then existed in New Zealand. The few choices were so expensive, however,



I felt I could learn as much through travel, visiting the beautiful historic homes open to the public and anything contemporary I could find. Over the three and a half years I was away I did a number of varied jobs: I was a teacher, a nanny, a land girl and a cook in Soho, and was employed for a short time at Heal’s, the well-known design store. I enjoyed all my positions and broadened my experience.

At that time import restrictions in New Zealand were so severe that the only way you could buy a new car was to purchase one overseas and drive it for a year before it could be brought into the country. Joy did this for her family so we had the luxury of her car, which we drove to the Continent. At that time nobody could legally take more than 50 pounds out of England; I am sure many found a way round that, but it did give a sense of some equality. We had brought a case of tinned meat from New Zealand and that, supplemented with bread, cheese,

fruit and wine, was our diet—economical, healthy and pleasurable—varied with the treat of visiting the occasional cafe.

We had a tent for fine weather. We also were frequent users of youth hostels, many of them situated in interesting buildings, occasionally an old castle. The protocol was very different to today’s hostels. You had to be out by nine and couldn’t arrive until four in the afternoon; dormitories were single sex and you couldn’t be older than 30, from memory. Still, it was a great place to meet young people of different nationalities, and so inexpensive. We appreciated the smooth running of our car until we met some other young women in an old and dilapidated car, which often broke down and resulted in their having the most amazing adventures and meeting glamorous Italian male rescuers.

I learned an indelible lesson in the effect of light on colour during a trip to Spain, which included some days in Majorca for sun and fun. I had bought myself

some clothes in London before I left. What I had chosen and thought attractive in the soft, misty light of England made me look like the drabest mouse in the bright, clear Majorcan sunlight. No wonder the gardens of England and Spain are so different in their colour palette. The renowned white garden of Sissinghurst and the pastel pinks and blues of the English herbaceous borders are quite unlike the oranges, reds and golds of the famous Spanish garden at the Alhambra.

I am reminded of a comment once made by the talented Australian interior designer Marion Hall Best<sup>-1</sup>. She could not believe that in a young country with its bright light, people were using the subdued colours of England. Marion Hall Best transformed Australian décor in the 1960s and introduced the bright glowing colours that were found in the fabrics of Florence Broadhurst<sup>-2</sup> and Marimekko and in the brilliant effect of colour glazing walls. She has always been one of my design heroes and was an inspiration to me when I began my career in the design world.

MARION HALL BEST, FLORENCE BROADHURST, MARIMEKKO

Reluctantly in some ways, but thinking it was time, I returned to New Zealand. Fortunately for me an Australian man I had met in England came over to New Zealand shortly after I returned: we were considering a permanent relationship. This did not prove to be the right decision, but showing him the beauty of our country made me appreciate it again and forget about its smallness and insularity.

Then came a lucky break: I read in the *Herald* that Hurdley's, the interior design and furnishing company, had opened its new showroom on High Street, moving from a small shop hidden upstairs in the Queen's Arcade. I went in to see Derek Hurdley<sup>-3</sup>, whom I had met briefly before my OE. He told me that they had just advertised a position and that I would be

ideal for it, but he did have to interview some applicants. Soon I was delighted to hear that the position was mine. A gift from heaven! Here was my opportunity to move into the interior design field. Derek was the perfect boss. He also had an innate sense of colour and design, and a great love and knowledge of fabrics. Back then, Hurdley's was working mostly in colour, soft furnishing and upholstered furniture. All its fabrics were imported as none were made in New Zealand and Derek had an excellent eye. Our clients were mainly from Remuera and the eastern suburbs. In those days there were no such things as fabric hangers to try in one's home, so I frequently staggered up driveways and steep flights of steps carrying whole bolts of fabric, developing strong muscles. There was a cult for what we called *Remuera green*, a soft, muted colour similar to that used by the eighteenth-century British architect and designer Robert Adam. Homes were elegantly and beautifully decorated, antique furniture playing an important role. I loved the work and the associations.

HURDLEY'S, DEREK HURDLEY, ROBERT ADAM

An important influence was David Bishop, who was already employed at Hurdley's when I joined. He had a more sensitive feeling for colour than anyone I have met. There was time to talk and discuss colour and how to best understand and use it. He later went to England and started the Designers Collection of fabrics. Tricia Guild, now of world fame, joined him. Tragically he died in his early 30s of a brain tumour and Tricia went on to establish her empire. I will always treasure his memory and influence. One time when he was back in New Zealand to see his family he demonstrated to me how he sometimes devised new colour schemes. Using a basket of silk embroidery thread skeins that he had acquired for this purpose, he would pull

out a random bunch and let them fall to the ground; how they fell would inspire a colour scheme, one he might not otherwise have conceived.

DAVID BISHOP, TRICIA GUILD



Vulcan Lane and High Street were then the nucleus of the Auckland design world. In Vulcan Lane, the firm of Brenner Associates included the artist-designer Milan Mrkusich and architects such as Vladimir Cacala. Next door was the spacious Burslem house, the home of fine china and crystal, while opposite was John Greer's<sup>-4</sup> shoe store, its windows always designed with flair. It was here that women such as I flocked to buy his beautiful imported shoes. John, a very cultured and charming man, built an early modern house designed by Rigby Mullan in Titirangi, and he used Hurdley fabrics and furniture throughout.

BRENNER ASSOCIATES, MILAN MRKUSICH, VLADIMIR CACALA

BURSRLEM HOUSE, JOHN GREER, RIGBY MULLAN

Next to him on Vulcan Lane was Ninette Gowns, an exclusive fashion house whose owner, Flora Mackenzie, would later run the successful Ring Terrace 'house of ill fame'. Just up a little in High Street was the workroom of Max Robertson, a flamboyant figure who made lampshades. At that time lamps with elegant shades were very much part of a successful interior. A decorated vase, Chinese jar or candlestick would be wired up and Max would design and make the shade, providing part of Hurdley's finishing touch for a room. Opposite Hurdley's was Blake's Inn, an attractive timbered lunch and coffee house. Later, Friday nights were enlivened by the colourful appearance of Anna Hoffman in the back of an open car, melodiously singing and openly drinking after closing time, much to the chagrin of the police. It was a vivid and exciting time to be part of the life and colour of the inner city.

/1 / Marion (Lady) Hall Best (1905-88) is acknowledged as the founder of Australian interior design. Famed for her originality and darling, Hall Best worked with architects, artists, sculptors, fabric makers and furniture designers to create rooms that were at once international and uniquely Australian.

/2 / Florence Broadhurst was born in rural Queensland in 1899. Transforming her creative talent into a wallpaper business in 1959 she created hundreds of unique and luxurious patterns with rich and vibrant colours all reflecting her flamboyant personality. She worked until her mysterious death in 1977. Her designs are produced currently by Australian company Signature Prints.

/3 / Derek Hurdley had a great eye for colour and design and his shop Hurdley's situated in Auckland's High Street, stocked the best of textiles from all over the world. Many aspiring designers cut their teeth working for Derek.

/4 / John Greer was a stylish Auckland who established John Greer Shoes in Vulcan Lane, now in Remuera, that provided footwear to stylish Auckland women. He commissioned from architects Rigby Mullan what has been described as New Zealand's 'first and finest pavilion house' built 1959-60.

All the upholstered furniture at Hurdley's was made by a firm called Wilson and Nicholson, still in existence today. They were a reliable and skilled team and I recall many trips there to check on furniture as it progressed through manufacture. Their factory was the old theatre, the Queen's Hall in Paget Street, Freemans Bay. The work was done on the ground floor and the circle was stacked with waiting frames that in the dim evening light often assumed eerie phantom shapes. I vividly remember the Christmas parties starting pleasantly but, as the evening progressed, getting somewhat riotous. We knew it was time to go when visitors from the tall and notorious house opposite arrived.

NINETTE GOWNS, FLORA MACKENZIE

MAX ROBERTSON, WILSON AND NICHOLSON

**I**n addition to the inner-city happenings there was also some interesting activity at its fringes. While at Hurdley's I also came to be a waitress at the Town and Country Roadhouse<sup>-5</sup> in Oratia. Run by Marge Harre and her three partners, it was a successful venture. Marge's husband had been a dairy farmer but unfortunately gambled on horses, got into debt and departed for Australia, leaving her to run the farm and parent three little children. Marge was a great cook, one who followed intuition rather than recipes. Her friend Julia Yates, after visiting America, suggested she open a restaurant rather than struggle with the farm. Julia, who had a successful high fashion boutique in Auckland called Trilby Yates, was a woman with a strong personality and a good business head. She had built a house in the area for weekend use. The decision was made after some persuasion, so Marge's old wooden house and spacious garden were altered by a friendly team. A generous dining room opened onto a new verandah, where Julia had designed

a jarrah floor in boards of deep red and pale blond, adding new timber tables with spindleback country chairs. Julia and her daughter set out to decorate the place so it would astonish. Afternoon Teas with freshly baked scones, homemade raspberry jam and cream from the cows proved extremely popular. 'Dine and Dance' on Saturday nights followed, the polished tables set with camellias from the garden and candlelight creating a romantic mood, the distance from the city and rough roads being no deterrent. Before liquor licences became legal, clients could bring their own wine, as long as it was not obvious. I have very happy memories of the time I was there: more pleasure than work, the atmosphere warm, friendly and fun.

TOWN AND COUNTRY ROADHOUSE, MARGE HARRE, TRILBY YATES

Sometime after my return from overseas, through my interest in architecture and design, I met members of Group Architects<sup>-6</sup>, who had a common goal to build modern houses in New Zealand that were attractive and affordable for the average person. These were simple timber houses opening to the outside via courtyards and decks. I became very friendly with Jim Hackshaw, a member of The Group. At this time my father had a section at Castor Bay close to the beach and with views, over a large and spreading pohutukawa tree, out to the sea; here he wanted to build a new house. It seems amazing that Castor Bay, now a residential area, was originally our seaside holiday home. After all these years, my father had just remarried. I convinced him that Jim would be ideal to design the new home. Inspired by the twisted shape of the pohutukawa, Jim designed a timber house that stood lightly on the land, very Japanese in its style with sliding timber Shoji-like screens separating an outer gallery from the living spaces on three sides. After my father's death the house became the home

of my brother Warwick and his wife, Jan; to meet the needs of themselves and their three children some alterations were made, but without spoiling the original concept of the design.

JIM HACKSHAW, THE GROUP

I met my husband, Douglas Cameron, and after we were married I continued at Hurdley's. Douglas lived in a cottage in Pakuranga, an area between Panmure and Howick that was then farmland and designated to remain part of Auckland's green belt. The house was a former sharemilker's cottage that had been attractively altered. One entered straight into the living room, which had been converted from two small rooms; there was a bedroom, a tiny front room, a kitchen and a bathroom, with a washhouse with concrete tubs in a separate building. It made a very pleasant home for a couple who both worked in the city and led a social life.

The living-room walls were painted in a deep green with a hint of blue, the two couches covered in brown printed linen. For the summer, influenced by my time in England, I covered the couches in creamy linen with a floral print in lime and soft blue-greens. The room received little sun but was lovely at night. An antique drop-sided table sat behind one settee and was pulled out for dining. I threw myself into developing the garden, a pastime both Doug and I enjoyed. We had quite a large space with one solitary tree on the section, a plum that was both graceful and prolific. Each weekend we were home I bought plants and dug up the side of the section to make a curving border, a mixture of maples, cherry trees and flowers.

We were married for eight years and had accepted the fact that we were unlikely to have children. As I was so absorbed in my work, I was not too upset. Eight years after we were married came an unexpected but delightful surprise: we were

/5 / The Oratia Town & Country Roadhouse served French and Italian cuisine from 1948 to 1966 and is reputed to be Auckland's first fine food restaurant. Established by Marge Harre whose cooking skills were legendary who died in 1985 aged 84. The Harre family has a long history in West Auckland and is linked to a number of early pioneers.

/6 / The Group began in 1946 and resurfaced several years later as Group Architects, in time becoming one of New Zealand's most celebrated architectural practices, best known for their houses. James Hackshaw was a member of Group Architects until 1958 when he established his own practice.

to be parents after all. Kirsty was born in late June and for the first time I was in the house all day. I found the dark green walls I had previously enjoyed too sombre and oppressive, especially as it was winter. It was a lesson on the psychology of colour and the power of the wrong colour in the wrong place.

By the time our second child, Johnny, arrived it was essential to extend the house. We asked the architect Rex Mason<sup>-7</sup> to design our extensions. Harry Turbott<sup>-8</sup>, who had studied landscape architecture in America, designed and supervised our landscaping, which included the most beautiful and sculptural swimming pool. Although geometric in shape, its regularity was broken up by widely stepped inlets and a timber bridge spanning two decks. It was the first pool in the area and a happy mecca for local children.

REX MASON, HARRY TURBOTT

An eager secondary school teacher who ran the adult night classes at Tamaki College, knowing I had been responsible for the *Auckland Star's* cooking column as 'Mary Anne', coerced me into taking Continental cooking classes at the college. At first I had recipes at my fingertips, but later discovered I did not really enjoy the organising and experimenting required, and so I resigned. The persistent organiser, knowing me better by then, suggested I take an interior design course. This had much more appeal and I threw myself into the study required. It is one thing to know a subject, but to teach it successfully you have to be much more thorough with your subject matter and how you convey it. In fact it was a godsend for me to have that challenge, particularly as I was home with very young children. I loved it and had great response from the students, mostly women, who attended, the course growing to become very popular and expand to two years.

/11/ Ronald Cox worked behind the scenes at Hurdley's. While studying architecture he began making light fittings and the enjoyment he derived from making together with their popularity (Habitat and Hurdley's both sold them) led him, with Tim Edwards, to open Intra Design. From their Symonds Street studio Ron and Tim designed a range of lights and furniture and also mastered the art of paint glazing. Nanette Cameron encouraged and collaborated with Ron on many interior projects.

/12/ Colin Martin studied architecture and then discovered furniture design. He worked for John Crichton before moving to Hurdleys, and later joined with John Hughes to establish Martin Hughes Interiors.

/13/ Former Victoria University law student John Hughes worked at Domus in Wellington with Gilbert Powrie and Bauhaus-trained Irene Oelsner. After completing tertiary interior design training in Sydney, then non-existent in New Zealand, and working at Premier Interiors of Rose Bay he returned to New Zealand to be the general manager of the Wellington Hurdley's store. With Oelsner and Don Sharp he established Focus Interiors in 1968 and Martin Hughes Interiors in 1972 with Colin Martin.

/14/ Brothers Gavin and Nigel Rees started the impossible to ignore Rees Interiors in 1967 in Symonds Street and which moved to Elliot Street in 1970. Their love of colour and contemporary design was inspired by living in London, and by growing up amongst their father's business, Rees Furnishing Company in Palmerston North.

/15/ Martin Hughes Architecture Interiors was established in 1972 as Martin Hughes Interiors by John Hughes and the late Colin Martin. It is a leading New Zealand interior design business and the most enduring in its field.



Unexpectedly, I received a phone call from Jo Noble, editor of the *New Zealand Home Journal*<sup>-9</sup>, who asked me if I would be interested in writing about New Zealand houses for the magazine. Without hesitation I said yes, I would love to. My passion is houses and I enjoy writing, so it was heaven-sent. Rees Osborne<sup>-10</sup>, a young and talented photographer, would work with me. For a good number of years I did this, choosing the houses, meeting the owners and the architects, arranging the shoots with Rees, and deciding which aspect would make the cover. I loved the writing but I did labour over it, constantly trying to improve it. There was relief when the deadline for copy came and I had to call it *fini*. I delighted in the atmosphere of the big editorial room at the *Auckland Star*, which published the magazine. If ever I felt a little low, to go into this room with all the activity and lively journalists brought an immediate lift to the spirits. But times were changing and magazines were going through a transition. The new look was glossy, and so *The Home Journal*, which was not, closed. I did similar work for *Thursday* magazine and then *Eve*, both glossy formats. These both ceased, along with many other magazines. It was a very low period for magazines, but they would flower again, later. Shortland Publications, who published the *Auckland Star* and were also book publishers, thought it would be a good idea to do a book on New Zealand kitchens. So I started, working with Wendy Pye, and fortunately had not got too far when that division was closed and she was made redundant. Of course this was the best thing that could have happened to Wendy, even if she did not think so at the time. She went on to great fame and fortune with her revolutionary schoolbooks, but it was the end of the book on kitchens for me. Finally I did some work for *HOME* magazine and then

*Cuisine*, which had just emerged under the leadership of Jenny Dalzell. I wrote about some houses with the emphasis on the kitchen, then the kitchen only, then passed it over to another journalist.

NEW ZEALAND HOME JOURNAL, REES OSBORNE, WENDY PYE  
THURSDAY, EVE, AUCKLAND STAR, HOME, CUISINE

After departing from Hurdley's, I continued working, on a limited scale, in the interior design field, as I had clients who wanted me to complete their houses. With two children it was more difficult, so when they were a little older I arranged to have Fridays as 'my day' and dropped them off into the care of a delightful woman who lived right on the beach. They had an enjoyable, fun day and I had a day to devote to my career. I felt that it was a wise decision, as if one leaves a profession completely it is much harder to break back into it. Of course I loved the work and my clients. Mostly the projects were private homes, but some were commercial and hospitality projects. I did not have drawing skills so relied on people like Ronald Cox<sup>-11</sup>, with whom I worked on a number of projects, to do scale drawings when required.

RONALD COX

By now there were a number of interior designers working successfully in the field, most of them trained through apprenticeship. People involved were Colin Martin<sup>-12</sup>, John Hughes<sup>-13</sup>, brothers Gavin and Nigel Rees<sup>-14</sup>, Irene Olsener, Don Sharp, Jean and Peter Roberts, John Scott and others. Colin and John had opened Martin Hughes Design<sup>-15</sup>, in an old house on Hobson Street with an eclectic interior. The Rees brothers started Rees Interiors in Symonds Street, the façade painted a brilliant orange that shone like a flame in the midst of grey buildings on a rather dreary street. They were strictly contemporary in style, much of it their own design. Later they moved to Elliot Street where the façade was a stand-

out yellow. Together we formed an association called the New Zealand Association of Interior Designers (NZAID); we decided that defined standards needed to be set for those practising and that it was time to establish a professional training for interior designers. The result, after many negotiations, was a course at Carrington Polytechnic, now Unitec. It was not all serious work, and we hosted many social occasions in Pakuranga, with more than one very successful NZAID Christmas party around our Harry Turbott–designed pool. Our house was ideal for parties as the floors were either wood or tiled, with no carpet. All the rooms, even the bathroom, opened out to decks and courtyards.

REES INTERIORS, COLIN MARTIN, JOHN HUGHES  
MARTIN HUGHES DESIGN

**L**ocal councils get greedy—or to put it more kindly, need money—so Pakuranga was transformed from a green belt into a mass of new houses, all going up simultaneously. It was a suburb without any history or culture. An art teacher friend, Lois Perry, and I started giving children’s painting classes in a local hall. Then with several other local people, including Iris Fisher, who also felt the absence of any cultural facilities, we formed a group, giving ourselves the rather uninspired name of the Pakuranga Art Society<sup>15</sup>; it did say what our aspirations were. Hamish Keith<sup>16</sup>, the guru of Auckland art, whom we had invited to a meeting at Iris’s home, told us that we must have much bolder ambitions and that it was time local councils provided art and cultural centres as well as sports facilities. He said we must go to the Manukau Council with a sound proposition. Inspired, and after many meetings, we formed a petition and a large group, some with infants in prams, put forward a case to the councillors at

one of their meetings. Of course it did not happen instantaneously, but with the support of the mayor, (later Sir) Lloyd Elsmore and his deputy (later Sir) Barry Curtis, our proposition for a community and cultural centre was finally approved.

PAKURANGA ART SOCIETY, HAMISH KEITH, SIR LLOYD ELSMORE

Lloyd Elsmore was a forward-thinking man, which is demonstrated in the building he had commissioned for Elsmore’s Supermarket. Standing alone—on the site of the future Pakuranga Town Centre, surrounded by green fields and the sprinkling of houses that was Pakuranga in the 1960s—was this alien creature with its parabolic roof. No one who drove past could possibly miss such an avant-garde building. In fact, it served as something of a harbinger of what was to come. Fletcher Challenge, who owned the site and developed the Pakuranga Town Centre, had the foresight to commission a work from sculptor Jim Allen. A large, green organic form was for many years the centrepiece of the southern end of the Town Centre, and has been etched into the memories of the many children who played on it while their mothers shopped. In spite of its popular image as a suburban wasteland, Pakuranga was the site of some innovative design and art.

PAKURANGA EZY-PARK IGA STORE, JIM ALLEN

The council architect, an Irishman with somewhat grand ideas, not all of which were financially possible, drew up the plans for the new Pakuranga Community and Cultural Centre and construction began. The local Rotary Club supported the gala opening, which was heralded by a band and a parade with local schoolchildren. It was the first centre of its kind in New Zealand to have been provided by a local council. The interior design course had developed and expanded to the extent that it demanded my full-time attention,

even though by now I had an assistant, so I had to cut down on my private consulting work. Running a successful school takes a great deal of time, even though in our case the business side was administered by the Arts Society on a shared profit basis. Preparation, research, constant upgrading and the evaluating of students work became a full-time occupation. This was compensated by the rewards: getting to know the students during the course of their study, sensing their appreciation and seeing what they achieved afterwards. I felt my life was made rich.

PAKURANGA COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL CENTRE

With the opening of the Pakuranga Community and Cultural Centre, the interior design course moved from Tamaki College to Pakuranga, where it was possible to run day classes. This appealed to many women, so the numbers expanded and the Nanette Cameron School of Interior Design (NCSID) now had a real home. In the following year an arts festival was held with major art awards and days of special activities. The students ran the lunches under student Paddy Naismith, a great organiser and cook. Each day the lunches differed, French one day, Italian the next, the variety of cultures offered proving very popular. Gretchen Albrecht, then a young emerging painter, won the Art Award with a beautiful dyed canvas, and received the sponsored prize of \$100—major money then. It was such a successful community facility that before long we were short of space. We needed a separate gallery next door! This time the council supplied one-third, a fund-raising company was engaged to raise a second third, and the Art Society met the last third. Fund-raising began in earnest with a very successful fete in Iris and Lou Fisher’s lovely property overlooking the water.

NANETTE CAMERON SCHOOL OF INTERIOR DESIGN  
GRETCHEN ALBRECHT

<sup>15</sup> / Pakuranga Arts Society formed in 1970 by a group of local residents, was instrumental in the founding of the Pakuranga Community and Cultural Centre, the Fisher Gallery and Te Tuhi. The society has worked alongside the Manukau City Council, at times in the face of local opposition, to tirelessly advocate and fund-raise for arts and cultural in the area.

<sup>16</sup> / Hamish Keith is a prominent and influential figure in the arts who has been a broadcaster, writer, ‘go to’ authority, advisor to and governor of countless public arts organisations, institutions and initiatives.



Once the new Gallery was built the NCSID moved in. These were the days before computers, although they were soon to appear, and the Gestetner machine was the source of the course notes for students. (I cringe now, not in terms of content but of quality, when I see a student's folio from this era and look at the notes they were given.) Everything additional to the work of the Gallery director and the small staff was undertaken by volunteers, and these fortunately were plentiful and willing. Bev Smaill, one of the volunteers, worked in the Gallery office almost daily. A very happy atmosphere prevailed. Members of the painters group helped to hang exhibitions, while interior design students were weekend volunteers and catered for all the exhibition openings and social functions. The Gallery had a spacious and attractive courtyard with landscaping by Harry Turbott, which included three mature olive trees requested by Iris Fisher. Very sadly Iris Fisher

succumbed to cancer. She was a lovely woman in every way and we all felt her loss. The rather uninspiring full name of the Gallery—the Pakuranga Arts Society Art Gallery—somehow drifted into the Fisher Gallery. Later, the largest exhibition space was officially named after Iris Fisher in recognition of the energy, time and financial assistance she contributed. The final chapter in the evolution of Pakuranga's cultural nexus came in 2001 and the two buildings should meld into one: the Community and Cultural Centre and the Gallery would now be the Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts under the one director.

FISHER GALLERY, TE TUHI CENTRE FOR THE ARTS

From the Gallery's beginnings a succession of directors has built its reputation into that of a significant New Zealand contemporary art gallery. This building has been my daily place of work for the last 40 years, and I often reflect on its many transitions—and on the fact that a

group of passionate people can change their neighbourhood if they're able to muster the collective commitment, tenacity and generosity.

In addition to the weekly courses the NCSID offers an annual trip to Australia. These interior design tours were the inspiration of a group of students, who bought me a ticket to Australia, covered my accommodation costs and said, 'Now you plan a design tour.' I knew several designers and architects that I would love us all to meet, but would it be possible? Picking a courageous moment, I began writing to my design heroes, with mixed feelings of confidence. Fortunately I had met Babette Hayes in Auckland and she had briefly visited my home. Babette was a well-known Sydney interior designer whose attractive home had been featured in *Belle* magazine. She wrote for both *Belle* and *Vogue Living* and was encouraging about the tour; yes, she would be happy to have us visit her. That was a good start.

BABETTE HAYES, BELLE, VOGUE LIVING

The first tour took place in 1977. We went to an interior design show, which we enjoyed, and then explored the city on foot. The day was very hot after New Zealand's cool temperatures, and first thing next morning there was a rush to buy comfortable shoes. Our first appointment on Tuesday morning was at The Bay Tree kitchen shop on the corner of an elegant tree-lined street in Woollahra. At this time the Muldoon Government had instituted severe restrictions on imported goods and one could buy little in the form of imported furniture, light fittings, kitchen equipment and shoes. In The Bay Tree, seeing all the goods available, we were ecstatic and left laden with parcels.

Next we visited a couple of well-known male interior designers, who lived and worked in a gracious old stone house,

also in Woollahra. I was mortified; we looked like a group of country women on an excursion when we arrived at their refined and tasteful office; even their aristocratic-looking dog seemed to sniff disdainfully as we walked past. Luckily, our hosts were very gracious, and we were most impressed with the simple but sophisticated quality of their own interior and their projects. I learned an important lesson that morning: to impress your host, don't arrive loaded down with parcels, especially in plastic bags! I have not been completely successful over the years, but I keep trying—and the items are always excused as design related.

Babette Hayes invited us to breakfast in her old house in Hunter's Hill, this unexpected time of day setting the theme for the visit. Her table was set with a mixture of variously patterned china, not usual then, and at each setting she had placed a small wind-up metal child's toy. The experience was unforgettable, as was Babette's house, which was full of what some people might call clutter, organised into defined groupings. Her two children had chosen impressive colour schemes for their highly individual rooms. Babette had a very vital, outgoing personality, and although we felt rather 'humdrum' in contrast we left leaving inspired.

One of our last appointments on that first trip was to the Paddington studio of Florence Broadhurst, a very influential and colourful Australian figure. Here she screen-printed her beautiful, dramatic fabrics and wallpapers. There was a great demand for patterned papers at this time and her work was popular. Florence herself was a tiny and dynamic woman, well over 70 years old by then with the brightest red hair and ring-laden fingers. She greeted us each by name (we were wearing name badges) and gave generously of her time, showing us through her studio and explaining the screen-printing

process. Then she suddenly said 'Good-bye' and brusquely ushered us out! We had only been back a week in New Zealand when we were horrified to read the headline in the newspaper: 'Famous Australian Designer Brutally Murdered.' It was a shocking end to Florence's life, a life certainly lived colourfully. To this day nobody has been charged with her murder. Florence could best be described as a chameleon, in that she completely changed her personality at least four times in her life. She left a legacy of brilliant designs, which fortunately were resurrected some years ago and are still in production today. So it has come full circle, and now on the Sydney Guild trips almost 30 years later, we visit Signature Prints in Sydney and see the Florence Broadhurst designs being screen-printed once more. It is a New Zealander, David Lennie, with his Australian wife, who has brought Florence's work to prominence again.

The first interior design tour was to Sydney only; tours now are annual and we visit Melbourne also. Luckily for me Bev Smaill assists with the tours. As well as being a passionate design advocate, she is also very efficient and handles people with skill. Together, over the years, we have built up a repertoire of architects and designers who are happy to show us new projects and introduce us to new contacts. The quality of their work, and the buildings we get to see, are cutting-edge. The tours offer an opportunity to appreciate the best of Australian design, whether it is in the form of a public building, a converted warehouse or a home. For those who attend it is a lot of fun, and an inspiration to use more colour and forget about New Zealand's beige addiction. It is the perfect finishing touch to their studies.

The Nanette Cameron Interior Design Guild ('the Guild') was formed after we realised that following the two years of

week-in, week-out study, there was a sudden gap in the lives of former students. The Guild delivered an ongoing programme to keep these alumni up to date with developments in the design world. This included visits to the homes of former students who had created warm, livable and beautiful environments; visits were open also to current class members, who benefited immensely because they had an opportunity to see real designed interiors.

BEV SMAILL, NANETTE CAMERON INTERIOR DESIGN GUILD

 Our visits were later to be the inspiration for charity fund-raising. Talks and lectures by successful people from a range of different areas of design proved popular. A publication of events was launched, improving as new printing technologies became available, so that today it is a very well produced quarterly magazine. The Guild has been led by several effective presidents, the longest-serving being the incumbent president, the vital and dedicated Brenda Higgins. The Interior Design Guild developed a close relationship with the Pakuranga Arts Society, which managed the Fisher Gallery. One of the first exhibitions in the gallery was *The History of the Chair*, sponsored by the Guild. Ever since the chair was developed, by adding a back to a humble stool, designers, architects and artists have been challenged to create a great chair, regardless of the number of chairs already on the market. When Italian architect Mario Botta was asked to design a chair, his initial reaction was, 'Another chair? After the hundreds and thousands of chairs we have already?' But through the history of humanity, as he came to realise, there is a continuing demand for the new; new chair designs are, of course, always the same—but at the same time they are always different.

MARIO BOTTA

The Guild was responsible for researching and finding the chairs for the exhibition, so that we had a historical record. It was the early 1980s and the radical Memphis<sup>17</sup> movement had just arrived on the scene. (I was very excited by Memphis; launched in 1981, it took the Milan Furniture Fair by storm and challenged the design fraternity to have more fun, to use more colour and more pattern after the severity of the Modern movement. By the time of our annual interior design tour in October of that year it had just reached Sydney. Today many of you may ask, what was Memphis?) Regrettably we could not find a Memphis chair in New Zealand.

MEMPHIS GROUP, MILAN FURNITURE FAIR

Following on from the success of the chair show, the Guild helped to sponsor an annual exhibition, forming a bridge between art and interior design, for a number of years. Exhibitions have included subjects as diverse as folding screens, dinner plates (in conjunction with Crown Lynn) and mail boxes; an exhibition of Dilana Rugs was designed by artists and architects. These shows produced a very warm amalgamation between the Guild and the Gallery. At the time there was a small staff, aided by many volunteers. The Guild helped at all the social functions of the gallery. The Guild also raised funds for the Gallery, one venture being visits to artists' studios. These took place on a Sunday, starting off at the Gallery to see the current exhibition and enjoy a ploughman's lunch. An effort was made to have a decorative theme for the tables; they too were works of art, Heather Swinburn being responsible for many of them. Directions and maps were given out, different groups starting at different studios. These were very successful, both visitors and artists enjoying the experience and the Gallery getting needed funds. For several years this was an annual event.

DILANA RUGS, CROWN LYNN

<sup>17</sup> / The Memphis Group was an Italian design and architecture group founded in Milan by Ettore Sottsass in 1981 that designed Post Modern furniture, fabrics, ceramics, glass and metal objects from 1981-1987.



On my 60th birthday I was surprised to see a group of Guild members walking up the path beside the house, armed with champagne and delicious breakfast food. Later that day, in the packed Gallery, a Nanette Cameron: This Is Your Life event took place. The talented entrepreneur Murray Thom, son-in-law of one former student and husband of another, was the host. As many of my brothers and sisters as could, came, and the two that were living overseas joined us by way of the internet. Some of my close friends from university days were also corralled to attend. I was presented with a new Mazda station-wagon to replace my battered old green Datsun—a very generous gesture, rendering me too overcome to respond adequately. The finishing touch, a cake, was wheeled in on a black and chrome Art Deco trolley. The cake was decorated Memphis style.

The NCSID really grew in this period, and daughters of mothers who had previously taken the course began enrolling.

This gave me a very warm feeling. To manage the rising numbers I took on another assistant; Sharon Graham, an ex-teacher, and a particularly good former student, was ideal and proved a happy choice.

The Guild also expanded. We had always tried to give something to the community, as I thought we should do something more useful than flit like butterflies between houses. For some years we supported the South Auckland Hospice. This came about through a class exercise, and because of the success of the students' scheme we were asked to help with the hospice's colour and furnishing, which in turn became a fund-raising project. We have supported a few causes; the ongoing one is a scholarship for a final year interior design student at Unitec. Anyone who has done the NCSID course will know that it is not a frivolous course but demands commitment, even if undertaken part-time. Although many students who graduate from the NCSID have been successful in the

profession, a two-and-a-half-hour weekly lecture cannot compare with a full-time course. Given the cost of tertiary fees, living costs and materials, many students are struggling by their final year and are very grateful for the assistance. We have a positive relationship with the interior design programme at Unitec.

Besides family, to my mind one of the richest joys in life is travel. Through the various Guild trips and along with some other personal ones I feel fortunate to have met some of the people and seen firsthand some of the places that have inspired me most. My first architectural hero was Frank Lloyd Wright. I had admired Wright for years and it was my dream to see his romantic and beautiful Fallingwater, the Pennsylvania home he designed in 1936 for Edgar and Liliane Kaufmann. One year, that dream came true: I was finally going to America, to Fallingwater and to Chicago, where Wright started his career as an architect and where his early work is. Having been mindful of Fallingwater when we were making our extensions to Glenmore Road my excitement was intense as my friend and I boarded the plane for America. But when, at last, I was on the drive towards Fallingwater after staying the night in Pittsburgh, I suddenly panicked: after all these years of dreaming about seeing it, would I be disappointed? I needn't have worried. It was so much more dramatic and beautiful than I had ever imagined.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, FALLINGWATER

The whole experience was a valuable lesson for any famous architectural visit. You must book the tour well ahead. There are only ten people per group, so you feel you are a guest, not a tourist. A guide gives you just enough information, but the essence of the experience is to let the house infiltrate your spirit. There is nothing you would change or improve,

the flowers are fresh and perfect. Wright placed importance on flowers in the house and insisted the garden should be planted with flowers that would complement the colours of the interior. He hated his houses spoilt with the wrong choice of furniture, so he designed lights and furniture when he could. Liliane Kaufmann had his complete approval: the fabrics, the ornaments... everything is perfectly selected. Wright was in so many ways at the cutting edge of technology; in Fallingwater, for instance, he experimented with mitred glass corner windows without a supporting frame.

 We were there to see the late summer sheath of deep green, before the trees turned into their autumn shower of gold. When Wright was asked what colour to paint the concrete cantilevered structure he suggested the colour of the rhododendron leaves in the autumn, so in this season, the house blends into the foliage. From photographs it is magical in the winter with the bare branches covered in a powder of snow, the water of the fall frozen into the folds of a curtain. Each season has a particular beauty.

My passion for design embraces many things; an important facet is my deep love of textiles, which I most probably inherited from my Mother. I was the eldest of three girls before my parents produced a son. Mother made most of our clothes and there was great excitement when a new outfit was imminent. She dressed the three of us in the same clothes. I was lucky as my outfit, often with a hat to match, was always new and my youngest sister remembers wearing the same dress for years. As a young child I responded to the tactile qualities of textiles, and to their colour and pattern. My lifelong love of textiles, whether they are used for clothes or interiors, grew still

deeper after working at Hurdley's, as Derek Hurdley had a great appreciation of fabric; he was a sensitive buyer and always involved his staff in discussions over choices.

When I started teaching I always put emphasis on the background and history of textiles. In many cultures textiles are treasured and major museums and galleries display them as art. New Zealand has little history in this field, as apart from Maori weaving, which for a long time was unappreciated, we tended to think of fabrics in terms of domestic curtains and upholstery. We miss the history and magic of how textiles are made and the intricacy and creative exercise that go with the applying of a pattern. Textile designers are highly regarded today. In older cultures the dyer of fibres for rugs or fabrics held a prestigious position and would not disclose his recipes. Imagination and innovation, as well as skill, are key factors in the design of textiles. On the course, I start the textile module by telling my students that studying the history of textiles is like looking at the history of the world and involves romance, drama, money, greed, cruelty, adventure, wars and challenge.

New Zealand imports textiles as we are too small to sustain a viable industry, and there are a number of companies importing beautiful fabrics. The story of Jim Thompson, the legendary figure who revived the silk industry in Thailand, has always captured my imagination. Thompson was an American architect, and he had such an innate sense of colour and design that he was asked to design interiors as well as houses. He joined the army during World War II and was sent abroad for special training in order to assist the Free Thai Movement. Arriving in Thailand just at the end of the Japanese occupation he developed such a deep love of the place and its people that he decided to spend the rest of his life there. First, he needed

to find an occupation. He had seen silk weavers in the North, but it was a dying craft, due to the Japanese occupation and to the introduction of rayon, which was much cheaper. He realised it would be a tragedy if the silk industry was lost, so he decided to revive it. Unable to speak the language, but gifted with a charming and gregarious personality, he was very successful in selling the glistening beautiful fabric to tourists, who were beginning to flock to Thailand now that the country (formerly Siam) had opened its borders to the outside world.

JIM THOMPSON

Thompson opened an elegant shop in Bangkok, later adding a factory in north-west Thailand, where the original silk weavers were from. His competitors could never rival the colours and patterns of his silks, although they often tried to imitate them. He floated the company, and the first weaver he employed was appointed a director. This great gesture on Jim's part enabled all the profits to stay in Thailand. His approach was in marked contrast to that of the English, who had earlier decimated the Indian cotton industry by sending raw cotton to England and then coercing the Indian people to wear and use cotton fabric woven in the north of England.

Atelier Textiles have the New Zealand agency for Jim Thompson Fabrics and a decade or more ago I was privileged, thanks to Atelier, to visit Thailand and the Jim Thompson factory. I flew out of Bangkok on the one daily flight, stayed the night at a small hotel and the next morning was driven to the factory for a tour of each section. After admiring the bales of silkworm cocoons—some glistening white, others golden—I was shown the dyeing, spinning and weaving processes. The factory was clean and ordered, and

LLOYD ELSEMORE'S PAKURANGA EZY-PARK IGA STORE



the noise of the clacking looms was not excessive. I was interested in the making of the complicated and time-consuming ikat fabrics. I still cannot understand how they work out the patterns for weaving these, even though I was shown!

ATELIER TEXTILES, JIM THOMPSON FABRICS

After a delicious lunch an inspector took me on his round of house visits. A benign company policy enabled valued married women weavers to have a company loom set up in their home. I had a fascinating afternoon visiting typical Thai homes and meeting smiling and friendly women. After a final farewell it was back to Bangkok. The next day I was invited to the company's Bangkok design centre, where all the new colours and patterns were trialled. In a small room two young Thai women were working out how to weave a new ikat pattern that Tinnart Nisalak, the design director, had given them. Finally I was taken to the printing factory in an

outer suburb of Bangkok, where I saw the screen-printing process in action. I left with an attractive cotton scarf similar to the one being printed. This, as well as my memories, I treasure.

TINNART NISALAK

I cannot 'leave' Jim Thompson without mentioning his house in Bangkok. As an architect, he initially had considered designing his own house, but then he said to himself, 'You are now a Thai citizen so you should live in a Thai home.' Thai buildings are wooden and demountable and so are easily transported. In the end he used six Thai structures, reversing the timber so that the more detailed panelling is now on the inside. Utilising Thai furniture, and silk fabrics in vivid shades of Siamese pink and orange, the rooms were adorned with his collections of Oriental ceramics and Thai paintings on paper. I would compare the interior to a treasured work of art or a delicious wine, to be slowly savoured.

Thompson's heart bled for children who had never experienced the beauty of colour, so he opened his house to the public one day a week to raise funds for children born blind. The house is set in a lush Thai garden on a Bangkok klong, or canal. It is an oasis of green and peace in the hot, dusty, noisy but exhilarating city of Bangkok. I have visited several times and never fail to have an emotional response.

Among the highlights of my design experience were the trips to the Milan Furniture Fair. This is not the largest furniture show in the world, but the most influential, and designers and companies flock to it each April. It is the size of a small town and requires buses to take you from one end to the other. My first visit blew me away. The excitement was infectious: the Fair, which runs over three days, has its own Underground station, and the crowds pour off the trains and up the escalators to the entrance. Regardless of the furniture on show, the styling was always disciplined and refined: if one type of flower was displayed on a stand, the same flower was repeated throughout the stand. It was a lesson in the use of the principle of rhythm.

On our first trip we were invited to the *Driade* party, held in an elegant old building with a beautiful courtyard. The party décor included conical lamps, hung throughout the building, which were made of a slow-burning material that gradually filled the space with soft incense. Philippe Starck designs for *Driade*, and he was somewhere in the large crowd that night.

DRIADE, PHILIPPE STARCK

A designer I much admired was Piero Fornasetti; the title of his book *Designer of Dreams* conveys something of his style. An artist influenced by the beauty of the buildings of ancient Rome, he was proficient in the *trompe l'oeil* effect. He was also prolific and designed furniture, screens, fabrics, wallpapers, china, ties,

umbrellas... all expressing his extraordinary visual language. One of his recurring images is a woman's face—classic, very beautiful—which he has used on numerous items, sometimes in a spirit of levity, making her wink or giving her a moustache!

Piero is no longer alive but in Milan we met his charming son, Barnaba, who is carrying on his legacy. Before we next returned to Milan, I wrote to Barnaba and asked him if he would invite us to his home. I have been told that I write a very persuasive letter; nonetheless I was delighted when he graciously agreed. It was with great excitement that we left the Fair early one day, in the rain, to keep our afternoon appointment. Piero's father had built the original house, so Barnaba was the third generation to inhabit it. Milan houses are built right up to the street and present a closed front. We were to discover the magic that was behind the aged brick walls as we entered by way of a courtyard with soft plantings. Most surfaces had some Fornasetti images; you may think it would be overpowering, but it is madly appealing. The kitchen table was printed in Barnaba's own design of butterflies, as is the floor and some of the cupboard units—enchanting. We thanked our host many times and reluctantly said goodbye, leaving in a state of mild euphoria.

PIERO FORNASETTI, BARNABA FORNASETTI

Before the same Milan trip we had read that the widow and daughter of the famous architect Achille Castiglioni had turned his studio and library into a research and learning centre, which could be visited by appointment. The group was accepted. Arriving in the elegant aged square we found the right building and went up to meet Achille's widow and daughter in their apartment, which they have preserved as a memorial for a great man; an artist, an architect and a designer.

ACHILLE CASTIGLIONI

I am an avid appreciator of Castiglione's many light fittings, most of which are still in demand today and are made by Flos. He is best known for his Arco lamp, designed in the 1960s, with its heavy marble base and arcing telescopic wand ending in a chrome bowl with a circle of holes around its crown. These throw a pattern of light onto the ceiling. I had always thought that the hole that pierced the marble base was there for aesthetic reasons, but discovered it was so a broom handle could go through it for easy transport. I personally covet his Snoopy lamp and Parentisi adjustable hanging light. We all felt we had got to know this great man, who, as a teacher at the influential Milan Polytechnic, was a mentor and inspiration for so many successful architects and designers of today.

FLOS, ARCO LAMP, SNOOPY LAMP, PARENTISI LAMP

 was honoured to receive the Queen's Service Medal for services to the community and the design world and had the memorable experience of going down to Government House in Wellington to have the handsome medal pinned on my chest by the then Governor-General Dame Sylvia Cartwright, a charming and dedicated woman. Bev Smail and members of the Guild were behind my nomination, putting in a great deal of hard work behind the scenes to achieve it, and I certainly appreciated their effort.

Looking back on my life was at first a daunting concept. As the project has gone on I am appreciating the honour. I'm a great admirer of the work of earlier Objectspace Masters of Craft, ceramic artist Richard Parker and jeweller Kobi Bosshard. Both makers had created objects, whereas what I have achieved is more ephemeral. Nonetheless, many successful people in diverse fields will every so often mention a teacher who gave them their initial inspiration. To give my students confidence

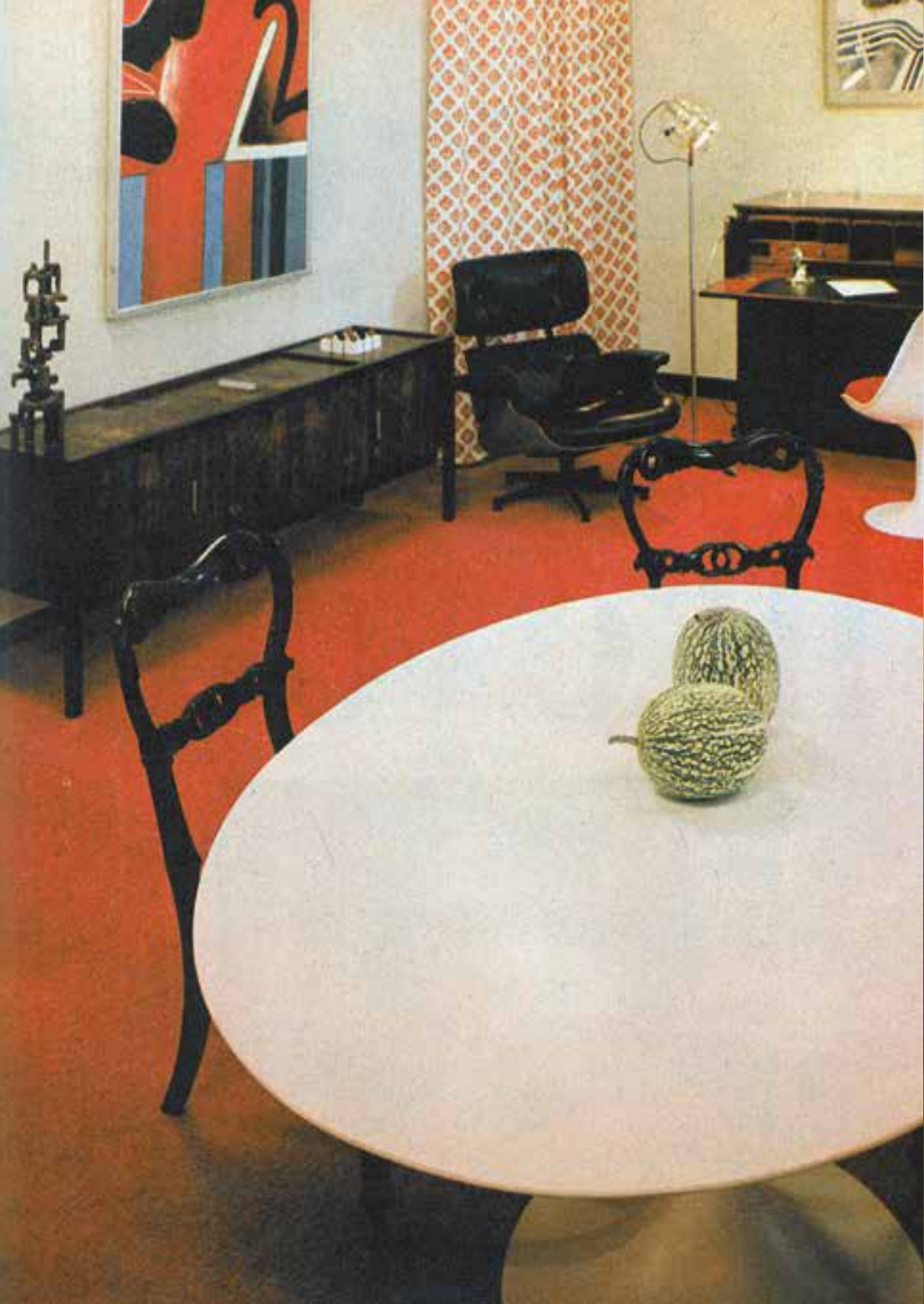
to achieve has always been a driving force of my philosophy. Whether it is to create a warm home that is expressive of their family's lifestyle and interests or to help a client, the same principle should apply. Several have gained the confidence to move into an entirely different field. My other strong motive is to broaden students' horizons so that their vision is wider and richer.

OBJECTSPACE, RICHARD PARKER, KOBI BOSSHARD

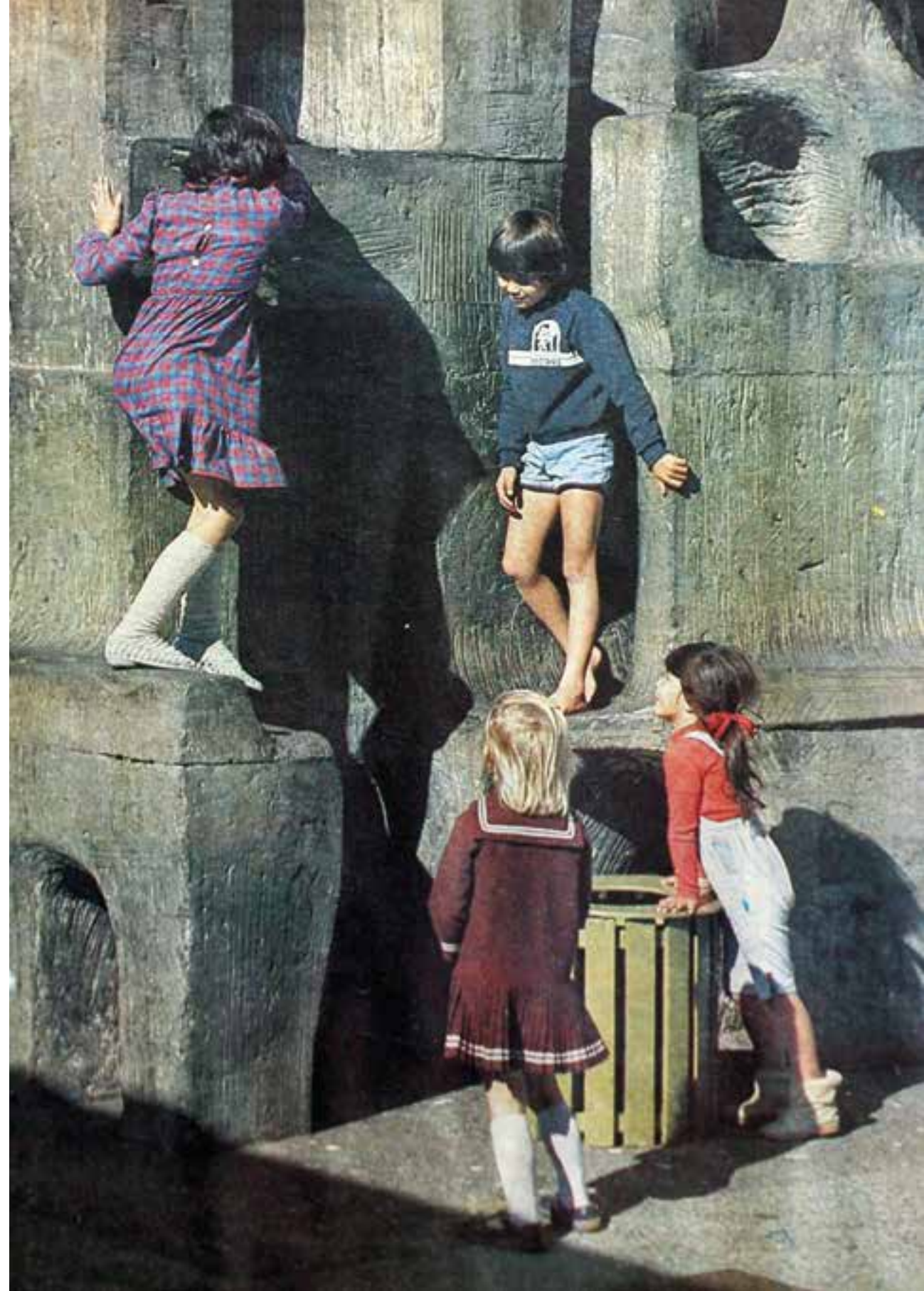
An unexpected reward from reviewing my life and former associations was meeting up with people who have meant a great deal to me in the past, but whom I hadn't seen for a while. Regretfully there are a number who are no longer alive; their children or family have substituted for them, which is also a pleasure. It has been a very warm and nostalgic time.

In reflecting upon my life, I realise I am not an innovator, but an avid appreciator and traveller. I treasure the knowledge of the past and get excited by brilliant new design. The experience of being in a great building continues to give me a sense of euphoria. I find a rich reward in sharing my enthusiasm and knowledge. Having lived through eight decades, I have acquired a repertoire of styles and influences. I am reminded of the great quote, borrowed from Johannes Itten, artist and Bauhaus teacher, which I give to my students in the first class of each course. 'Learning from books and teachers is like travelling by carriage, so we are told in the Veda [the ancient Hindu scriptures]. But, the carriage will serve only while one is on the high road. He who reaches the end of the high road will leave the carriage and walk afoot. One may travel carriage-less and by unblazed trails, but progress is slow and the journey perilous. If a high and distant goal is to be attained, then it is advisable to take a carriage at first, in order to advance swiftly and safely.'

NANETTE CAMERON



PREVIOUS PGS: FOCUS INTERIORS, EVE MAGAZINE, SEPTEMBER 1970, REES INTERIORS, EVE MAGAZINE  
RIGHT: JIM ALLEN SCULPTURE, PAKURANGA TOWN CENTRE 1960S







Katie Lockhart has a design studio in Auckland that focuses on interior orientated projects who first met Nanette Cameron at the Milan Furniture Fair.

Kirsty Cameron is a costume designer, film maker and the daughter of Nanette.

Dr Rachel Carley is a Senior Lecturer in Interior Design in the Department of Design and Visual Arts, Unitec. She is currently Executive Editor of the IDEA Journal (Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educators Association).

Vivienne Stone is an independent producer who has known the Cameron family for many years.

The poster consists of Home Journal articles 1970-1978 written and styled by Nanette Cameron and photographed by Rees Osborne. The postcard features the Blue Room from the Nanette Cameron Master of Craft exhibition, photo courtesy Darryl Ward. The bookmark features Nanette Cameron and her Memphis styled birthday cake on the occasion of her 60th birthday.

## Images

Cover, p.026: Stills from 'Swan-song' a short film by Kirsty Cameron 2012.

Inside cover, p.022, 023: 'Le Corbusier Polychromiearchitecturale.

p.008: Textile woven from old silk saris.

p.018, 020: Colour Moves: Art & Fashion by Sonia Delaunay, Smithsonian, 2011.

p.024: Lacquered shelf in dining room, Glenmore Road image by Kirsty Cameron.

p.28: Glenmore Road image by Gavin Rees, 1976

p.030, 032: Architectural model scale 1:100 of Glenmore Road model made by Susan Hillery, 2013.

p.034-038, 040-043: Glenmore Road by Mark Smith for HOME Magazine, 2008.

p.039: Johnny and Kirsty Cameron at Glenmore Road, 1969.

p.044: The Blue Room at Objectspace image by Darryl Ward, 2013.

p.046: Rees Interiors, late 1960s.

p.047-049, 051, 052, 054-063: From articles written by Nanette Cameron for The New Zealand Home Journal photos by Rees Osborne, 1960s and 1970s.

p.050: Jim Thompson silk scarf owned by Nanette Cameron.

p.53: Textile design by Vanessa Bell.

p.054: Johnny Cameron at Glenmore Road, 1969.

p.064: Chair designed by Colin Martin purchased by Nanette Cameron, 1960s.

p.065: Lucy Rie ceramics purchased by Nanette Cameron from the Art of the Potter, 1950s.

p.078, 080: Colour Wheels from Nanette's students folios.

p.085: Workbook for The Blue Room, image Darryl Ward, 2013.

p.086: Nanette Cameron and siblings 1938.

p.088: Cameron family at the Vernon farm 1970s.

p.090: Family Christmas at Glenmore Road 1970s.

p.092: Art Of the Potter, Victoria Street Auckland 1950s, courtesy Jill Pierce.

p.094: Nanette Cameron sunbathing on holiday 1950s.

p.099: Teschmakers Convent where Nanette Cameron boarded, image courtesy of North Otago Museum.

p.108: Nanette Cameron and Joy McCaskey in Europe, 1950s.

p.112: Nanette Cameron and friends skiing at Queenstown 1948.

p.115: Lloyd Elsmore's Pakuranga Ezy-Park IGA store, photo courtesy of Auckland Libraries Footprints 01378.

p.118: Focus Interiors, Eve Magazine, September 1970.

p.119: Rees Interiors, Eve Magazine.

p.121: Jim Allen sculpture, Pakuranga Town Centre 1960s, photo courtesy Mark Lawson.

p.122: Howard Sumpter's Castor Bay house designed by Jim Hackshaw of Group Architects 1956-57.

p.125: Nanette Cameron in a dress she made at Otago University 1947.

Unless stated images are sourced from the Cameron Family.

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