

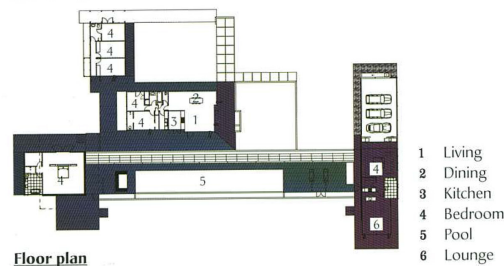
2008

Williams BACH

• MATAKANA •

Transformed from its humble Kivi beginning the Williams Bach now forms a sprawling, relaxed 'L' of pavilions around the split-level terrace and pool.

This holiday house celebrates light and space, the pavilions being seldom more than one room deep. The living areas have a series of sliding doors that enable whole walls to open out to the terrace. The bathrooms, lined in pale timbers and coloured floor tiles, fuse simple elegance with a beachside holiday feel. *Kerry Mason*



Floor plan

of products and materials is the cause of the biggest change in the industry. In the generation I grew up in there were only two sets of taps, showers were lined with Formica, or, if you were really wealthy, they were tiled and had a stainless steel shower tray. Nowadays, everyone has the opportunity to see everything and New Zealand is part of the international market.

If there is a lot of input from international markets, how do you ensure you are designing a house that is of New Zealand?

Well, that is really the onus on our consciences to do that. We still want to design buildings that are appropriate for New Zealand, and I hope we do. That is what we go through a lot of effort for.

I think it is critically important that New Zealand plays a part in our architecture. Obviously there will be international influences – we are all exposed to international magazines and other countries and cultures, but I still think a house in New Zealand for New Zealanders needs to be designed and built to reflect the way we

live, because we do live quite differently to other cultures.

You mentioned that you have done work in Fiji. How do you approach that in terms of design references?

We don't try and take the New Zealand aesthetic over there, but we don't just go up there and do a thatched roof burre.

How did the work in Fiji come about?

It came from my time at Warren and Mahoney, when we designed the Sheraton

in Fiji. Howard Paterson was an existing client and friend of mine, and he was one of the shareholders in the Sheraton Villa's development. It was run as a competition and we were fortunate enough to be successful.

Howard did a lot of work in Fiji, and through him we met Evan Williams. Sadly, Howard died seven years ago. He was MAP's predominant client until then but Evan stepped onto that bridge and became a similar type of client for MAP from that point on. Evan has provided a

lot of commercial work for us, but we also do alterations, houses and baches for him. Again, it is that thing about relationships.

What is it like working in Fiji?

It is horrific. I mean it is a great opportunity, but the building industry is dreadfully difficult. The Sheraton, which was about a \$20 million project, had 400 staff on site. Fletcher Construction managed the project so they had expatriates running it, but the labour was all Fijians and Fijian-Indians. There is a different way of building

in Fiji. They have lots of people on the job who are not paid much money. There would be 10 people doing a job that maybe one person would do in New Zealand. The difference is that there is a lower standard of workmanship or craftsmanship in Fiji, whereas if you build somewhere like Indonesia or Thailand it is carried out by more skilled labour. Fijians tend not to be. They employ a rough and ready process.

Does that mean you are required to approach design differently?



10 The Williams Bach's form is a sprawling collection of living and sleeping pavilions around a split-level terrace and pool.

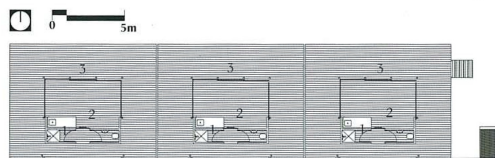
2008

Wiroa Station BEACH PAVILIONS & WINE CELLAR

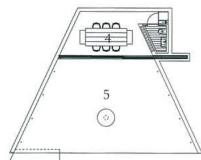
• NORTHLAND •

Providing a beachside day facility for residents, the beach pavilions achieve an elegant rusticity, employing several different forms of cedar inside and out in simple flat-roofed cubes set on large floating decks.

On the same site, a concrete wine cellar utilises the local vernacular of wartime coastal bunkers. The cellar opens into a broad wedge to take in a stunning elevated vista of the Bay of Islands from an extensive infinity-edge terrace. *Kerry Mason*



Beach pavilion plan



Wine cellar plan

- 1 Kitchen
- 2 Dining
- 3 Deck
- 4 Tasting room
- 5 Terrace

Yes, materially we tend to use a lot of concrete block over there. Not only because it is readily available, but also because the one thing that Fijians do well is plaster. I think it is because everything is built so badly, so they use the plaster to straighten everything up – its thickness probably ranges from 10 to 20 millimetres.

When building in Fiji you also have to prepare your client for a different set of expectations. You have to make them aware that their building won't be built to the millimetre, it will be built to the nearest 20 millimetres. You also have to be aware that contractors may just disappear or go broke. We had a job last year, where the joiner was paid a reasonable sum of money through the contractor as a deposit to start the joinery and then disappeared. The client never saw the money again.

What drives you in your business?

The thing I really enjoy about the business is the creative side where the end result is something that is realised and three-dimensional. That is without a doubt the greatest satisfaction of being an architect.

I also think the fear of failure is a real motivating force for me. When you are running your own practice collectively you have a responsibility as a lot of people are depending on you. I have to say I spend

quite a lot of time lying awake at night thinking about the business aspect of it.

Architects aren't often known for their business nous. Were you exposed to the business aspect of being an architect while you were at Warren and Mahoney?

I guess if I were self-analytical I would say that I have an interest in the business aspect of anything. Our profession is not regarded as being fantastic with money, and that is probably something that clients throw around all the time, and it might be true, to a degree. However, I am quite interested in how a business works and I have a commercial motivation.

Even at Warren and Mahoney, while there was a structure to the administration area of the business, I think I understood enough about how it worked to immediately know what lay ahead when we started MAP. New Zealand is a country where everyone does a bit of everything but I certainly don't do the accounts on the kitchen table. We have a proper set-up, good administration, a practice manager and good accountant support. If you get some systems set up all you really need to do is monitor it. Being able to run a small business adequately is really satisfying, and I treat it as just another aspect to the practice of architecture. It just doesn't work if all you want to do is design.

It is often said that an architect needs to be a lot of things. Going back to what you said about Miles Warren being a good teacher, do you undertake the same level of teaching in your office?

I try to, but I am not nearly as diligent as Miles was. Huia went through the Warren and Mahoney process too, so we have both been taught the same way, and when we do sit down with staff and review drawings it is with the same terms of reference.

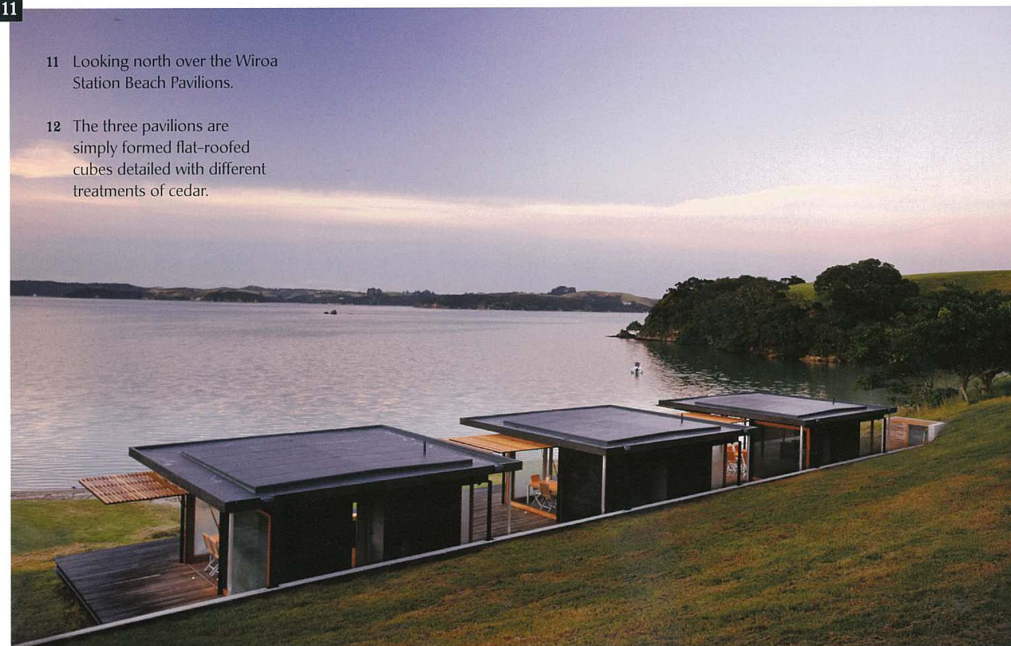
The review process has changed as people are drawing on computers and I think computer drawings are much harder to read in that things can be hidden. I think philosophically we approach parts of the practice in the same way as we experienced at Warren and Mahoney, that being either graphically through the way our drawings are set up, to technically, as in getting the assembly right to the importance of proportions and arrangement.

Working for Miles was interesting. Everyone could benefit from the experience of working with someone who can be charming one minute and tyrannical the next – explosive tempers, drawings being ripped up, and the next minute everything is fine. In that sense it was very much the old fashioned office. Those of us who stayed and grew in that environment at Warren and Mahoney did receive a pretty tough ▶

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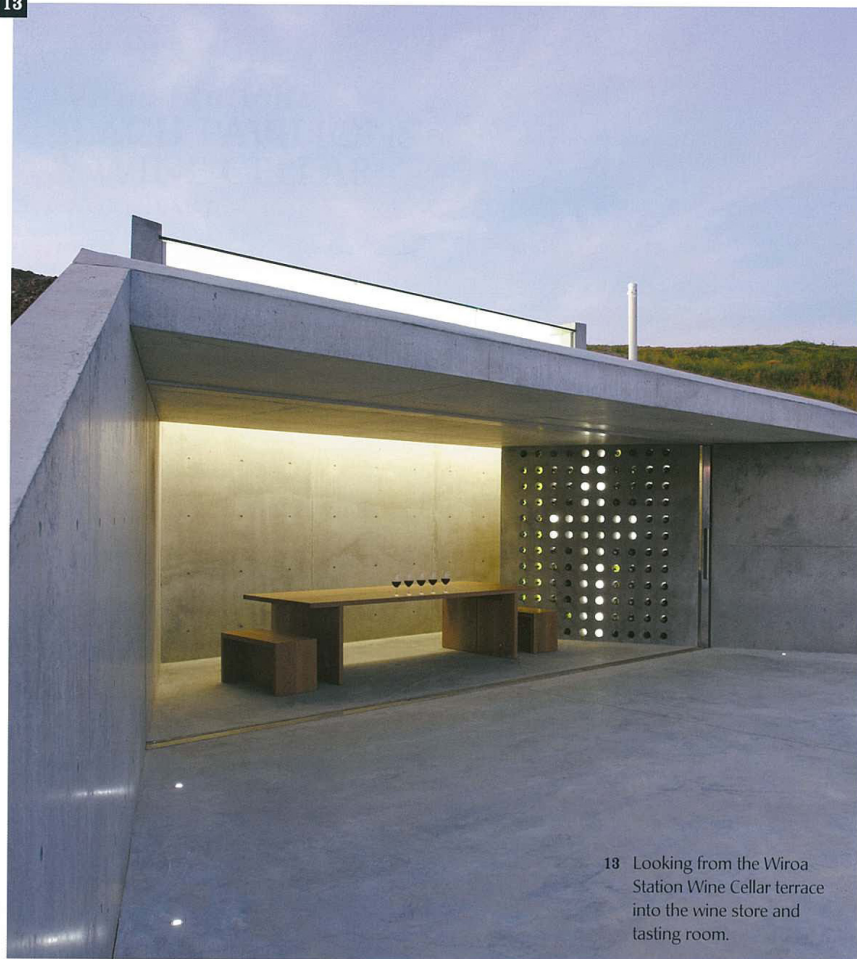
11 Looking north over the Wiroa Station Beach Pavilions.

12 The three pavilions are simply formed flat-roofed cubes detailed with different treatments of cedar.



12





13 Looking from the Wiroa Station Wine Cellar terrace into the wine store and tasting room.

MAP Architects

Level 3, 133 Victoria Street,
Christchurch
03 962 6530
www.modarch.co.nz

Selected publications

Home Work, Random House, 2010
Trends Inspiring Homes,
Harper Collins Publishers, 2007
Home, Feb/March 2008
Houses, Kitchens and Bathrooms,
2, 2008
New Zealand Home and Entertaining,
2, 1999; 2, 1998; 5, 1997; 5, 1995;
5, 1994
Next, 245, 2004; 208, 2001; 99, 1999
Urbis, 51, 2009; 45, 2008; 2, 1999

Selected awards

2010: NZIA National Award:
Wiroa Station Wine Cellar
2009: NZIA Local Awards: Wiroa
Station Wine Cellar; Wiroa Station
Beach Pavilions; Peppers Bluewater
Resort; McLean House; Clear House
2008: NZIA Local Award: Petrini
Café and Deli
2006: NZIA National Award:
Breamtail Lodge
2005: NZIA National Award:
Frenchman's Bay Holiday House
2004: NZIA Local Award:
Frenchman's Bay Holiday House

training. I think the tough ones survived. The one who could be confident and stand up and argue a point would make it.


It sounds like a continuation of the crit process that one goes through at architecture school.

Yes, and the satisfaction you can get from actually going into battle and getting success at some level is great.

It's also an amazing skill to acquire.

Looking back over the number of years and the people who thrive in that environment doesn't necessarily relate to their academic success. It is the ones who come out mid-stream and have learnt to be tough about what they have done, in the real world of architecture and in the practice of

architecture, who often succeed.

Culturally, for the office, I think it is really important that everyone contributes to the debate and the crits. It is really healthy and it keeps them and it keeps us on our toes. If you have keen architectural graduates out there, those are the ones that you have to watch out for and who keep pushing us to do better work. Again, it connects to the idea about challenging students' studio work so that graduates can go out and have the confidence to question if architects' work is really good enough. If we hadn't had a really good mix of staff here, I think that human nature would have seen to it that our standards would have dropped. Certainly, the better work over the last five years has been the result of people within the practice challenging it. 

Photography

Portrait: Patrick Reynolds

Frenchman's Bay House:

MAP Architects

Breamtail Lodge:

Christine Hanson

Mason House: Patrick Reynolds

Foggo Bach: Daniel Allen

Williams Bach: Brian Culy

Wiroa Station Beach Pavilions

and Wine Cellar: Brian Culy