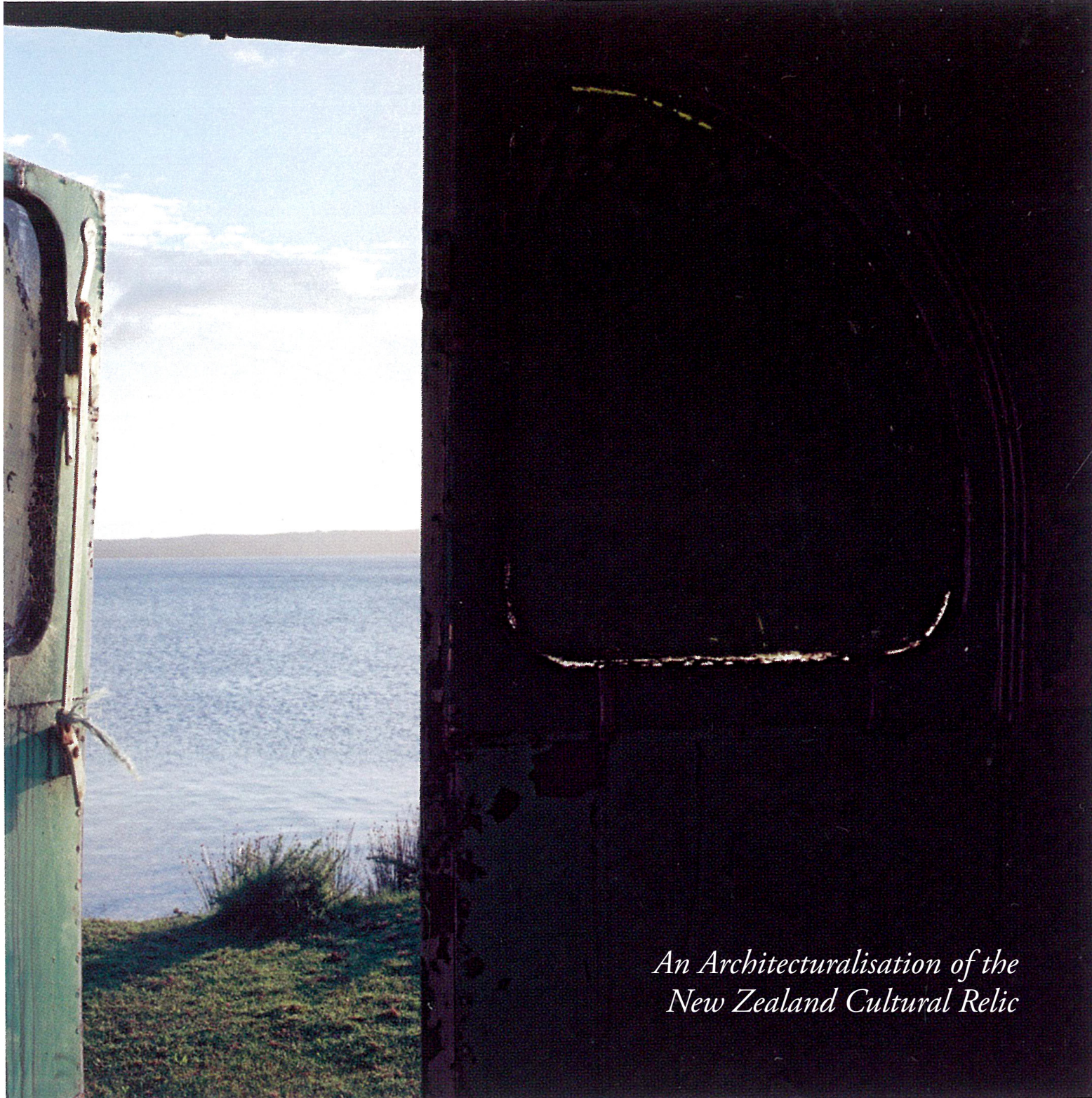
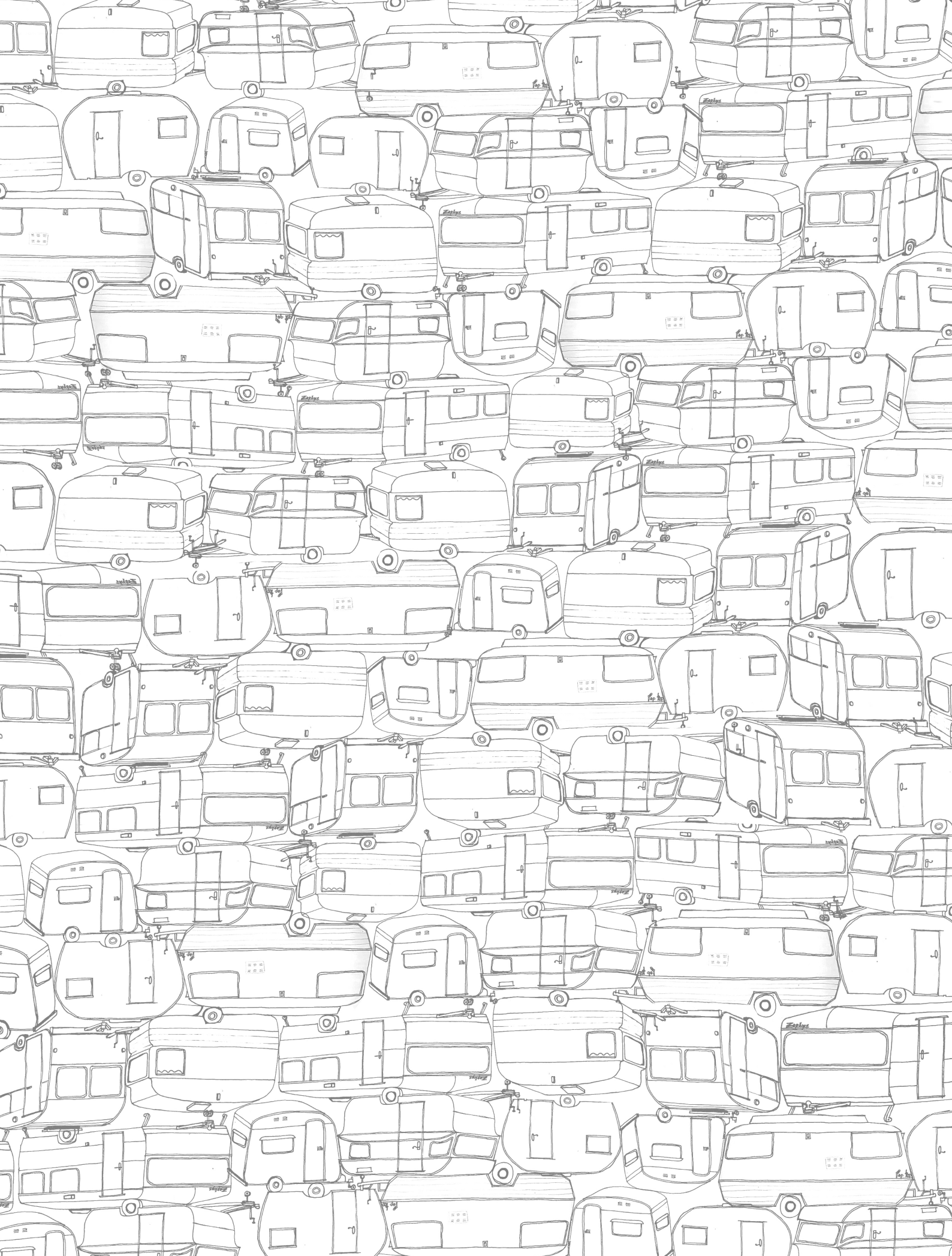


# "Re-collecting" Caravan



*An Architecturalisation of the  
New Zealand Cultural Relic*







“Re-collecting” Caravan:  
*An Architecturalisation of the New Zealand  
Cultural Relic*

by  
Shelly Clement

A 120 point thesis submitted to the School of  
Architecture of Design, Victoria University of  
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# Abstract

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*“Re-collecting” Caravan* re-interprets caravanning as the basis of a 21<sup>st</sup> century New Zealand vernacular architecture. Two themes run through this thesis: the caravan as an article of nostalgia, and the caravan in architecture as marginal. The final design outcome is a new typology of holidaying vessels within New Zealand’s camping grounds.

This thesis begins with the specific history of the caravan within New Zealand and the facts that surround the reality of caravanning in today’s society: the caravan has become a celebrated cultural relic of our recent past of which is now continually used as a symbol or icon of New Zealand. A fear for the loss of the caravan as a living holiday reality sparked a cultural nostalgia and the foundations for this research. To prevent the loss of the adored functional domestic vessel, the caravan was next analysed for its compositional and phenomenal attributes of which could later help inform an architectural response. It was the ‘retro’ aesthetic combined with the fact that ephemeral cultural artefacts (such as the caravan) do not typically ‘belong’ in the architectural realm that brought about the second theme. Kitsch as a by-product of a re-interpreted retro artefact is addressed before moving on to the design process and final design.

Although orientated specifically toward the caravan, this thesis addresses the wider issues of celebrating and liberating the architectural influences of the margins. It deals with kitsch, lifestyles, nostalgia, miniature, popular culture, media, tourism, mobility, and iconism.

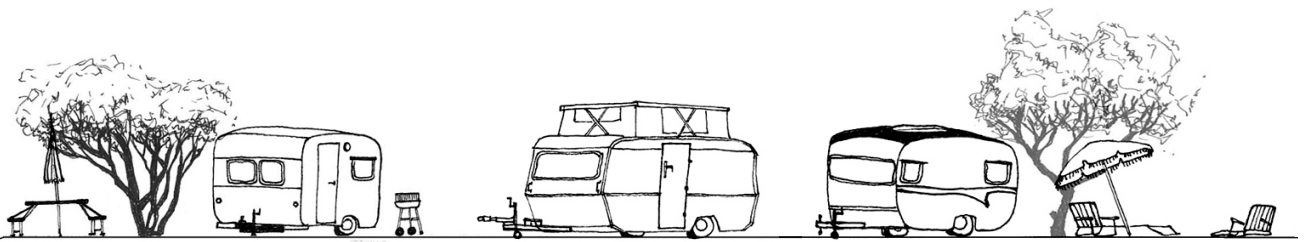


Figure. 4. Caravan Park scene  
sketched by author

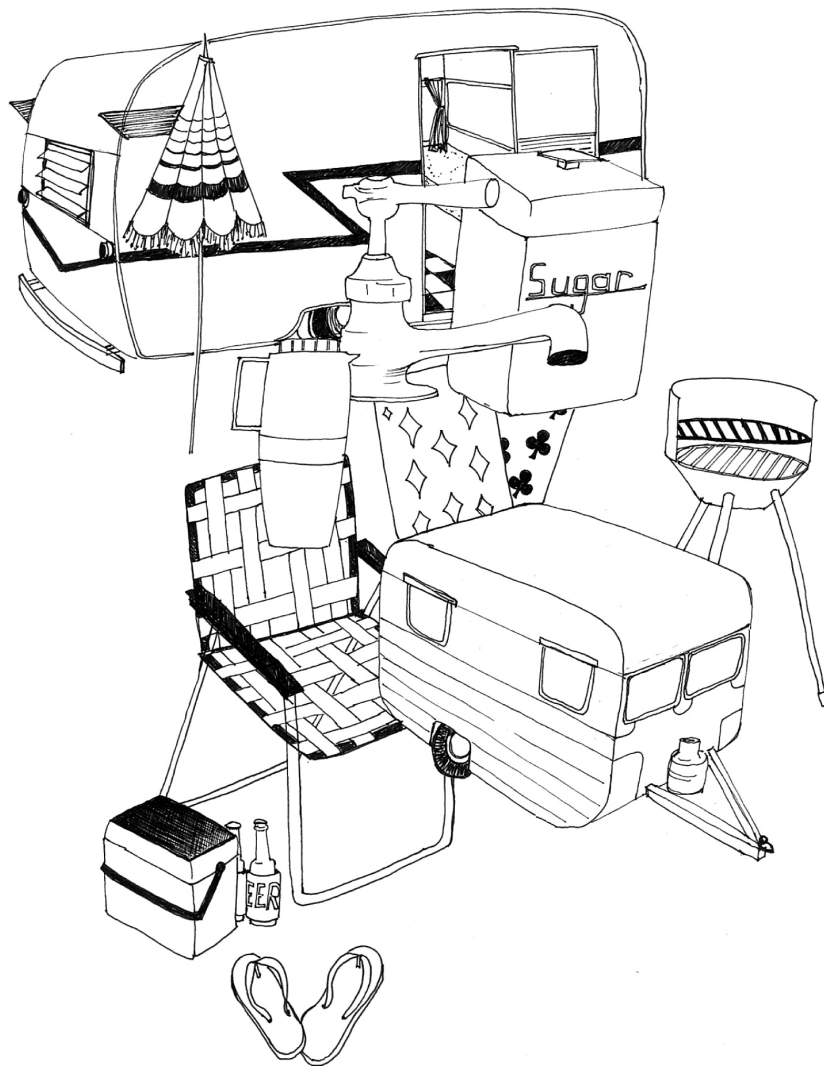


Figure. 5. 'Caravaning'  
sketch by author



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# Introduction

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## *Caravan in New Zealand as Nostalgic*

Nostalgia is an ambiguous term which refers to the qualitative emotions of sentimentality, happiness, sadness and longing. But it is these contradicting subjective emotions which make it so interesting. The caravan, I suggest, is an architecture of nostalgic reflection in New Zealand. The caravan was in fashion and in use predominately from the 1940s through to the 1980s when the industry was thriving. The aesthetic nature of the New Zealand fleet of caravans became fixed within these decades. Thirty years on and these holidaying vessels are decidedly 'retro' and have come to represent a time past. Their iconic exterior forms and ornately furnished interiors have instilled them with charm and character. Although the caravan has been a beloved relic of the New Zealand holidaying culture for some time, it was the threatening camping ground decline that sparked the caravanning renaissance. Headlines in magazines and newspapers began to scare New Zealanders into believing the caravanning lifestyle was disappearing. New Zealand has grown culturally nostalgic for the caravan as the limited number of 'originals' is precarious. Today the caravan appears on postcards, television advertisements, in museums and in galleries. Its identity is associated with New Zealand's cultural heritage. As the caravan continues along the path towards being 'collected', the lived reality and experience of its unique qualities fade with the memories of the caravanning generation. The intent of this research is to extract the physical and metaphysical qualities of the caravan to use as new design devices for a contemporary vernacular architecture.

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Figure. 6. Line of caravans, Kaiteriteri Beach Motor Camp, April 2010



## *Caravan in Architecture as Unimportant*

There is an invisible line drawn for cultural relics where they no longer become appropriate motifs. This is where the 'guardians' of the higher culture undermine these celebrated features of an artefact and consider if they 'belong'. They are regarded as something that the masses or popular culture can enjoy, and deem them inappropriate for use in anything within the academic realm- for instance art and architecture. One New Zealand artist, Judy Darragh, defies this trend. She embraces and celebrates the iconic knick-knacks that most consider junk, and uses them to create sculptural pieces. She is not concerned by the kitsch connotations that have been associated with her work. It is rare to find artists who are self confessed fans of kitsch, and it is even rarer to find an architect who is. Kitsch has not found its place within architecture and only recently have contemporary theorists begun to challenge its derogatory associations.

The New Zealand Bach is another example of a quaint cultural treasure which now influences the architecture of contemporary holiday houses. This is not to say that every new design has been entirely successful. The term 'Bach' has become a label to grant any building situated at the seaside, regardless of its architectural qualities. This thesis is a study of the caravan as an artefact of New Zealand; it aims to extract its inherent virtues which can translate architecturally. Kitsch is addressed as an important analysis of popular icons entering an artistic or architectural realm.



## *Aim*

The aim is to creatively reinterpret the New Zealand caravan as a contemporary vernacular architectural design. By giving the caravan a new 'life path', the original can continue to be admired, adored, collected, and celebrated whilst its contemporary counterpart cures the panic and melancholic longing for the caravanning experience. There are two themes that run throughout this thesis. The first is the caravan as a nostalgic trigger of past enjoyed holidays and the second is the caravan in architecture as unimportant or 'outsider'. The second theme arose as a bi-product of the first. The caravan cannot be re-interpreted into the architectural realm without addressing the fact that ephemeral cultural artefacts such as the caravan do not typically 'belong'. The aim remains the same, there are just more issues to address along the way.

## *Research Approach*

There is one background chapter and two theory chapters before introducing the architectural design outcome. Although each chapter addresses a variety of research areas, the New Zealand caravan is the common factor to which they all relate. The design nature of the caravan is multidisciplinary. It cross-references automobile, industrial, interior and architectural design. However this thesis is not predominately concerned with prefabrication or mobile architecture. The caravan is approached from a vernacular perspective as an artefact of New Zealand.

To achieve a new contemporary caravan inspired architectural design the caravan itself needed to be explored and studied. Chapter one- *The Nostalgic Caravan* specifically relates to the caravan within New Zealand. It looks at the history of the caravan to reveal any significant moments that informed an impression of New Zealand. It discusses the three 'stages' the caravan can belong to in regards to its function. A caravan that is still in use as a holidaying vessel is in the 'functional reality' stage. Caravans that appear in advertisements or on postcards have become souvenirs and are at the 'nostalgic souvenir' stage. And finally caravans that feature in galleries, albums or museums have become collected and are staged at 'collected cultural relic'.

Figure 7. Robin Morrison Photograph.  
'A classic pink caravan with matching crib. Otago Peninsula'  
Figure 8. Levin Campground 1983  
Figure 9. Caravan parked at beach

Chapter two- *The Miniature World of Caravaning* discusses the qualities of the caravan relative to theory on the miniature. The chapter reveals three spatial components which make up the caravan; the camping ground, the external shell and the interior nest. The camping ground features as an important part of the caravaning lifestyle as a microcosm world of our 'real-world'. It parallels the suburb in miniature form which transforms into a kind of actualised utopia, known as a heterotopia. The caravan's external 'shell' represents the physical form of the caravan as well as providing the threshold layer between the external landscape and the interior. The internal 'nest' of the caravan represents a homely, cosy haven in which to retreat, to feel secure and safe. The terms 'nest' and 'shell' are borrowed from Gaston Bachelard to describe the primal foundations of inside and outside.<sup>1</sup>

Chapter three- *Caravan: A Place for Kitsch* delves into the traditional and contemporary theories of the argument that surrounds kitsch. Can it be considered art proper, does it run alongside art, or is it simply bad art? The chapter then relates contemporary ideas to the New Zealand context to further understand its relationship specifically with the caravan. The landscape imagery of New Zealand is heavily instilled in the aesthetics of kitsch. This is because kitsch and tourism are 'two words which go nicely together'<sup>2</sup> and New Zealand is a tourist's nation.

Chapter four- *The Re-Imaging of the Architectural Caravan* is a description of the architectural design result compared with the first three chapters. Decisions, aesthetics, and functional features were derived directly from conclusions drawn from the caravan about its spatial, compositional, physical, and ephemeral qualities. The design solution is not a singular built form, but a series of architecture that create a typology.

This project has become a creative exploration of embracing and celebrating parts of our iconic lifestyle into built form. It is believed that caravans will disappear, which became the generator of a cultural nostalgia. Through this research proposal the caravan is re-imagined into a vernacular architecture for our holiday lifestyle, which developed into a new building typology or architectonic. Sentimentality and nostalgia are integral emotions connected to the caravan which necessitate an analysis into the aesthetics of kitsch.

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<sup>1</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at how we Experience Intimate Places* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1969), Chapter 4 is dedicated to Nests and chapter 5 Shells.

<sup>2</sup> Gillo Dorfles, *Kitsch-An Anthology of Bad Taste* (London: Studio Vista, 1969), 153.





Figure. 10. Caravans on the Kaikoura coast, near Goose Bay, Dec 2010.  
Figure. 11. Ibid.





# The Nostalgic Caravan

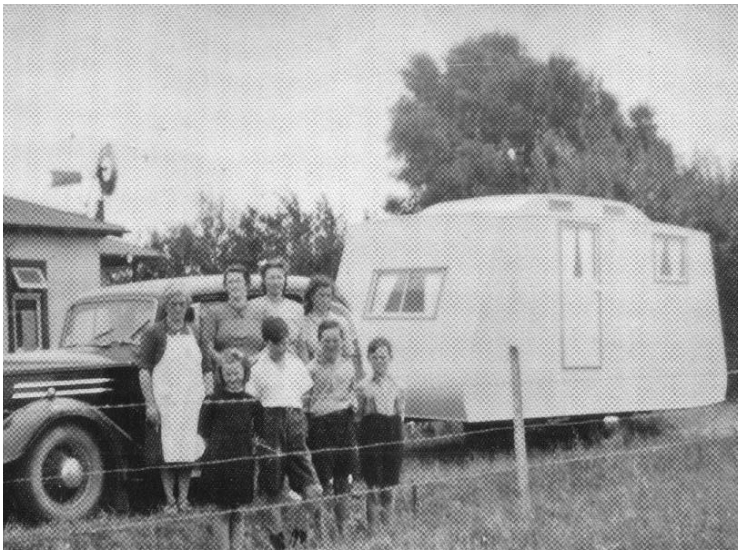
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*It was not a pretty sight: it had been used as a sleep-out and an office, and the bodywork was pocked with rust and dents. Three decades of wind, rain and dust had masked the shine of the painted white aluminium. The tyres were cracked and deflated, bleached after years in the sun. Still, the caravan had charm. The door creaked as I pulled it open, and a hot, musty smell came from inside. I sat down on the threadbare cushions, and then it all came back.<sup>3</sup>*

This chapter gives a brief background to the history of the New Zealand caravan which describes how its fate becomes aesthetically sealed within only a few decades. Years on from this we are looking back upon the caravan through rose-tinted lenses. Based on concepts described by Susan Stewart in her book *On Longing- Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, I propose that there are three scenarios of which the caravan is a participant. These discuss the caravan as a functional holiday vessel through to a symbol or graphic on a postcard. As a young country, New Zealand has few built monuments which contribute to our national identity as the Eiffel Tower does to Paris. This is not to say that I think we should be building large scale monuments which we can claim are icons of our country, but we should look back to our small roots to rediscover the identity we have already established. The Bach for example is a celebrated



building aesthetic of New Zealand and has become a sought after architectural quality within new beachside holiday houses. I would like to argue that the caravan has also become an image or icon of our holidaying lifestyle, one which we are not yet 'owning' and embracing as we do the Bach. At present the caravan's future is ambivalent: caught between a lived reality of family holidays and a memory for the album or museum.



## *A History of the New Zealand Caravan*

Only a handful of international caravan imports needed to arrive at our shores before New Zealand noticed the opportunities in the market and decided they could be manufactured here for less cost. During the caravans' heyday from 1932 until 1979 the caravan was adopted and adapted specifically for its use within New Zealand. It flourished. The already well established love for the outdoors and adventuring meant that the majority of New Zealanders jumped at this new way of travelling and living while on holiday. Although at first not many people could afford their own, there were plenty of opportunities to hire a caravan. Fourteen English manufacturers and a few other dealers had hire fleets spread across the country.<sup>4</sup> Mass production was still in

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<sup>4</sup> Christopher Hunter, *Vantastic: A Pictorial History of Caravans in New Zealand* (New Zealand, Auckland: Harper Collins Publishers Limited, 2005), 15.

the developmental stages and wasn't to arrive until the 1930s. This put a high price on the scarce commercially built caravans.<sup>5</sup> Such circumstances as these provided the optimal conditions for 'kiwi ingenuity' to thrive; caravan builders were discovered in the engineering industry through to woodworking craftsmen, and serial home builders. These emerging caravans soon came to represent the lone and suburban caravans of New Zealand, characters coined by Jock Phillips, in *The Kiwi Caravan- Or Three*. Prosperous middle class families were fancied by the idea of either holidaying in an empty remote location or in temporary communities where neighbours are friends. Camping grounds were set up by the Automobile Association where the presence of caravans was rapidly increasing.<sup>6</sup> In the same period Bach ownership was still low as families struggled to afford them.

The continuation of the successful industry was instantly destroyed due to the introduction of the 1979 caravan sales tax. This sudden halt in production sealed the aesthetic fate of the New Zealand caravan within the languages of the 1940s, 50s, 60s, 70s and early 80s. Although at the time the caravanning population was being hit hard by multiple setbacks such as the leisure tax, an increase in petrol prices combined with a recession- it produced a profound effect on the nation's fleet known to us today. New Zealand has come to adore the 'retro' caravan of our past; it has become a reassuringly quaint and stable image of our heritage. The new white washed conservative imports lack character, charm, and most importantly, a history shared with New Zealand.

Figure. 13. The Dodds family with their 1947 caravan built by professional joiner Bob Dodds, Ashburton, 1948

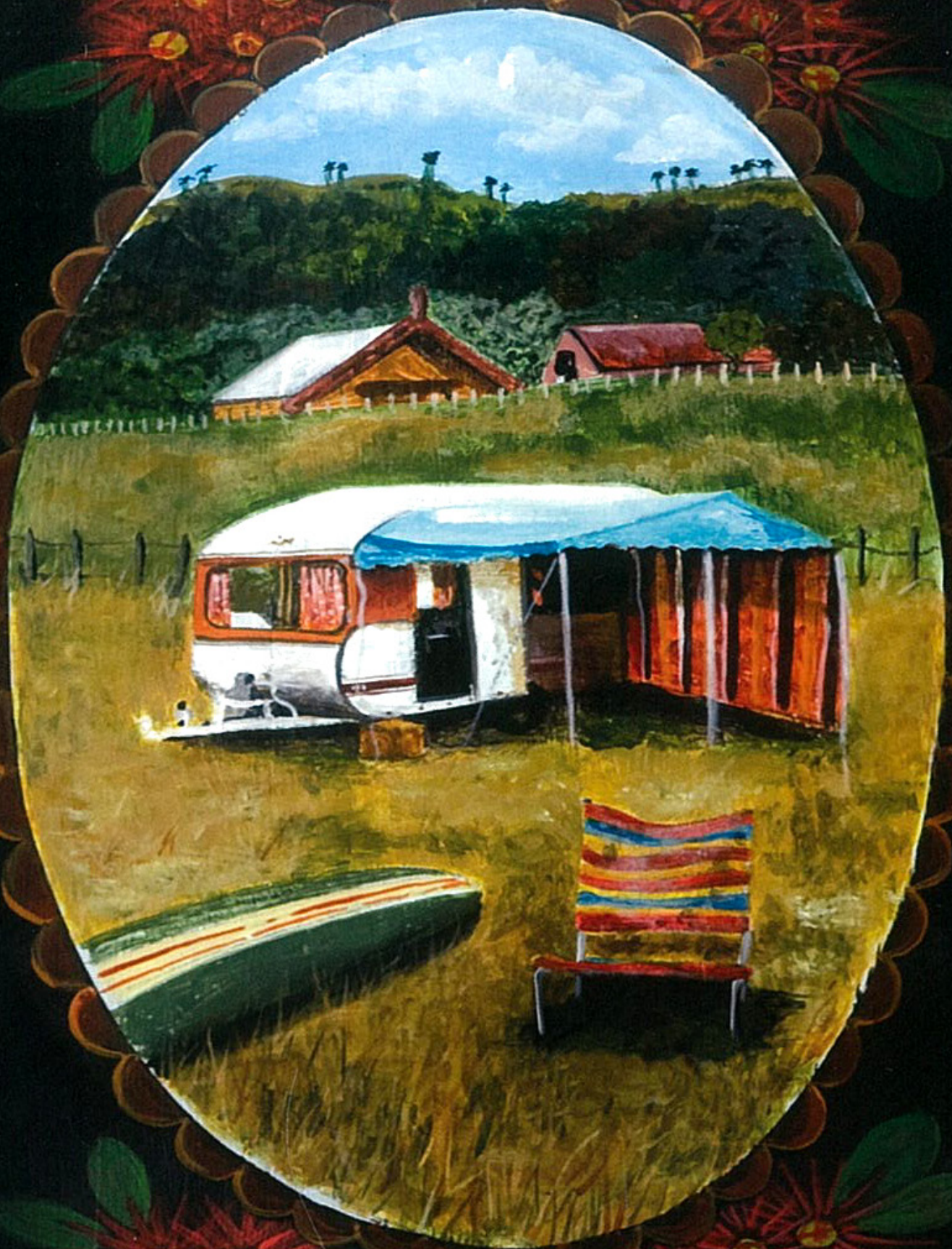
Figure. 14. Caravanning before the Second World War

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Hunter, *Vantastic: A Pictorial History of Caravans in New Zealand* (New Zealand, Auckland: Harper Collins Publishers Limited, 2005), 18.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Figure. 15. 'Perfect Holiday' caravan  
greeting card, Artwork by Leanne Culy







## *The Presentation and Re-Representation of the Caravan*

At present the iconic image of the caravan is being utilised for many different purposes: advertisements, toys, clothing, gifts, artworks, photographs and postcards. They can still be seen in their traditional habitats such as the lakeside, coastline and inland camping grounds, but coastal caravan parks occupy prime real estate and are under constant pressure by developers to sell. Today, it is also common for the caravan to make appearances on television, within galleries and museums. They are enjoyed, celebrated, exploited and manipulated. After all the representations, imitations, and repetitions of the caravan's image are exhausted, will any integrity of the caravan have been diluted? Or will its relationship with New Zealand's national identity become more significant? An artefact that is nostalgically remembered has become a frozen relic of the past. The artefact can only assume new interpretations through its re-invention.



To further understand what is going to happen to the caravan in the future, I have divided the various visual appearances of the caravan into three different scenarios. I have called these *Functional Reality*, *The Nostalgic Souvenir* and *Collected Cultural Relic*. The first type, *Functional Reality*, is a presentation of the caravan; it is a 'genuine' experience. The *Nostalgic Souvenir* and *Collected Cultural Relic* scenarios offer representations of caravans that produce different perceptions of them. Representations that are classified as *Nostalgic Souvenirs* take advantage of the iconic qualities that people recognise and identify with, they are often used in advertising to induce sales or recruitment. It is a type of exploitation and celebration often seen in the tourism industry. The *Collected Cultural*

Figure. 16. Caravan toys  
Figure. 17. Caravan birdhouse



*Relic* is a museumification of all things 'caravan'. It raises the status of the humble caravanning origins into an artefact or piece of history. Differing concerns accompany the different scenarios. For instance, the main concern for the first phase-*Functional Reality*- is that it is disappearing. Less New Zealanders are experiencing a 'real' caravan holiday. The second and third scenarios make use of the quirky 'retro' nature of the caravan as an object of nostalgic desire, however utilising these same qualities can also lead to tacky interpretations. There is a fine line between the 'tongue and cheek' celebration of the caravan and its exploitation as a mere object or icon. The caravan is entwined into New Zealand's heritage- a tactful approach should be employed when using it as an inspiration for a project of any nature, including an architectural one.

### *Functional Reality*

There is much debate as to the number of people still caravanning within New Zealand, but the general feeling is that people believe the number is dropping. Within the last two decades, popular magazines and newspapers caused a panic for the 'death of the campground'. Articles with headlines that read, *\$1m Slice of Heaven* and *Concern at Campsite Decline* injected a fear for campgrounds being bought out by developers as they occupy prime real estate and the developers could offer high prices. A Harcourts estate agent was quoted talking about Mangawhai; 'It's on the cusp of joining other 'discovered' coastal getaways - Pauanui, Mata-rangi, Omaha, Mahurangi. The days of the cute little bach are

Figure. 18. Newspaper Clippings



numbered.<sup>7</sup> Fear for the northern region camping grounds was growing much faster than down south; 'Twenty commercial camp grounds had closed in the Coromandel, one of the most popular spots for beachside summer holidays. Overall national 'camping opportunities' were down 6 per cent, but concern centres on the much more notable decline in the most popular spots in the north and east of the North Island.'<sup>8</sup>

Despite this fear, statistics for April 2008 to April 2009 saw a 28% increase in the number of guests staying nights in caravan parks and camping grounds.<sup>9</sup> This was the largest increase in the tourism sector of all the accommodation types. Further Tourism New Zealand statistics show that domestic tourism has increased by 9%, indicating that New Zealanders are perhaps keeping holidays local. Some campground owners around the country believe the recession is having an influence in their business increase. However, Grant Webster, owner of the *Hot Water Beach Holiday Park* believes '...nostalgia is playing a bigger part in the camping resurgence.'<sup>10</sup> He is not alone in this thought however the introduced panic no doubt played a role in sparking the nostalgic reminiscing of summer holiday destinations. This nostalgia arising through panic is slipping towards melancholy as it is instilled with regret. Some families may feel regretful that they did not fully appreciate their caravan experience while they could, whilst other families may feel regretful that they have lost the opportunity to have the experience at all. The nostalgia of the camping ground has grown into a 'constructed nostalgia'. New Zealand as a whole feels as though something will be lost if the camping grounds disappear. Gray Borrel of Roadcraft, a motorhome manufacturer, suggests that 'perhaps the average New Zealander is worried that they may eventually lose their ability to go and holiday next to the beach? Parents want to ensure that their children experience a classic kiwi camping holiday while we can.'<sup>11</sup>

*"We've definitely  
seen a resurgence in  
caravans over the last  
couple of years... I  
believe it is something  
that will continue."*

Richard Sansbury, Manager of  
Akaroa Top 10 Holiday Park.,  
In Jo Bailey. "The Renaissance  
of Camping", *Next Magazine*  
January 2010, 41.

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7 *The New Zealand Herald*, "\$1m Slice of Heaven", November 12, 2006.

8 Martin Kay, "Concern at Campsite Decline", *The Dominion Post*, September 16, 2006, A2.

9 Jo Bailey, "The Renaissance of Camping", *Next Magazine* January, 2010, 39.

10 Grant Webster, In Jo Bailey, "The Renaissance of Camping", *Next Magazine* January, 2010, 40.

11 Gray Borrel, In Jo Bailey, "The Renaissance of Camping", *Next Magazine* January, 2010, 41.



Figure. 19. Castlepoint Holiday Park & Motels, Castlepoint, Wairarapa

*“Years later the magnificent Cooper’s Beach motorcamp, which we stayed at for five years running, became a victim of Northland’s coastal development frenzy. But in the 1970s it was an egalitarian utopia where families could experience quintessential Kiwi beach holidays. Now the Doubtless Bay views are the preserve of wealthy in their condos.”*

Lester Thorley. “Beach Boy”, *Waikato Times*, December 30, 2002, 10.

The Statistics New Zealand accommodation survey for November 2010 shows that the number of nights guests are staying in holiday parks has been steady around the 400,000 mark for the last 5 years.<sup>12</sup> The Holiday Accommodation Parks Association of New Zealand also shows that the number of camping grounds has not decreased below 350 for a decade.<sup>13</sup> Therefore the ‘kiwi summer holiday’ may not be as threatened as it may feel. During this period which has come to be known as ‘the death of the campground’, second-hand nostalgia has been growing regardless of what the statistics show. It has resulted in a cultural nostalgia, a kind of appreciation for the New Zealand caravan. This nostalgia is an appreciation for the lost and unobtainable.

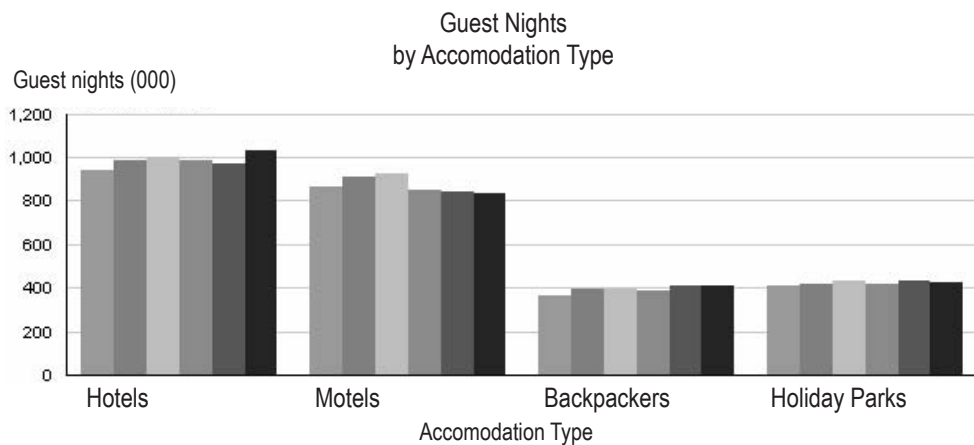


Figure. 20. Statistics New Zealand.  
“Accommodation Survey, Year  
Ending November 2010”.

12 Statistics New Zealand, “Accommodation Survey, Year Ending November 2010”, [http://www.stats.census2006.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/industry\\_sectors/accommodation/Accommodation-Survey\\_HOTPNov10.aspx](http://www.stats.census2006.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/industry_sectors/accommodation/Accommodation-Survey_HOTPNov10.aspx) (accessed January 19, 2011).

13 Angus & Associates Ltd, “New Zealand Holiday Parks- Some Quick Facts: October 2009”, *Holiday Accommodation Parks Association of NZ (INC.)* <http://www.holidayparks.co.nz/PicsHotel/HAPNZ/Brochure/Quick%20facts%2009.pdf> (accessed January 19, 2011).





Figure. 21. Pakiri Beach  
Holiday Park

### *The Nostalgic Souvenir*

To analyse the New Zealand caravan with the intention of re-imagining it into an architectural design, its nostalgic properties need to be explored. 'Nostalgia and progress are like Jekyll and Hyde: alter egos.'<sup>14</sup> There is a risk in extracting a design from a treasured piece of national heritage becoming old-fashioned, or void of contemporary ideas- examples of this are seen today in newly built 'Baches'. To ensure this new 'caravan-architecture' is inspired and interesting all attributes of the caravan's life and functions are explored. This includes its properties that lend itself to becoming a cultural souvenir.

The caravan is a source for two types of nostalgia, personal and cultural. For many New Zealanders one caravan in particular, their family caravan, will be remembered with a comprehensive level of detail; from the intricate floral curtains to every dent and stain. This type of nostalgia is intimate and personal. Cultural nostalgia is generalised nostalgia

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<sup>14</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (USA: Basic Books, 2001), XVI.

for the collective population. It is a recognition and acknowledgment that something is inherently iconic without necessarily having a personal experience with it. For example the 'Kiwi Bach' is widely recognised as an integral subject of New Zealand's built identity however not all New Zealanders will have owned or stayed in a Bach. But the Bach is visible, not only in its actual form, but visible by way of its representation. The 'retro' aesthetic of the caravan is ornate with patterns, colours, textures and iconic shapes; all of which leave a strong impression within memory and can be recalled easily. The bold and iconic visual motifs are engrained into the memories of the individual and the nation.

A nostalgist is a person who indulges in nostalgia or tries to recreate the past using recollection to access memories. Nostalgia is triggered by 'memorative signs', which Svetlana Boym describes as permanent accompaniments of nostalgia with ineffable charm.<sup>15</sup> Memorative signs can manifest as sounds, smells, tastes, feelings, and sights acting like triggers to a memory. The caravan beholds many of these triggers, like the smell of warm musty canvas, the feel and look of the textured, patterned velvet furnishings and the sound of the large plastic zips of the awning. When these phenomena are mimicked away from the caravan, they can spark a recollection of the caravan; just as specific music can have a strong relationship to specific times. Boym writes that 'Nostalgic time is that time-out-of-time of day-dreaming and longing that jeopardises one's timetables and work ethic...'<sup>16</sup> It is this 'longing' that causes an easy slip from a nostalgic daydream to a melancholic one. The yearning to return evokes mixed emotions of both happiness and sadness. This slippage into a melancholic feeling is another reason why a nostalgically referenced design could be jeopardised. Some people evaluate their past world with such high esteem that their present world seems inadequate; these regretful desires can affect a person's progress to move forward, essentially becoming trapped searching for something that is no longer obtainable. The outcome of this perspective is inevitably utopian; it can never exist. However, nostalgia is not always about the past. Although often retrospective, it can also be prospective. I particularly like the alternate perspective Boym offers as there are potentially interesting outcomes to the recreation of a celebrated cultural artefact. She writes; 'Fantasies of the past determined by needs of the present have direct impact on realities of the future.'<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (USA: Basic Books, 2001), XIX.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., XVI.

Figure. 22. Awhitu, Manukau, 1965

Figure. 23. Caravan parked in backyard

Figure. 24. 'Diddy', the perfect playhouse



We are responsible for our own national nostalgic tales and what becomes of them- we cannot continuously repeat the unrepeatable. The imitations, replications and representations we are seeing of the caravan today will become exhaustive as they are repeated to capacity. It is for this reason that a fresh, liberating new design be realised.

### *The Dormant Caravan*

Whilst a caravan is not in use, it commonly relocates to the backyard of the suburban home, under a carport, to a storage paddock of a camping ground and more rarely into a garage. The multifunctional nature of the caravan has allowed it to cater for various other purposes during this off-season. Offices, studios and sleep-outs are typical caravan adaptations. The caravan that waits in a dormant state for the next holiday is forgotten as families continue with their present everyday lives. It represents a time past, but not yet a time to come; '...it will still exist as a sample of the now-distanced experience, an experience which the object can only evoke and resonate to...' <sup>18</sup> I see the caravan as having two potential states of being- 'active' (in use on holiday) and 'dormant' (any other use). In a dormant state the caravan becomes an object which represents the holiday experience. It becomes the 'sample of a distant experience' Susan Stewart is writing about. This is true of course only until the next holiday. The office, studio,

<sup>18</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (USA: Duke University Press, 1993), 136.



and sleep-out (dormant) caravans become souvenirs of the caravaning holiday experience while they supply a secondary function. They are dormant in the respects that they are not being used for the traditional purpose of holidaying. These dormant phases are crucial for their transformation into souvenirs as something that is experienced everyday is too ever-present to be reflected upon. Whilst caravans sit in these 'dormant' states, real lived experience gives way to daydreaming and imagination. For each family member the narrative of their daydream will differ, although not in terms of its idealistic exaggerated themes. When I pass my family caravan at the back of our house I think of balmy nights dining on gourmet seafood and listening to my parents' music collection which gets louder as the wine dries up.

The souvenir authenticates a past experience whilst simultaneously discrediting the present.<sup>19</sup> For as long as the family ventures out in their caravan, its impression will be made in memory. When the caravan is no longer active, the experience is no longer 'directly lived' and will forever be played out in the distance between the present and the imagined- nostalgia. A permanently dormant caravan isn't really a caravan, it becomes the function it supplies. For example a caravan that is only used as an office *is* an office. The holiday experience cannot be removed from the iconic New Zealand caravan that I am recreating. It is an essential contributor to the themes which I have chosen to explore: memory, collections, and utopia.

The caravan is a vessel that has a short-circuit between actual real life leisure, to purely imagined life amusement. The iconic nature of the caravan has come to represent the lifestyle for all New Zealanders. Regardless of whether one has actually been on a holiday in a caravan, the caravan for New Zealand is a national experience, a cultural nostalgia. The caravan is set into our cultural biography because of its role in our national identity. If the use of caravans on holidays begins to fade, the caravan will shift into a state of pure souvenir, one that can only reference the past lived experience. A new architectural interpretation of the caravan will ensure a positive future for this cultural relic along a new path which in time may also become a cultural relic. Through this type of progressive design development, small incremental changes can be made to cultural motifs and an archetypal language could start to emerge.

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<sup>19</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (USA: Duke University Press, 1993), 139.



Figure. 25. Judy Darragh's  
house / museum

### *Collected Cultural Relic*

As well as a caravan possessing memory triggers, its replication and representation within books, as toys, on T-shirts, postcards, and other trinkets become constructed nostalgic triggers too. These items are the 'souvenirs' of the caravan, they act as reminders or mementos that authenticate the past.<sup>20</sup> New Zealand is a tourist nation with a young heritage where cultural relics are relished and exploited to enhance and reinforce our national image. These souvenirs become part of collections. Collections exhibit in a variety of ways, for example artworks, galleries, museums, tourist gift shops and within books. One of the more literal examples of a souvenir collector is the vibrant New Zealand

<sup>20</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (USA: Duke University Press, 1993), 151.



Figure. 26. Caravan key ring

Figure. 27. Holiday scene in New Zealand drama television show, 'Outrageous Fortune' - Series 2 Episode 17 - Wherein Our Saviour's Birth is Celebrated

Figure. 28. Grandpa's caravan in 'Outrageous Fortune' Series 3 Episode 3 - Most true, she is a strumpet



artist, Judy Darragh. Her method of creating an artwork involves a timely process of collecting items from markets and junk shops, placing them within her personal museum before transforming them into works for their new context: the art gallery.<sup>21</sup> The recollection that a singular souvenir creates is a personal memory of the past, multiple souvenirs within a collection represent a past time without the same recollection. Susan Stewart explains it thus; 'The collection does not displace attention to the past; rather, the past is at the service of the collection, for whereas the souvenir lends authenticity to the past, the past lends authenticity to the collection.'<sup>22</sup> When the relics of caravanning appear within a collection, they become less personal. The recent past from which they originated becomes solely about the objects, they remove the need to remember more by offering so much already; whereas a personal souvenir of the caravanning experience is just a fragment of a larger memory, like the partial fragments within a cabinet of curiosity which reference the whole from which they came from. Culture and its relics deposited throughout New Zealand's history have become a commodity. The cultural commodities are collected to reinforce our identity.

Without the cyclic occurring tradition of 'Swings of Taste'<sup>23</sup> people may experience what Celeste Olalquiaga refers to as 'spleen', a modern phenomenon described as '...an existential state of pure present devoid of all past (history and mythical time) and future (hope and a potential for change).'<sup>24</sup> Where the present is a permanent anchorage for remembrance to occur consciously, this conscious 'knowing' that the past is disappearing causes a melancholic languishing effect. As an attempt to document and memorize the passing time, commodification becomes the norm. Both personal and united collections grow incessantly. Olalquiaga's 'spleen' describes why we have the need to collect relics such as artefacts instilled into a particular decade or era. There is a wishful longing to hold on to it. I can relate this to a habit which New Zealand as a country has adopted. New Zealand frequently grasps at cultural artefacts to commodify, again the Bach is a

<sup>21</sup> Liz Eastmond, "High-tack Ex-cess", *Listener*, December 26, 1987, 118.

<sup>22</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (USA: Duke University Press, 1993), 151.

<sup>23</sup> Gillo Dorfles, *Kitsch-An Anthology of Bad Taste* (London: Studio Vista, 1969), 10-11. 'Swings of taste' is a phrase Dorfles uses to describe how taste changes according to the period we are in and the historical situation we are looking back upon.

<sup>24</sup> Celeste Olalquiaga, *Artificial Kingdom: A Treasury of the Kitsch Experience* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1999), 74.

good example of this. The heyday of the lived Bach reality is long since gone and the 'Baches' we see today are more often a contemporary holiday house void of any Bach characteristics.

This last scenario, *Collected Cultural Relic*, provides a description of the caravan in its most removed position from a holidaying vessel. It has become a symbol to reproduce onto and into other objects. It is a compliment to the caravan that it has arrived on New Zealand postcards, in the artworks of photographers, in bank and insurance television advertisements, and within books about 'kiwiana'. Some representations are portrayed more honourably than others but this is just a reflection of the various ways New Zealand is viewed by itself. I think there is merit in both acknowledging the caravan as a national artefact and celebrating its 'kiwi quirks'. They both make up the essential elements of our national caravan.

## Conclusion

This chapter highlights the iconic and highly visual nature of the caravan through the reality of its situation in New Zealand. It explains how and why it initially became so popular as a unique and bourgeois way of comfortable camping. It also explains how twenty years after the industry crashed the caravan became popular once more, but in numerous new ways and in a variety of forms. Whether or not the actual number of people actively holidaying in caravans is decreasing or not is irrelevant. There is enough fear and concern about the impending death of the caravan that it has sparked a renaissance and a cultural nostalgia for the lifestyle and aesthetic regardless of any statistics. One design function has become certain, that the caravan's integrity is held together when it is an active participant in holidays- its original programme. This suggests that more potentially architectural aspects of the caravan will lie in its *functional reality*, within the caravanning lifestyle.



Figure. 29. 'Midday Matapouri', painting of bach and caravan by New Zealand artist, Tony Ogle







# *The Miniature World of Caravaning*

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During the summer holiday months families journey in their caravans to camping grounds scattered throughout New Zealand. The caravan offers everything a home does in a miniature form, and the camping ground is a miniaturisation of suburbia. What is created is a microcosm holiday world inside our ordinary world. There are many synchronicities between suburban life and the lifestyle of the camping ground, but because of the camping grounds' more relaxed and informal nature, subtle shifts occur in the way we experience this little suburb. In a camping ground you are on 'holiday', it is an escape from real-life; its existence is only temporary and the location is borrowed. This is the miniature world of caravaning.

The theme of the miniature filters through three different scales which I have determined as separate analyses. These later lead to separate design solutions. The three sections which range from the widest caravaning context to the most intimate are; *The Camping Ground*, *The Shell* and *The Nest*. 'Nests' and 'Shells' are images which Gaston Bachelard uses to characterize the primal foundations of inside and outside.<sup>25</sup> A nest, like any other

image of rest and quiet, is immediately associated with the image of a simple house.’<sup>26</sup> The caravan is a condensed house, therefore through the use of Bachelard’s metaphor- I propose the interior of the caravan is its ‘nest’. A caravan’s ‘shell’ encases this nest as the external layer.

*The Camping Ground* explores the caravan within its wider context of New Zealand- the caravan’s ‘habitat’. I reveal the heterotopian qualities of the camping ground and the concept of miniature ‘worlds’ within our ‘real world’. *The Shell* section of this chapter refers to the caravan as an externalised object. The study looks at the caravan from an outsider’s perspective and how the perception of the caravan can change from one of intrigue, to one of suspicion. *The Nest* section investigates the interiority of the caravan in contrast to the external landscape. It also looks at the physical and aesthetic characteristics. Although the caravan is nostalgically iconic, it is still a mysterious artefact in our landscape and is worth exploring for its attributes of *Functional Reality*, which are thought to be fading. That is to say, the caravan produces a different image in the wild to what it does on a T-shirt. The analysis of the caravan through these three scales was to find any qualities worth attempting to make tangible through a new architecture. Caravan physicalities are the obvious features to translate architecturally. However, I am interested in how the compositional, metaphysical, heterotopian, and ephemeral aspects could inform architecture also. Throughout this chapter, the hidden underlying utopic and miniature themes of the caravan become revealed. With these qualities brought to light, a new architectural design perspective is created for the three spatial sections.

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<sup>26</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at how we Experience Intimate Places* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1969), 98.



## THE CAMPING GROUND



Figure. 31. Mount Maunganui,  
Summer of 1968

### *The Miniature World Created about the Caravan*

A modest caravan can accommodate six people comfortably, and the internalised space becomes a family's entire world for the duration of their holiday. All their possessions are stored inside, and all their activities are conducted in or around the caravan. This world, created by the caravan, is repeated out to the external parameters of the camping ground. The infrastructure mimics that of a suburb but in a miniaturised form. The roads are the equivalent lanes and the sites are proportional to the caravan module. Each site has just enough room for an awning, an outdoor living area, and sometimes the additional space for a small tent. They are cut to fit.

The allure of minute objects is directly associated with the imagination, the idea that there might be a multitude of miniature 'worlds' within our world. Susan Stewart writes; 'This is the daydream of the microscope: the daydream of life inside life, of significance multiplied infinitely *within* significance.'<sup>27</sup> When you are living inside the camping

<sup>27</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (USA: Duke University Press, 1993), 54.



Figure. 32. Caravaning at the beach, Tairua, 2003

*'I want a retreat, a place to go on a whim for a quick weekend or a long, lazy summer. A place that's balm for the soul, where even the mowing isn't a chore.'*<sup>A</sup>

ground, normal domestic life and activities are shifted, they feel and appear different. Although it parallels the life within a suburb, it has been simplified and condensed into a miniature replica, one where tasks and chores are more enjoyable. The temporary caravaning lifestyle is a relief from full scale domestic living; it is your miniature world within your standard world. This is perhaps due to the nature of the environment for living being compressed in size to become closer to a toy scale. Caravans are mostly in use for small periods of time, therefore the space can be re-explored on each return avoiding boredom- the antithesis of explorability and play.<sup>28</sup> They are heterotopic spaces, spaces that appear to exist in reality; however they are too fleeting or ephemeral to ever exist in a permanent world.

<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Farrelly, *Blubberland: The Dangers of Happiness* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd, 2007), 139.

A) Kirsty Cameron. "Bach to the future", *The Dominion Post*, October 13, 2010, L13.



Figure. 33. Dishes done in caravan kitchen

*'And how is it that washing the dishes becomes so relaxing if it's done in within the confines of a caravan? Perhaps it has something to do with the tradition that only when all the dishes are done can the cards and board games come out.'*

## Heterotopia

Foucault defines heterotopias in his text *Of Other Spaces* as a form of utopia that has been realised and exists within an actual physical location. He goes on to write that because these sites reflect all other real sites of the culture it is from, they become 'outside of all places', regardless of their location in reality. They have represented, contested and inverted the sites of which they are in relation to, to form a semi unreal space.<sup>29</sup> I believe the camping ground to be a heterotopia. It relates to the suburb, the motel, and an outdoor escape, but is re-presented as a twist upon each of these sites. It is smaller and freer than a suburb, less controlled under a form of rule, and more controlled by its occupants which form the community. Stewart refers to the actualisation of the fantastic or exotic through the act of miniaturisation. In the case of the camping ground it is made real by the act of miniaturising its related sites. Like Foucault, she acknowledges that although heterotopias or the fantastic have become physically tangible, they serve as a 'representation, an image, of a reality which does not exist.'<sup>30</sup> The camping ground is an ephemeral space, it expands and contracts between the summer and winter months. It cannot exist in winter; this is when it transforms into another form of holiday destination up the mountains close to the snow.

29 Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", *Diacritics* 16, no.1 (1986): 24-26. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/464648> (accessed October 11, 2010).

30 Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (USA: Duke University Press, 1993), 60.



Within a campground the caravanner chooses their neighbours and designs their personal idealised community, consisting of family and friends. Families invite their children to bring a friend along on holiday. Children thrive at the opportunity to briefly become extended siblings, and the scenario offers conditions for maximum happiness for all people including parents, siblings, and friends. The master plan of a campground is divided up into small sites, each with the necessary services provided. A group of families travelling together often occupy a row or bunch of camping sites to set up their own communal environment. The caravans and their awnings are orientated around a central internalised space which simultaneously marks out the territory of the group. Popular camp sites cannot be owned by the guests, however they are reserved each year for as long as the same group returns, creating a loyalty of a group to one particular destination.

Because the occupants have so much freedom within a camping ground, they begin to be the controllers of it. The guests are the urban planners and site surveyors. The decisions they make about orientation and site set up are based on views, sun, the surrounding trees, slope, soil density, and relationship to amenities. Practiced caravanners have perfected the art of campsite set up, on the arrival at a new camping ground a thorough survey of the camp is conducted before selecting a site. This is usually one on higher ground, with little rocks, more soil than sand, trees nearby, and close to the amenities without having to view them. It will also have something special about it which is less describable than functional features, it will have the right 'vibe' about it. All these analyses require the caravanner to exercise their imagination. We are at our happiest whilst within our imagination;<sup>31</sup> and we are exercising our imaginations when we are in a miniature world of caravanning.

Everything in the campground is more negotiable than within a suburb, you pay for your accommodation per night, you can disappear, there are no fixed boundaries. No physical fences or boundary pegs. You can spill over your site and into your neighbours. Pathways are created by the camp occupants dependant on where one is needed and when (like a new shortcut to the beach directly from the back entrance of your caravan awning). There is no need to follow strict pathways or roads as trespassing does not exist and security is not an issue. The level of trust found within the camping ground is unlike

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31 Elizabeth Farrelly, *Blubberland: The Dangers of Happiness* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd, 2007), 138.



Figure. 34. Happy family,  
South Island, 1975  
Figure. 35. Social circle  
at Te Awamutu rally,  
1979

any suburb in actual reality; tents, awnings, and caravans are left unlocked and alone with little fear of theft. Everyone has access to their very own tennis court, playground, swimming pool, sauna, and beach, right at your doorstep. The camping ground itself is interchangeable with any other, replaceable from one to the next. Lakeside camping grounds are the inland version of the coastal camping ground. The weather is always nice (or remembered as such) and every night is a good night to eat outdoors.

It is for such reasons that returning to 'real-life' can bring about a melancholic longing. There is a wishful thinking that you want to stay forever, however this is exactly why the campground is heterotopic; it cannot exist permanently. The weather would turn colder meaning more and more time would be spent indoors. The confined nature of the caravan would become claustrophobic, and there would be no privacy or escape from your family. The rest of the camp would be left exposed, far from any larger forms of civilisation and facilities. Inherent to the camping ground is its community. Without dwellers in the space it is merely a series of empty plots, not unlike a new subdivision. The collection of caravanners and campers is what brings the utopian idea to life. Before the community arrives it is just that, utopia, an idealised space which does not exist. It is the collection of people that spark the transformation from utopia into an actualised utopia, a heterotopia. The heterotopian camping ground world exists through two key factors- it mimics 'real life' in miniature form, and collections of people dwell in it temporarily.



Figure. 36. Amphibious caravan with retractable wheels, built approx. 1965

## *The Landboat & the Mobile Family*

‘The ship is the heterotopia *par excellence*. In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates.’ Foucault<sup>32</sup>

Foucault refers to the boat as a ‘floating piece of space, a place without place’ as it is alone on the sea as a contained vessel of adventure. It is the ‘greatest reserve of the imagination.’<sup>33</sup> The caravan can be thought of as the ‘landboat’ of New Zealand, although it does not have freedom on the same scale as the ocean, it does have the length and breadth of the country for its explorations. It is a mobile habitable volume that also has no one place. It belongs to no one destination. Having your home and belongings with you whilst also having the freedom to visit any location is a luxury. It comes with a sense that nothing has to be sacrificed. There is also a security and comfort in knowing that even if you

<sup>32</sup> Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces”, *Diacritics* 16, no.1 (1986): 27. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/464648> (accessed October 11, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

become stranded you have everything you need until you can continue roaming.

The caravan has captured the imaginations of New Zealanders since its introduction in the 1930s, however the enthusiasm for towing the wide volume around the narrow roads of New Zealand is fading. The reality of the situation is that caravans are taking residence at a family's favourite destination. What is left is the image of freedom. The wheels of the caravan keep the 'landboat' metaphor alive through knowing the potential to migrate still remains. The modern family is fast moving and efficient, they have sacrificed the mobile home dream-image for a simpler, quicker, and easier travelling experience.

A family does not necessarily need a mobile home, such as a caravan, to become a mobile family. In Jennifer Siegal's *Mobile, the Art of Portable Architecture* a discussion develops about mobility, permanence and impermanence. Andrei Codrescu discovers the contradicting habit of portraying nomadism whilst seeking stability and permanence. The average American family moves house every couple of years; the family itself becomes mobile whereas the suburban houses they move to are stable. Stationary dwellings are repetitious throughout all subdivisions, they are 'interchangeable with any other house in any other subdivision- and the subdivisions themselves often evaporate.'<sup>34</sup> This type of impermanent repetitious dwelling within suburbia is synonymous with the trends in New Zealand. The living pattern of modern mobile families is that they

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<sup>34</sup> Andrei Codrescu, *Mobile: The Art of Portable Architecture*, Edited by Jennifer Siegal, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), 010.



seek stationary homes that are more impermanent than a mobile home. A family caravan will travel with the family to each new house, and is more likely to be an older more stable part of a family's history than any other domestic dwelling.

Within New Zealand it is becoming increasingly more common to grow attached to one particular holiday destination and to leave ones caravan there all year. Come holiday time the family is still mobile, but the caravan is merely towed from storage to the desired site within the camping ground. The range of movement the caravan participates in is becoming confined to the perimeters of the park. The modern family is more loyal to their mobile home than to their stationary home, regardless of whether it follows them from house to house or waits for them in a holiday park. The journey has been replaced with an urgency to arrive at the destination- the goal of the family is the arrival point. They are now seeking stationary retreats to park up their caravan, and return to each year. The ideals of the 'landboat' have been passed on to the tourist's campervan, a lightweight small vehicle. These campervans are limited in space and do not possess the same luxuries as the caravan, and do not appeal to the situation of a family. From an architectural perspective this informed a stationary dwelling that is suitable and interchangeable with any location. The series of dwellings I have designed are suited to the new fast pace direction family holidays have taken.

## THE SHELL



Figure. 37. Robin Morrison photograph, 'Caravan at Seddonville', West Coast, 1979

The Shell of the caravan presents two different versions of itself to an onlooker. It has a hidden secret life, and a sinister secret life. The secret, playful life of the caravan during the day shifts at twilight into its sinister secret life. This is the transition point where the light outside dims to be less bright than internal artificial lights. It causes an effect where people inside can no longer see out and people outside can see in, in which case people usually draw their curtains. When the caravan is sealed tight visually the private interior conceals itself from the exterior, it is a fully contained environment. It is this concealment which introduces curiosity and wonder of what could be inside. Bachelard writes; 'The surest sign of wonder is exaggeration. And since the inhabitant of a shell can amaze us, the imagination will soon make amazing creatures, more amazing than reality, issue from the shell.'<sup>35</sup> The exaggeration of the caravan inhabitants is what leads the imagining of sinister characters.

<sup>35</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at how we Experience Intimate Places* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1969), 107.

## *The Caravan's Secret Life*

The caravan as an object has a life of its own. There is a wonder and underlying magic of miniature objects that instils a power to them. Michael Riffaterre describes this phenomenon as occurring outside our given field of perception, in a place where actions and narrative are held in a hidden state. This idea parallels Stewart's idea, 'the daydream of the micro-scope'<sup>36</sup>, the imaging of a minute life smaller than we can comprehend. Riffaterre continues that this concealment only confirms further that it does exist. 'The rule of polarization applies: the moment it is stylistically emphasized, any statement of motionlessness will generate a statement of motion. The more natural and permanent the movelessness, the more striking the mobilisation, and the more suggestive of fantasy.'<sup>37</sup> A caravan sitting alone in a paddock, or in a row at a campground, bestows this fantasy of a hidden secret life by its suggestive aesthetic features such as the wheels and towbar. With its anthropomorphic features consisting of window eyes, a curved brow, coloured smile, silver handle dimples and a tow bar tongue, it is not hard to imagine they have lives of their own. The wheels and fold down feet leave little left for the imagining of the caravan's secret life. They take on personalities based on their size, colour, shape, and general aesthetic composition. The uniqueness of each caravan from the next lends itself to a similar application of personalities. People often name their caravans and talk about them like a member of the family. The owners of a 1950's Starliner named their caravan Ngaire; 'We show holiday snaps of her to friends and proudly introduce her to strangers.'<sup>38</sup>

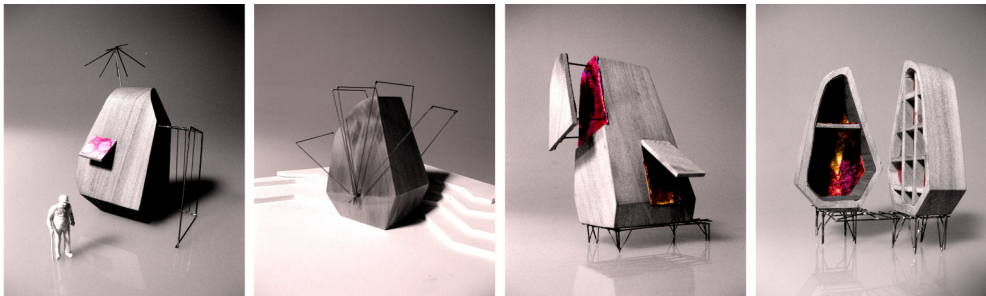


Figure. 38. Four examples of the new anthropomorphic architectural designs

<sup>36</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (USA: Duke University Press, 1993), 54.

<sup>37</sup> Michael Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry* (USA, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, c1978), 69.

<sup>38</sup> Victoria Moss, "Starliner Express", *NZ Life & Leisure* January-February issue 35, 2011, 102.



Figure. 39. Starliner named  
Ngaire parked outside typical  
New Zealand dairy

*'Ngaire joined our family about four years ago; we have been devoted to her ever since. We show holiday snaps of her to friends and proudly introduce her to strangers. We search out the most picturesque places for her to stay at night. We wince and apologize if we accidentally back her into a tree.'*

Victoria Moss. "Starliner Express" *NZ Life & Leisure* 35, January / February, 2011, 102





*'The distinctive rounded shape of the caravan sitting alone against the New Zealand landscape has become a central icon of Kiwi men's uneasy encounter with the land'*

Jock Phillips, "kiwi caravan or three", In *The Caravan*, edited by Aberhart, Laurence (New Zealand: McNamara Gallery, 2002): 16.

## *The Sinister Secret Life*

*'Wolves in shells are crueller than stray ones.'* Gaston Bachelard<sup>39</sup>

Bachelard discusses shells in a similar fashion to Anthony Vidler's description of the heimlich / unheimlich (homely / unhomely). The housed creature is at home in its environment, however externally it appears concealed and hidden. The fascination and curiosity poses a fear of what might be brooding.<sup>40</sup> Heimlich is defined as; 'belonging to the house or family', 'not strange, familiar'.<sup>41</sup> Heimlich things are associated with the intimate, the 'friendly comfortable'. There is an easy slippage here to unheimlich due to the second definition of heimlich; 'concealed, kept from sight...' behind someone's back, secret and thereby magic, 'the heimlich art'.<sup>42</sup> The occupant of a caravan may describe their small domestic haven as homely, familiar and 'friendly comfortable', but an outsider's view of the same caravan at night, will reveal glimmers of movement. Behind the curtains something is lurking and threatening. A caravan's external shell is the physical barrier that conceals the interior and excludes the exterior. Its form is inward orientated and when it is completely sealed shut there is little relationship with its external environment. The simultaneous contradiction of the term heimlich in the case of the caravan is constant, for its meaning depends on whether you are inside or outside.

Within Vidler's *The Architectural Uncanny* the term heimlich is linked to home and domesticity- and home he writes is comfortable and cosy. The caravan is a small domestic vessel which has a comfortable and cosy interior. It can also be considered *heimlich*. A heimlich space is associated with the intimate; '...the enjoyment of quiet content... arousing a sense of agreeable restfulness and security as in one within the four walls of his house.'<sup>43</sup> The caravans 'nest' is a small, warm space which is highly textured and coloured.

39 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at how we Experience Intimate Places* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1969), 112.

40 Ibid., 110-112.

41 Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, c1992), 24.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid. (Quoting Daniel Sanders's 1860 Worterbuch (dictionary))

Subtle details such as orange scone lighting and wooden veneers create a warm ambiance and a sense that it is a personal, homely space.

The caravan can be viewed from two perspectives- as a playful object with a personality and life of its own, to a capsule which is concealing an unknown creature and world. ‘...Freud’s intuition that from the homely house to the haunted house there is a single passage, where what is contained and safe is therefore secret, obscure, and inaccessible, dangerous and full of terrors...’<sup>44</sup> The physical barrier dividing these two opposite caravan visions is the external shell. It provides the threshold between the homely interior and excluded exterior. The shell physicality and inward orientated nature of the caravan is its strongest architectural feature, it switches between being a space and becoming an object. Architecture influences a person’s experience of a space, just as the external shell alters the perception of the caravan.



Figure. 41. Caravan alone in the landscape, photograph by Peter Peryer, 1975

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<sup>44</sup>Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, c1992), 32.



## THE NEST



Figure. 42. Pamela Karwowski nestled inside her caravan on a rainy day, 1980

According to Heidegger humans are fundamentally unsettled. We constantly seek security and ‘homeliness.’<sup>45</sup> Without security we cannot rest nor have piece-of-mind within our enclosure and we have an instinctive desire to fortify. Once made impenetrable the interior begins to contrast against the exposed, supernatural world outside. The caravan paradox lies in a vast landscape contrasted against a tiny dwelling. The landscapes of New Zealand supply immense backdrops to the camping grounds located in the far reaches of the country. Within these landscapes the caravan provides a relief from the expansive surroundings by becoming the only small space within the vicinity. It offers a comfortable situation sheltered from the weather, where one can be settled and embedded into. A sense of ‘cosiness’ is qualified by being snug, homely, nestled and

<sup>45</sup> Martin Heidegger, quoted in Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, c1992), 8.



embraced. Contentment follows due to the tranquillity and calmness of the intimate capsule, however the underlying sense of the uneasy external environment still lingers outside. A magnificent site is consequently sinister.<sup>46</sup> At night the need for the caravan retreat is much greater than in day time. The landscape is there to explore during daylight and retreat from during darkness.

External situations such as a rough coastline, choppy seas, heavy winds and storms reinforce this contrast with the cosiness within.<sup>47</sup> Vlamincx wrote of the country; 'The well-being I feel, seated in front of my fire, while bad weather rages out-of-doors, is entirely animal. A rat in its hole, a rabbit in its burrow, cows in the stable, must all feel the same contentment that I feel.'<sup>48</sup> A shelter's worth is enhanced by the bad weather. The intimacy of the safe internal environment develops into a nest for dreaming, sheltering a space for the imagination.<sup>49</sup> The interior of the caravan provides small nests scattered throughout New Zealand's vast remote landscapes. The caravan's smallness in such scenarios is amplified because of the immensity that surrounds it, it becomes even more intimate. Bachelard writes that humans receive physical pleasure when withdrawing or retreating into their 'corner'.<sup>50</sup> In this particular scenario the 'corner' is provided by the caravan.

The landscapes of New Zealand present a vulnerability which can be cured or fostered by the caravan. They both contrast and complement each other. The most striking scenario is between a lone caravan and a dense, magnificent site. During the day the landscape and the caravan are fully exposed, by night they both become obscured. The caravan's 'nest' becomes concealed from the external environment as does the external environment from the 'nest'. The occupant of the caravan will be in a secure, safe space whilst a person outside will be in an unknown miscellaneous environment. The duality of this relationship creates an invigorating experience for the New Zealand caravanner- it is full of unknowns, mysteries, darkness accompanied by adventure, comfort, relief and

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46 Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, c1992), 19.

47 Ibid., 36.

48 Maurice de Vlamincx, quoted in Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at how we Experience Intimate Places* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1969), 91.

49 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at how we Experience Intimate Places* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1969), 103.

50 Ibid., 91.

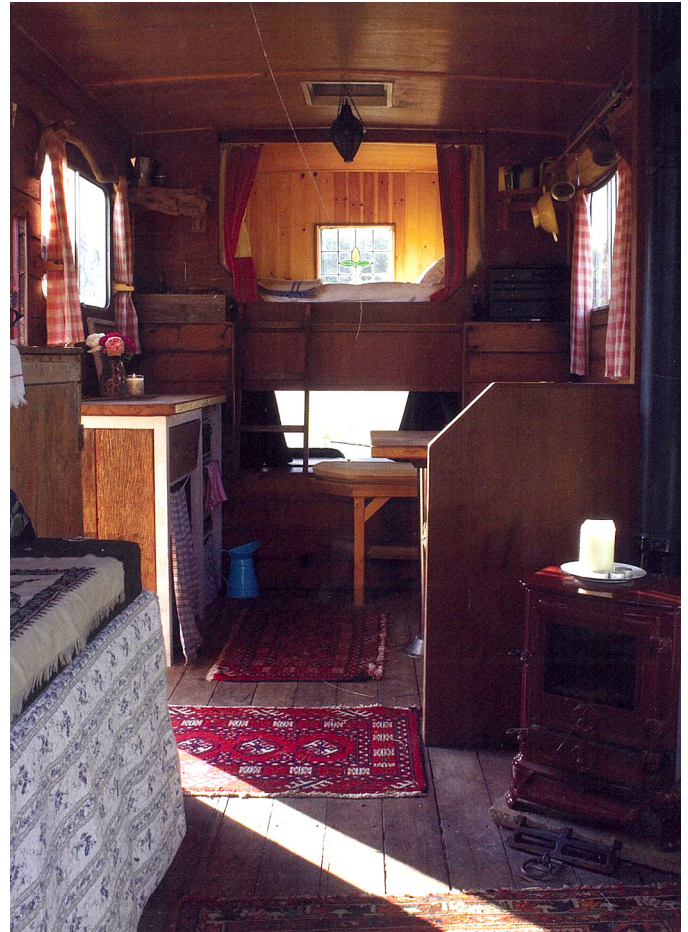


Figure. 43. Rich wooden caravan interior decorated with rugs and candles

excitement. These are some of the caravan's metaphysical qualities I have tried to capture within my architecture. They have become unexpected design drivers which I attempt to amplify or heighten within my design detailing. The potentially sinister or dark side of this domestic retreat provided another experiential layer to the architectural form of the caravan. The caravan in this stark environment has two fundamental elements- the fragile thin shell, and the soft warm nest. This miniature domestic vessel is not unlike an egg.



Figure. 44. Dining table  
 Figure. 45. Caravan sink  
 Figure. 46. Renovated  
 caravan interior  
 completely lined in  
 wallpaper

## *Physical Aesthetics & Attributes of the Nest*

There is an inherent fascination about the miniature that begins in childhood when our imagination is most open to fictive narratives and day-dreaming. Miniature objects allow for a constant imagining of a secret life, the imagining that there is something ‘more’ and something smaller than we can comprehend.<sup>51</sup> It does not seem dangerous because of its smallness therefore we can happily explore the ideas associated with the miniature within our minds (unlike the gigantic as it is larger thus potentially harmful to us). Miniature objects are objects we can possess; hold in our hands and ‘own’. However, the wonder and underlying magic reverses this power we have back to the object.<sup>52</sup> It is this underlying magic that allows the miniature to enter the realm of the sublime. Edmund Burke writes that the greatest extremes of magnitude and dimension are sublime, and that the extremities of littleness are sublime also. He notes that there is a vastness that comes with

<sup>51</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (USA: Duke University Press, 1993), 60.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry* (USA, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, c1978), 69.

the infinitely divisible nature of matter, and that the infinite downscaling of size both amazes and perplexes us.<sup>53</sup> The idea of ‘infinite downscaling’ translates architecturally into my designs as layering. Within the domestic volumes I have organised a series of inner spaces which are hidden and gradually get smaller. They begin with ‘rooms’ such as the kitchen and bathroom which are concealed behind walls which appear to be cabinetry. The next of these spaces are large cupboards which house appliances and furniture which fold or swing out from the walls. Within the medium storage cupboards are smaller draws and nooks. And finally, the lining of each cupboard or space is patterned to create the smallest level of visual detail. The depth of these internal spaces is visually concealed because all the layering happens within what appears to be wall.

Although the caravan is not miniature against human scale, it is an example I have defined as ‘habitable miniature’. Susan Stewart writes that miniature objects can only be identified as such when they are in relation to a familiar context, only by contrast would the smallness be evident.<sup>54</sup> The caravan is essentially a domus, and therefore is in correspondence with the familiar. It is a small, mobile house. I consider this to be architectural miniaturisation as opposed to the miniaturisation *of* architecture; in which case you would receive a small toy caravan, merely a replica of the original. Architectural miniaturisation is therefore functional and habitable.

The interior aesthetic of a caravan is highly detailed and laden with various materials and surface treatments. Just as Bachelard writes that descriptions in tiny detail tend toward the verbose, objects of a reduced physical scale become increased in detail therefore also possessing verbosity. ‘The procedure by which description multiplies in detail is analogous to and mimetic of the process whereby space becomes significance, whereby everything is made to ‘count’.’<sup>55</sup> A caravan is a condensed version of an entire house, everything inside the space automatically has increased significance due to its functionality (often multifunctional), all interior features ‘speak loudly’ of their purpose. Such an intense use of space omits useless interventions, thus everything is made to count.

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<sup>53</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* Edited by J.T. Boulton, (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1958), 72-87 Section VII

<sup>54</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (USA: Duke University Press, 1993), 46.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 47.

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The impression of 'cosiness' on containment is proportional to the confinement's proximity to the body. The smaller or closer the external parameters of the space are to the body, the more embraced, or snug one can feel (with the condition being the ability to be released at any time- freedom). For example, a duvet which wraps or folds around the body's skin reads as a part of the body, or a second skin. To compliment the closeness of the confinement, texture and colour add a second layer of factors related to the cosiness of a space. Warm, matte colours combined with soft materials of a rough but not coarse texture bestow comfort for the eye and touch.

The caravan as a miniature house fits the metaphor of an architectural 'egg'. The shiny, hard aluminium shell is contrasted with the soft, warm textured nest. The interior encompasses the essence of every function of the home, both physical and metaphysical. All the usual utilities are distilled down to the bare minimum and compacted into the space such as kitchen, bathroom, dining, living, and bedrooms. All the qualities of a house that create a welcoming, safe, homely (or heimlich) effect are replicated and enhanced because of the reduced size of the caravan. "The beauty of the caravan was how it combined domesticity and the flight from it in one package."<sup>56</sup> The caravan is your home away from home, it allows you to experience the outdoors within the safety of your own personalised nest.

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<sup>56</sup> Peter Beilharz, "A Sociology of Caravans", <http://www.tasa.org.au/conferences/conferencepapers09/papers/Beilharz,%20Peter%20&%20Supski,%20Sian.pdf> (accessed July 16, 2010).

#### THE THREE CARAVAN SCALES:

Figure. 47. The Camping Ground

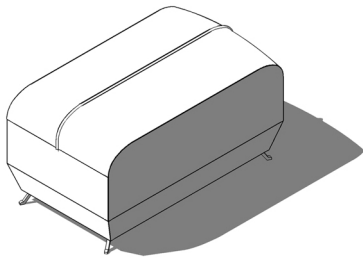
Figure. 48. The Shell

Figure. 49. The Nest

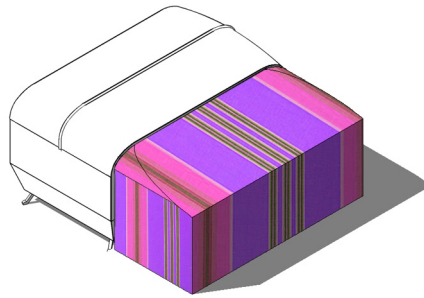


## Conclusion

The success of the caravan in New Zealand is directly related to its context. The small domestic vessel is not just a house, it is a lifestyle. The miniature nature of the caravan and the camping ground together with a community of people create a heterotopian world that parallels suburban life. The heterotopian world has become possible through four key factors- holidays, community, freedom, and miniaturisation. Caravanning is a holidaying activity that mostly takes place in the summer months in a remote New Zealand landscape. The camping ground community consists of family and friends. Some caravanners become loyal to a particular destination along with other groups of people, this creates a community tradition. The temporary nature of the camping ground allows the guests to have the freedom of custom designing their sites, along with neighbouring sites. Stewart writes that fantasy worlds, or utopian ideals such as the camping ground way of life can become actualised through the act of miniaturisation. I believe that the caravanning lifestyle is achievable because of its size- every element (caravan, awning, and tent) is at a human scale. These elements have full scale counterparts in the everyday suburban world. The caravan is the house, the gravel paths are the roads, the awning is the conservatory, and the tent is the renovated bedroom addition. These key factors of the heterotopian caravanning world are essential elements to my new architectural design. These are the qualities that are essential in making the caravan so successful in New Zealand.



COMPLETE SHELL



SHELL WITH NEST

Figure. 50. Diagram of the caravan awning becoming an extension of the internal nest on the exterior of the shell

Modern family life has become too fast pace to enjoy the journey of towing the caravan, holidays are rare and precious and it is more feasible to leave a caravan at a location. In terms of design this leads to a realistic sacrifice of the mobility function from the caravan. It has become more about the destination than the journey. The vast magnificent landscapes of New Zealand provide an essential contrast to the interiority of the caravan. It is this juxtaposition that enforces the importance of the shell; it is the mediating threshold between the landscape and the nest. There is an interesting relationship between the three spatial zones, *The Camping Ground*, *The Shell*, and *The Nest*. They possess individual architectural qualities and remain as three zones in the final design. Dependant on where you are spatially in relation to the caravan determines whether you feel comfort, relief, security, adventure, fear, or adrenaline. These are the experiences of the caravan.







# Caravan: A Place for Kitsch

3

## Kitsch Satisfies Nostalgia

The caravan has become a *Nostalgic Cultural Relic* of New Zealand. This chapter is a discussion on the possible implications this 'souvenir' could have on a future architectural design. Kitsch is an inevitable bi-product of sentimentality and culturally nostalgic artefacts. This is due to a replica of an 'authentic' beloved relic becoming kitsch. Hermann Broch draws the connection between the romance associated with the idealised past and the ease of which kitsch can 'sooth' the longing for these times; '...any historical world nostalgically re-lived is 'beautiful''.<sup>57</sup> He goes as far as to say that romanticism is the mother of kitsch.<sup>58</sup> The fear instilled into New Zealand that the caravan has an impending 'death' has paradoxically sparked a romantic renaissance for the seemingly rare caravaning culture and lifestyle. According to Broch, kitsch is the aesthetic that will satisfy this longing or nostalgia.

The caravan and lifestyle which is laden with cultural souvenirs is being increasingly looked upon by New Zealanders through rose-tinted lenses. The heterotopian campground world is remembered with 'pangs' of regret and the desire to re-live the experience. By adopting

Figure. 51. Advertisement for Pinoneer caravans, their emphasis was rested on the upmarket nature of caravans

<sup>57</sup> Hermann Broch, "Kitsch & Romanticism", In Gillo Dorfles, *Kitsch-An Anthology of Bad Taste* (London: Studio Vista, 1969), 73.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 62.





Figure. 52. Fred Flutey and his paua shell parlour. Bluff, Southland, 1979. Photograph by Robin Morrison

the New Zealand caravan and lifestyle as a contemporary architectural design driver, I want to risk creating a 'kitsch-architecture.' The bitter-sweet yearning for persons, things and situations of the recent past continues to be damned by the higher culture of the creative world. All things sentimental are deemed to not belong in the artistic realm, yet I think there is potential for a highly emotive architecture to develop from such a strong cultural sentimentality. The New Zealand conceptual artist Judy Darragh achieves this in her sculptural pieces created literally from New Zealand's 'kitsch junk'. She has an ability to elevate these iconic knick-knacks of the past into the gallery context. Darragh is an important precedent to my work. New Zealand itself as seen by the world is washed with kitsch due to the ever-present tourism industry exploiting the imagery of our natural landscapes. Gillo Dorfles draws the connection between the imagery associated with tourism and the kitsch aesthetic.

Kitsch is an obscure term that undoubtedly carries negative connotations. Within this chapter I will summarise the traditional theories on kitsch and also explain the contemporary ideas about kitsch which are emerging from academia. Walter Benjamin, and philosopher Tomas Kulka, address kitsch in a unique way and do not accept the key

opposition between kitsch and art proper as the majority of other theorists do.<sup>59</sup> This is not to say Benjamin simply embraces kitsch, but ‘calls for strategies of dialectically acknowledging and overcoming it rather than merely condemning it as an instance of bad taste.’<sup>60</sup> It is the ideas of Benjamin and Kulka that I refer to when attempting to undertake a design saturated in sentiment and nostalgia. I am predominately interested in the work of Kulka, who makes the first attempt to understand kitsch aesthetically by unpicking and conducting an analysis to discover what he calls the ‘conditions of kitsch’. Although he shares the similar opinion with Broch that kitsch offers nothing new,<sup>61</sup> merely borrowing previously established ideas of beauty, he goes further to provide ‘ingredients’ of kitsch. It is these ingredients which intrigue me as I would like to explore the possible outcomes of a ‘recipe’ that alters one of the three ingredients. Kulka identifies the lack of understanding kitsch from an aesthetic sense which he undergoes himself; ‘We have to explain why so many people are attracted to kitsch, as well as why kitsch, nevertheless, is not entitled to the status of respectable art.’<sup>62</sup>

### *A Fresh Look at Kitsch*

Regardless of how many artists and architects loathe the aesthetic of kitsch and consider it ‘low culture’, there can be no denying the prevailing popularity of it. The concept of kitsch does not sit solely within an aesthetic realm and its societal value includes its significance to social memory. This aspect of kitsch is what makes it a curious case- it is generally considered aesthetically unpleasant, yet the popular culture enjoy it. Kulka asks the question which so many have chosen to ignore; ‘... if we concede that kitsch has an aesthetic appeal and cling to a rather plausible assumption that art is appreciated for its aesthetic qualities, we will have to face the following problem: if the appeal of kitsch is of an aesthetic nature, and if aesthetic qualities serve as a measure of artistic excellence,

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59 Winfried Menninghaus, “On the ‘Vital Significance’ of Kitsch: Walter Benjamin’s Politics of ‘Bad Taste’ “. In *Walter Benjamin and the Architecture of Modernity*, edited by Benjamin, Andrew E. Rice, Charles (Melbourne, Australia: Re.Press, 2009), 40.

60 Ibid., 51.

61 Tomas Kulka, “Kitsch”, *British Journal of Aesthetics* 28, no.1 (1988): 24-26.

62 Ibid., 19.

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why is kitsch considered worthless?’<sup>63</sup> The success of kitsch belongs to the masses- to the kitsch geographies of everyday life which is held in a collective social memory. The aesthetic has taken hold of the general public through its surface honesty, for its security and pleasant easiness. The terms ‘mundane’ or ‘everyday life’ are recurring within articles that attempt to unpick kitsch. Sam Binkley proposes in his article *Kitsch as a Repetitive System* that the most important aesthetic feature of kitsch is its ‘love for all things sentimental’ and kitsch taste is found in objects of mundane pleasure that provide comfort through its unnatural modesty.<sup>64</sup>

This fresh perspective of kitsch is discussed within Kulka’s book, *Kitsch and Art*, he begins with acknowledging the unanimous loathing of kitsch, however he quickly follows up with his curiosity of asking what is disliked and why. ‘I hope to show what it is that disqualifies kitsch as respectable art despite its apparent appeal. I shall try to account for both the popular success of kitsch and its deficiencies by reference to its internal, *aesthetic* properties.’<sup>65</sup> This ‘apparent appeal’ mentioned in Kulka’s statement is due to kitsch’s regard with the masses, or the ‘popular culture’. Kulka is unsettled with the lack of understanding of the relative popularity of kitsch and also its derogatory nature within the artistic realm. He says that it cannot simply be classified as

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63 Tomas Kulka, “Kitsch”, *British Journal of Aesthetics* 28, no.1 (1988): 18.

64 Sam Binkley, “Kitsch as a Repetitive System: A Problem for the Theory of Taste Hierarchy”, *Journal of Material Culture* 5, (2000): 131-152. <http://mcu.sagepub.com/content/5/2/131> (accessed September 5, 2010).

65 Tomas Kulka, “Kitsch”, *British Journal of Aesthetics* 28, no.1 (1988): 19.

Figure. 53. Brightly coloured  
'Retro' caravans



bad art, there is something that sets it apart and that it contains definite appeal.<sup>66</sup> To understand the aesthetic rules of kitsch he conducts a study based on instructions you would give to a painter who wished to paint a kitsch painting. What Kulka resulted in was a series of three criteria which he calls the 'conditions' of kitsch. They are as follows:

First condition for the application of kitsch: (1): *Kitsch depicts an object or theme which is generally considered to be beautiful or highly charged with stock emotions.*

Second condition for the application of kitsch: (2): *The object or theme depicted by kitsch is instantly and effortlessly identifiable.*

Third condition for the application of kitsch: (3) *Kitsch does not substantially enrich our associations related to the depicted subject.*<sup>67</sup>

The second condition parallels that which Winfried Menninghaus describes as part of Walter Benjamin's definition of kitsch; 'Kitsch offers instantaneous emotional gratification without intellectual effort, without the requirement of distance, without sublimation.'<sup>68</sup> Benjamin (like Kulka) does not simply discriminate kitsch from art proper, or high art, but accepts it as a separate genre which grew alongside avant-garde art.

<sup>66</sup> Tomas Kulka, "Kitsch", *British Journal of Aesthetics* 28, no.1 (1988): 18.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 18-27. Almost the entire article is dedicated to finding these three conditions. Kulka describes in great length the justification for arriving at each one.

<sup>68</sup> Winfried Menninghaus, "On the 'Vital Significance' of Kitsch: Walter Benjamin's Politics of 'Bad Taste' ". In *Walter Benjamin and the Architecture of Modernity*, edited by Benjamin, Andrew E. Rice, Charles (Melbourne, Australia: Re.Press, 2009), 41.

Gillo Dorfles wisely points out in his book *Kitsch- An Anthology of Bad Taste* the inevitable connection between tourism and kitsch; ‘Why is every monument, every landscape... instantly made kitsch by tourism?’<sup>69</sup> New Zealand prides itself on being a tourist’s country; therefore New Zealand has an unavoidable link with the imagery of kitsch. I will apply Kulka’s three conditions of kitsch to the context of New Zealand to explain this association;

(1): New Zealand’s landscapes, mountains, beaches, lakes, forests, plains, and rivers are generally considered by the world to be beautiful and can affect people in an emotional way to inflict, happiness, amazement, wonder and awe.

(2): New Zealand has been portrayed as a clean, green country across the globe- the picture perfect landscape photography is well recognised and identifiable.

(3): The landscape photographs of our clean, natural image do not inform the tourist of the ever increasing carbon emissions which are now as high as the US- they are not supplementing a person with any additional information.



Figure. 54. 100% Pure New Zealand advertising campaign by Tourism New Zealand. The image is inherently beautiful and kitsch

<sup>69</sup> Gillo Dorfles, *Kitsch-An Anthology of Bad Taste* (London: Studio Vista, 1969),153.

In terms of an architectural outcome, the third condition offers the most opportunities to test and push the kitsch aesthetic beyond these three limits. Essentially this will mean it is not 'true' kitsch in accordance with Kulka's conditions, but a version of kitsch. The qualities of kitsch which make it so identifiable and popular are the first two conditions. Therefore by 'enriching the associations' with the new architectural design, the outcome could be more highly valued and potentially raise the status of kitsch. This architectural version of kitsch could then be informed by various other cultural artefacts until eventually a new archetypal language has formed based around the aesthetics of kitsch.

### *New Zealand- a Kitsch Nation*

'The relationship between the tourist and the environment that surrounds him is only rarely genuine, and it is this veil of falseness, imitation and admiring sentimentality that more often than not makes the world, as it appears to the tourist, vomit kitsch all over itself.'<sup>70</sup> Gillo Dorfles

New Zealand is a tourist's heaven. With our beautiful rivers, mountains, plains, forests and coastlines we happily exploit our landscapes and features through various types of advertising to entice tourists to visit. The tourist market has everything ready on a platter, from skiing packages in Queenstown to kayaking adventures in the Coromandel. Dorfles describes this type of easy foreign adventure as a falsification or an image with a type of glazed coating of 'myth' that blurs out the 'real' genuine experience. He writes that the tourist comes prepared with prefabricated feelings, admiration and excitement for places and wonders if the tourist can really believe a kilted Scotsman playing the bagpipes in Scotland is authentic rather than 'advertising's complement to the landscape.'<sup>71</sup> What the tourist is looking for and what New Zealand is giving them is a 'pseudo-adventure'<sup>72</sup> Not entirely an authentic experience but one with all the boring, dirty, or unflattering sections removed. What remains is the most exciting and beautiful parts to New Zealand- a simulated experience.

<sup>70</sup> Gillo Dorfles, *Kitsch-An Anthology of Bad Taste* (London: Studio Vista, 1969), 154.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>72</sup> Ludwig Giesz, "Kitsch-man as tourist", in *Kitsch: An Anthology of Bad Taste*, ed. Gillo Dorfles (London: Studio Vista, 1969), 167. Pseudo-adventure is a term Ludwig Giesz uses to describe what a tourist is looking for, as opposed to a 'real' adventure with unknowns and the exotic.







Figure. 55. A collection of kitsch 'kiwiana'



The exploitation of our iconic places also extends to our way of life, this includes the caravanning lifestyle. The caravan as a *Collected Cultural Relic* has become another symbol of our nation that will become fresh bait for tourists. Essentially what New Zealand is doing is 'kitschifying' itself, making it as easy as possible to obtain an experience of our country. It is important to find a balance between the celebration of our iconic heritage and the progress of our built environment. This thesis looks at how New Zealand can keep progressing architecturally to create new national images and build up an architectural language. These cultural relics can be inspiration or foundations for new art and architectural designs. Less privileged buildings and spaces which are not generally highly noted are beginning to influence our social memory. It is these types of buildings which at the time of construction may seem insignificant that can help a vernacular language grow. David Aitkinson writes about social memory in his 2007 article *Kitsch geographies and the everyday spaces of social memory*. He writes that we should look even further and think even more fluidly about social memory at different scales and within every day, mundane places.<sup>73</sup> In this instance the traditional New Zealand camping ground.

It is through mass media that Dorfles describes the loss of the 'lived' experience is occurring. It becomes a paler image, or 'dream ghost' of the original reality. This is opposed to the vibrant smells, colours, sounds, and tastes you would truly experience if you were

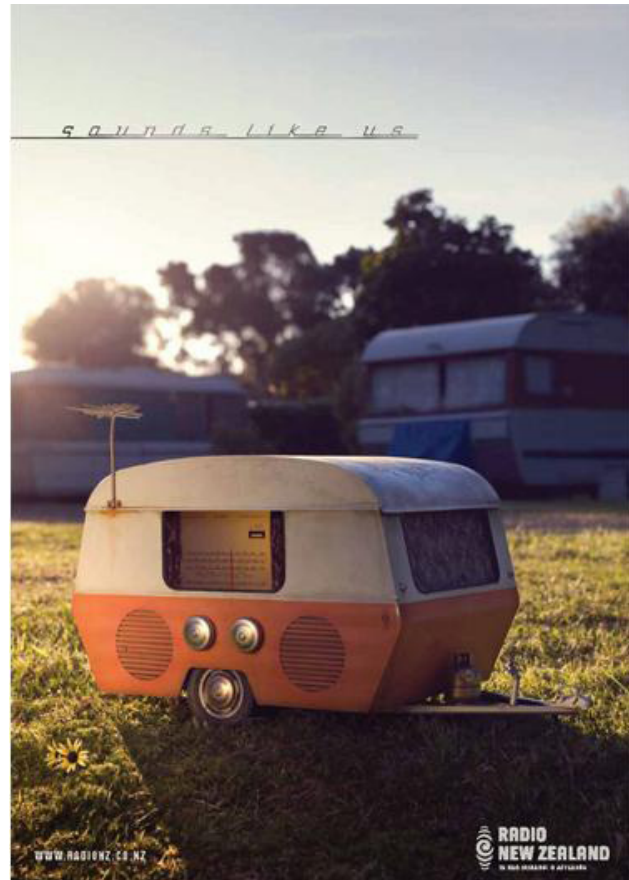


Figure. 56. Caravan Radio- Design Culture Lab for Radio New Zealand. "Open to all New Zealanders, the objective of the competition is to design a radio that captures the essence of New Zealand."

<sup>73</sup> David Aitkinson, "Kitsch geographies and the everyday spaces of social memory", *Environment and Planning* 39, i.03 (2007): 521, <http://www.envplan.com/abstract.cgi?id=a3866> (accessed November 9, 2010).

Figure. 57. Image on the Tourism New Zealand Website. Sunsets or an afternoon glow are common motifs of their photography



actually somewhere foreign. This is true in the case of the campground as many of New Zealanders' encounters with the experience are second-hand through television programmes, advertisements, and postcards et cetera. They are missing the subtleties and vibrancies of the 'functional reality' (described in chapter one). There is an authentic 'real-ness' missing from the memory of the cultural experience.

### *The Taste of Necessity*

An early interest of mine is how something that embodies social memory and cultural nostalgia can be considered 'depthless'? The French sociologist, anthropologist, and philosopher, Pierre Bourdieu, calls this 'the taste of necessity'.<sup>74</sup> Kitsch is an enduring aesthetic of the modern world. In the consumer driven society we live in, the topic of kitsch is becoming an increasingly contemporary issue. Atkinson writes perhaps kitsch aesthetics are insistently popular because of their 'comforting familiarity'.<sup>75</sup> This comfort associated with kitsch is evident within the caravanning lifestyle of New Zealand. The majority of families prefer the retro original caravans which have a stronger sense of home

74 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984), 149, <http://books.google.co.nz/books?hl=en&lr=&id=nVaS6gS9Jz4C&oi=fnd&pg=PR12&dq=Distinction:+A+Social+Critique+of+the+Judgement+of+Taste&ots=70vSrc-SjO&sig=rPQCcLmxJz5oKxrXijbrYp4NZk#v=onepage&q&f=false> (accessed October 13, 2010).

75 David Atkinson, "Kitsch geographies and the everyday spaces of social memory", *Environment and Planning* 39, i.03 (2007): 521, <http://www.envplan.com/abstract.cgi?id=a3866> (accessed November 9, 2010).



than the new white imports. The sentimentality, nostalgia and images of an idealised past are portrayed as kitsch in a 'nourishing' or 'naively beautifying' way.<sup>76</sup> Other critics also note the relief of a nostalgic kitsch as a method of creating an aesthetic of the mundane present.<sup>77</sup>

The general conclusion Atkinson and Bourdieu are describing is that kitsch has a pleasant easiness about it which makes you feel comfortable and helps you accept the time and place you are in. There is no pressure from the distant past, or the unknown future, it merely represents what is known to us at present. To quote Atkinson; 'In sum, this nascent perspective suggests that imitative, familiar kitsch aesthetics are popular because they conjure unchallenging, nostalgic visions of modern worlds.'<sup>78</sup> Kitsch is a necessity in the modern world as a relief from the constantly changing environment. People enjoy seeing motifs, artworks, and buildings of which they are already familiar.

Nostalgic visions of modern New Zealand are the forte of the New Zealand artist Judy Darragh. She celebrates the iconic knick-knacks and kitsch deposits that others would simply dismiss as junk. This makes her the sole link between New Zealand, nostalgic souvenirs, kitsch, and high culture. Her artworks are the art-world equivalent of my intensions for the realm of architecture in New Zealand- therefore she became an important study and influence on my design process. Darragh is completely unique in the way she has embraced New Zealand's kitsch. Dubbed the 'Queen of Kitsch'<sup>79</sup>, Darragh is very adept at translating the nostalgic emotion into something physical. By shifting New Zealand's cultural artefacts into the gallery context she draws out different values and meanings. The early stages of my design process took on a similar approach to Darragh's by collecting memorabilia from the caravanning world and manipulating them through a series of drawings and physical models. The original artefacts and imagery were taken a step further through each change in mode and media.

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76 David Atkinson, "Kitsch geographies and the everyday spaces of social memory", *Environment and Planning* 39, i.03 (2007): 525, <http://www.envplan.com/abstract.cgi?id=a3866> (accessed November 9, 2010). Atkinson quoting terms that Lindquist wrote.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 Natasha Conland, *Judy Darragh So...You Made it?* (New Zealand, Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2004), 11.

*'Superior culture is one of the most artificial of all human creations, and the peasant finds no 'natural' urgency within himself that will drive him towards Picasso in spite of all difficulties. In the end the peasant will go back to kitsch when he feels like looking at pictures, for he can enjoy kitsch without effort.'*

Clement Greenberg, "The Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939), in *Kitsch: An Anthology of Bad Taste*, ed. Gillo Dorfles (London: Studio Vista, 1969), 121.

Figure. 58. A comfortable outdoor setting





Figure. 59. Judy Darragh,  
'Furry Fish', 1990. Fake fur, plastic  
fish, wood and metal 390x140mm

The inherent 'pleasant easiness' or 'comfortable familiar' quality that kitsch bestows is highly evident in Darragh's work. Curator Natasha Conland writes that she explores what it means to be a New Zealander by both commemorating and unsettling New Zealand's identity. Her work demands that kitsch be taken seriously as a part of New Zealand's living heritage, and that it be elevated to the status of art.<sup>80</sup> It is Darragh's investigations of value and nostalgia within contemporary artistic culture that made her the perfect precedent for my architectural investigations of the same qualities. Her work is successful because it is 'comfortable, witty and at ease with things New Zealand; 'our' stuff; knowing without condescension.'<sup>81</sup> Darragh acknowledges and understands the weight of the sentiment 'congealed' within her motifs which also functions as a secret message or code.<sup>82</sup> We might then embrace sentiment and nostalgia as emotions of the caravanning lifestyle in New Zealand and test their value within an architectural design.

80 Natasha Conland, *Judy Darragh So... You Made it?* (New Zealand, Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2004), 9-11.

81 Ibid.

82 Chris Kraus, "Fat Cheesy Slut", in *Judy Darragh So... You Made it?*, ed. Natasha Conland (New Zealand, Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2004), 33-35. Kraus distinguishes the difference between Darragh as a conceptual artist and folk artists who deal with similar themes. Folk art is derived from a singular moment of inspiration and is static. Darragh's work is a process of experiments which continually feed and cancel each other out.

## *Kitsch- A Dirty Word*

The word kitsch translates roughly and inadequately into German as 'bad taste' or 'vulgar trash'. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Twentieth Century Art the term was applied to art and artefacts characterised by vulgarity, sentimentality, and pretentious bad taste.<sup>83</sup> Broch considers kitsch to be ambitionless. Instead of the intuition artists have about reality which they use as a tool for the creation of art, kitsch supposedly borrows 'previously discovered spheres of beauty'.<sup>84</sup> It is for this reason that he considers art superior to kitsch. Architects and artists still do not wish to cross the very fine line into kitsch- in fact they dare not approach it without a critical sense of distance. This is highly evident in the work created within the modernist period. Norwegian painter Odd Nerdrum even describes kitsch as the 'antithesis of modern art'.<sup>85</sup> Benjamin is in defiance with modernism's insistence on 'pure' forms and its removal of ornament and emotion. He demands that artworks should be 'ultimately heartening' and kitsch should be treated as a 'protected species'.<sup>86</sup>

Millions of people around the world currently enjoy caravans, recreational vehicles and mobile homes yet they still remain predominately unrecognised and ridiculed as examples of good design.<sup>87</sup> Visionary Architects during the 1960s began to take a major interest in mobility and mobile dwellings which they used as a source of inspiration. Young avant-garde architects such as Archigram, Hans Hollein, Coop Himmelblau, Superstudio, Archizoom, and the Metabolists designed futuristic versions of the urban environment which were dynamic and machine-like.<sup>88</sup> Their ideas were utopian and a majority of the work remains as paper architecture. They were not attempting to create permanent monuments that would be around forever, they aimed for a transient and

83 Ian Chilvers, *A Dictionary of twentieth-century art*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

84 Hermann Broch, "Kitsch & Romanticism", In Gillo Dorfles, *Kitsch-An Anthology of Bad Taste* (London: Studio Vista, 1969), 61.

85 Odd Nerdrum, *On Kitsch* (Norway, Oslo: Kagge Forlag, 2001), 11.

86 Winfried Menninghaus, "On the 'Vital Significance' of Kitsch: Walter Benjamin's Politics of 'Bad Taste' ". In *Walter Benjamin and the Architecture of Modernity*, edited by Benjamin, Andrew E. Rice, Charles (Melbourne, Australia: Re.Press, 2009), 51.

87 Sean Topham, "Caravans are Cool" in Anthony Kiendl, *Informal Architectures- Space and Contemporary Culture* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2008), 194.

88 Peggy Deamer, "The Everyday and the Utopian" Deborah Berke & Steven Harris, *Architecture of the Everyday* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), 195-196.



flexible architecture; “They envisaged the city of the future as a giant trailer park.”<sup>89</sup> The enthusiasm of the 1960s is still celebrated and appreciated today however the ideas of these architects never filtered through the decades and down into the smaller scale individual domestic dwelling. They remain as big, revolutionary ideas. I see opportunities in New Zealand for the testing of these ephemeral, transient architectural ideas at a much smaller domestic scale.

Artists, architects and other cultural commentators of the 20<sup>th</sup> century rejected anything kitsch as crude or simply bad art and taste; for they are the guardians of ‘high culture’ and have the power to evaluate what is and what is not ‘genuine’ art. Recently the theorisation of kitsch has become more in-depth and has adopted a broader scope of scholarly interpretation, from philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, historians and anthropologists- the former mere dismissal of kitsch is no longer valid. Although Broch despises the vulgarity of kitsch and considers it ‘evil’, he also acknowledges that it cannot be compared along the same scale of values as ‘art’; he says kitsch ‘is by no means ‘debased art’; it has its own self-contained system which insinuates itself like a foreign body into the universal system of art, or, if you prefer, takes up its position beside it.’<sup>90</sup> Kitch is beginning to break away from its comparisons with art which had it rendered secondary and part of ‘low culture’. In its own system of evaluation, kitsch is liberated from the ‘snobbery’ of the guardians of the high culture. It is an exciting prospect to think of what might become of kitsch once finally freed from these criticisms.

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89 Sean Topham, “Caravans are Cool” in Anthony Kiendl, *Informal Architectures- Space and Contemporary Culture* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2008), 198.

90 Gillo Dorfles, *Kitsch-An Anthology of Bad Taste* (London: Studio Vista, 1969), back cover.

Figure. 60. Classic ‘Retro’ lamp and deck chair from personal caravan



### *Retro- Artefacts of the Recent Past*

*“Retro is not just a recapitulation of the past; it focuses on the recent past, even if it might seem to have slipped out of sight only yesterday.”<sup>91</sup>*

The New Zealand caravan, currently a lived reality and souvenir, is becoming a cultural artefact of our biography, a ‘Memorative Sign’ which triggers nostalgia for the entire lifestyle. This fate parallels a quality of kitsch which has been described by Kulka; ‘Unlike real art, kitsch does not in any meaningful way enrich or transform the antecedently stored associations. It functions merely as a stimulus, or a triggering device, for their retrieval.’<sup>92</sup> This connection may at first appear distant and irrelevant. However the slippage between these two facts is seamless, the concept of ‘retro’ provides the link. When something popular from the recent past (something ‘retro’) is replicated, the imitation becomes inherently kitsch. The use of the term popular here is popular within the masses, not popular as in artistically

<sup>91</sup> Elizabeth Guffey, *Retro: The Culture of Revival* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2006), 17.

<sup>92</sup> Tomas Kulka, “Kitsch”, *British Journal of Aesthetics* 28, no.1 (1988): 25.

or intellectually. The culture that is being revived is not 'proud examples of the past'. It is what Elizabeth Guffey describes in her book *Retro-The Culture of Revival* as the simple, easy aesthetic of a seemingly mundane or everyday object. Retro has a non-serious and subversive instinct to highlight obscurities from unlit corners and unopened closets; 'but retro's non-seriousness should be distinguished from frivolity.'<sup>93</sup>

These 'seemingly mundane' or 'everyday objects' are abundant within the caravanning lifestyle. Celebrated retro artefacts related to the caravan range from the small circular barbeques, brightly coloured woven plastic deck chairs, to the materials of the canvas awnings, curtains, and upholstery patterns, textures, and colours. The interiors of the caravans in New Zealand's fleet today are decidedly retro. This is because in the decades they were created (in particular the 1970s) the designs reflected contemporary tastes. Popular interior design magazines at the same time mimicked the aesthetics being realised in caravan interiors.<sup>94</sup>

The thirst for the recovery of earlier yet still modern periods is a post-war tendency which has become increasingly more popular and only coined 'retro' within the last thirty years. This phenomenon is not necessarily just a reflex of stylistic gestures, but a 'kind of subversion in which the artistic and cultural vanguard began looking backwards in order to go forwards.'<sup>95</sup> Dorfles has also explored this idea of 'swings of taste' where he describes how taste changes according to the period and historical situation; the same can be said for the evaluation of works of art. Objects that fall fate to this type of resurrection are like relics or souvenirs of yesterday. Through this collection of the retro, society has learned to tell its own history. Voltaire once noted that 'history does not change, but what we want from it does.'<sup>96</sup>



Figure. 61. Seat cushion pattern from 1970s caravan

93 Elizabeth Guffey, *Retro: The Culture of Revival* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2006), 14.

94 Christopher Hunter, *Vantastic: A Pictorial History of Caravans in New Zealand* (New Zealand, Auckland: Harper Collins Publishers Limited, 2005), 10.

95 Elizabeth Guffey, *Retro: The Culture of Revival* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2006), 9.

96 Voltaire quoted in Elizabeth Guffey, *Retro: The Culture of Revival* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2006), 9.

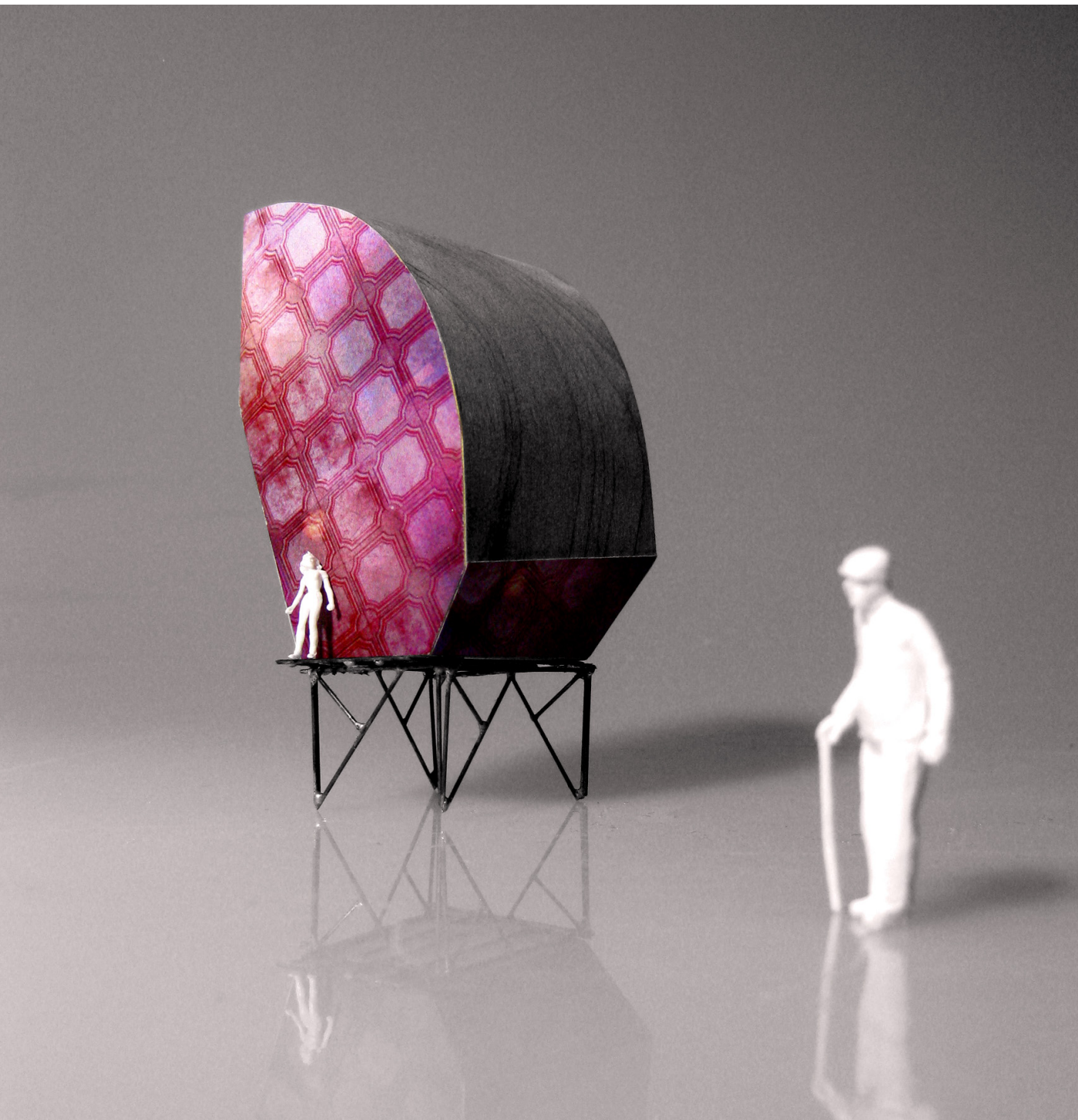


Figure. 62. The warm tones of a retro caravan interior with matching crockery, cushions, & curtains

## *Conclusion*

The difference between something ‘retro’ and something ‘kitsch’ lies in its timeline. A retro object is one that is sought after from a recent past. They are genuine artefacts- living relics of that period. Kitsch objects are replicas, or recreations, of an original object. The relevance of this fact is crucial as it hints at the risks inherent in my research proposal. The New Zealand caravan is a popular icon of the recent past, belonging to the period which has ‘swung back into fashion’ therefore an original caravan today is classified as ‘retro’. In re-interpreting the caravan as a modern architecture I will be challenging the notions of what is classified as kitsch, and the worth of kitsch in architecture. There is potential in a unique kitsch form of architecture that is quite separate from postmodern architecture that has not yet been explored. A New Zealand vernacular architecture seems a valid place to test this idea due to the omnipresent influence of the tourism industry- an industry that thrives on the presence of kitsch. The highly intricate, ‘verbose’ physical nature of the caravan (in particular the interior) offers plenty of tangible qualities with which to experiment as an aesthetic to inform a ‘kitsch-caravan’ architecture.





# *The Re-Imagining of the Architectural Caravan*

4

‘Kitsch satisfies Nostalgia.’<sup>97</sup>

*Can a kitsch New Zealand architecture satisfy our cultural nostalgia for the caravan?*

Although the caravan may be small, it has become a complex vessel of ideas which opened up a variety of discussions from different academic fields. This cultural souvenir is laden with typically unconventional architectural virtues. These ephemeral attributes are too often dismissed or contradicted by architects within their operations. Practicing an ephemeral architecture is frequently hindered by the cultural requirement to produce objects and buildings that subscribe to the conditions of the gallery or town plan.<sup>98</sup> The caravan sits outside this expected intellectual norm due its small nature combined with its strong association and identification with popular culture in New Zealand. The

Left. Montage of developmental sketches  
Right. Photograph of a final model

<sup>97</sup> Gillo Dorfles, *Kitsch-An Anthology of Bad Taste* (London: Studio Vista, 1969), 72.

<sup>98</sup> Andrea Phillips, “The Politics of Informal Production”, in Anthony Kiendl, *Informal Architectures- Space and Contemporary Culture* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2008), 142.

relative youth of our country is reflected in the way our innocent cultural artefacts are reminiscent of a past childhood mythology. It is this relationship with New Zealand's heritage that makes the caravan architecturally significant and potentially monumental. Throughout my research I have attempted to break down and further explore the caravan as an architectural treasure to re-interpret through design.

I have welcomed the presence of kitsch within my work as implicit in the nature of 'retro' artefacts transforming into kitsch through their re-creation. There is a precarious balance between over- and under- acknowledging kitsch within design. Atkinson highlights the risk of swinging the kitsch argument around too far in either direction; '...celebrating the creativity of kitsch *uncritically* also risks misinterpreting the phenomenon just as much as do lazy accusations of vulgarity and tastelessness.'<sup>99</sup> The caravan, and accompanying lifestyle, is enjoyed by the vast majority of New Zealanders- it would be discourteous to extract an architecture from this popular culture that was not being injected back into it. A theme of kitsch as a celebration of simple pleasures became important during the design phase. It was this that sparked what I like to call, *an architecture of the little things*. Many design features have been derived from the small characteristics associated to the caravan and its lifestyle.

Anthony Kiendl writes in his book *Informal Architectures* that perhaps the 'by-products of society's mass metabolism' are drawing our attention more than the monumental artefacts of modernity (such as skyscrapers) are. Kiendl is dedicated to the small ephemeral architectures found in urban cracks and crevices which have been overlooked by architects until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to him there is an increasing emphasis being placed on spatial qualities like the 'temporary, contingent, mobile, and incomplete.'<sup>100</sup> The last essay in the book *My Cool Caravan* by Sean Topham directly includes the caravan into this new emerging architectural culture. I think this is even more relevant in the New Zealand context as the caravan is such a significant image of our holidaying heritage. It has become a commonly used motif of New Zealand based companies, for example the National Bank of New Zealand's latest television advertisement. It employs typically

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99 David Atkinson, "Kitsch geographies and the everyday spaces of social memory", *Environment and Planning* 39, i.03 (2007): 524-525, <http://www.envplan.com/abstract.cgi?id=a3866> (accessed November 9, 2010).

100 Anthony Kiendl, *Informal Architectures- Space and Contemporary Culture* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2008), 11.



Figure. 63. Fat Freddy's Drop T-Shirt with an illustration of 'Cays Crays', Kaikoura  
Figure. 64. National Bank television advertisement, 'For the Places you Go' by DraftFCB New Zealand, Robber's Dog and Dr Seuss

New Zealand items (or 'Kiwiana') to illustrate New Zealander's who are 'going places'- included in these motifs is a paddock of caravans. The New Zealand music group 'Fat Freddy's Drop' also uses the caravan image on their T-shirts as a symbol of a small New Zealand town Kaikoura. These obvious replications of the caravan symbol are a form of collecting culture. The easy identification of the caravan symbol in such advertisements brings about a conscious reminiscing of the caravan's heritage. As the caravan continues along the path towards being 'collected', the lived reality and experience of its unique qualities fade with the memories of the caravanning generation.

My design aesthetic references iconic parts of the caravan to trigger recollections of this experience. At times this is more obvious and a conscious memory will form, during other moments it will be an unconscious remembrance. The conscious mode leads to a reminiscence, and idealised version of a past time which strategically leaves out any intense feelings. The unconscious mode leads to remembrance, '...a piercing, fragmentary recollection that can direct perception to the hidden archives of our individual memories...' <sup>101</sup> These unconscious remembrances are likely to be experienced by people from the caravanning generation, people with a personal relationship with one from their past. For others, a conscious reminiscing will be more evident as they are identifying with nostalgia of the nation, not necessarily a personal nostalgia.

<sup>101</sup> Celeste Olalquiaga, *Artificial Kingdom: A Treasury of the Kitsch Experience* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1999), 68-78. Olalquiaga discussing the different forms of recollection. She refers often to the work by Walter Benjamin. See Benjamin, "On Some Motifs" in *Baudelaire* and "The Image of Proust", in *Illuminations* pgs 155-200 and 201-215.



## Method

Judy Darragh (or, the ‘Queen of Kitsch’) uses the kitsch aesthetic to investigate value and nostalgia within contemporary New Zealand artistic culture.<sup>102</sup> I have established my design process around the same sequence of events Darragh goes through in the process of creating her sculptural pieces. This process emphasised the importance of collection and the worth of the original artefacts within the final re-architecturalisation of the nostalgic caravan. Darragh’s artistic method is as follows:

- 1) Collect from markets and junk shops
- 2) Place them into her personal museum (her house)
- 3) Select particular items and manipulate the museum
- 4) Re-assemble objects into her artworks fit for the gallery<sup>103</sup>

The design process I undertook consisted of a series of images that were a combination of drawing and collage. This is the first in the sequence above- the collection of imagery and objects of or about the caravan. The collection I created consisted of personal photographs, deck chairs, various fabrics and small mementos from my childhood. It was important that I could graphically represent the ideas I was discussing before attempting to create architecture. Event two, the placing into a museum translated for me into a drawing board. The collages became individual records or ‘museums’ of the experience of which occupied my drawing board until a composite drawing of each was created. I then translated the drawing qualities into three dimensions through model making- this process combines events three and four in Darragh’s sequence. The most successful drawings were selected as the driver for the creation of the model, and each model stands alone as an individual object. The forms that resulted were too difficult to model digitally which is appropriate in representing the unique individual characteristics of each.

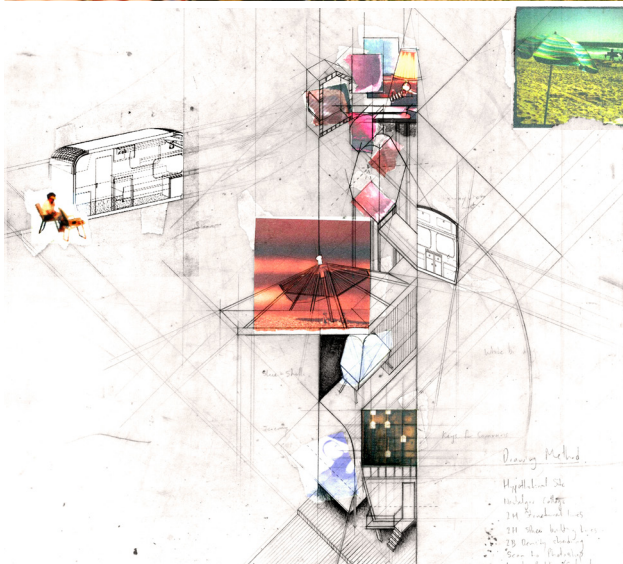
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<sup>102</sup> Natasha Conland, *Judy Darragh So...You Made it?* (New Zealand, Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2004), 10.

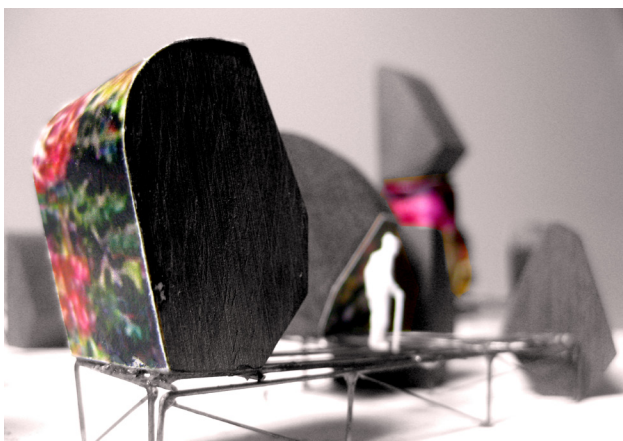
<sup>103</sup> Liz Eastmond, “High-tack Ex-cess”, *Listener*, December 26, 1987, 118.



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2



3-4

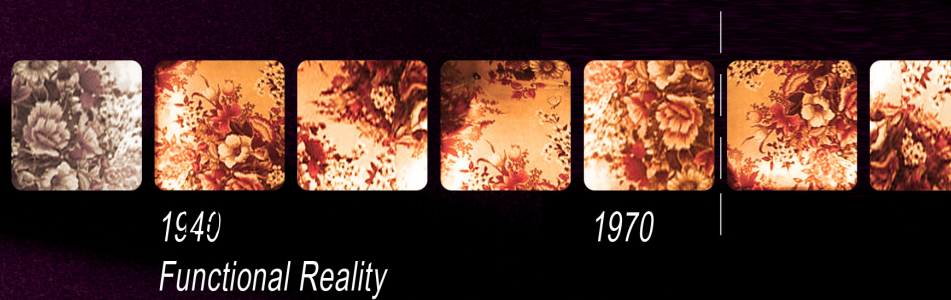
Figure. 65. Personal family photograph of Dianne Clement, 1980s

Figure. 66. Composite axonometric drawing with textures & photographs collaged over

Figure. 67. Photograph of final model series. Made with jarragh, paper collaged patterns, velvet, and mild steel



Figure. 68. CARAVAN DESIGN  
TIMELINE- Bright pink path  
indicates the new architectural  
design whereas the grey path  
shows the path of the caravan  
becoming a cultural fossil. White  
dashed line is the introduction of  
the leisure tax, 1979.





# Design



*Retro came to symbolise a deviant form of revivalism* Elizabeth Guffey



## Nostalgia

*Forever played out in the distance between the present & the imaged*



2010

## The Nostalgic Souvenir

*Lived experience giving way to  
day-dreaming & imagination*

## Collected Cultural Relic

*Culture as commodity- 'Cultural Fossil'*  
Celeste Olalquiaga

*'Memorative Sign'*  
Svetlana Boym

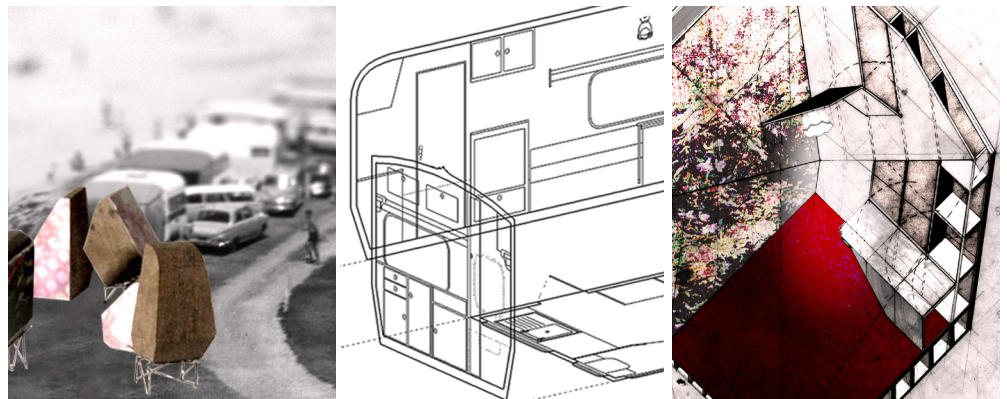




# THE THREE SCALES OF DESIGN

As written in chapter two (*The Miniature World of Caravaning*), the ideas extracted from the caravaning world are divided up into three different scales of which they are most relevant. The three scales are: The Camping Ground, The Shell, and The Nest. The Camping Ground is the caravan's wider context, or habitat. The Shell is the caravan as an externalised object, and The Nest is the caravan's interior. The terms 'nest' and 'shell' are borrowed from Bachelard as a description of the essence of interior and exterior. Each of these scales required a different set of design requirements and has been treated as three parts to the whole design.

Figure. 69. Left. Personal collection of deck chairs in Thistle Hall Gallery  
Figure. 70. Right. Images of each scale- The Camping Ground, The Shell, & The Nest







## THE CAMPING GROUND

The Campground I suggest, has become a miniature world within our world, one where everyday life becomes more enjoyable and less mundane. It has become a kind of actualised utopia, which Foucault describes as a heterotopia. This heterotopian world will disappear with the caravan. To prevent this from happening my designs are inserted into camps around the country until eventually, they will have become the new New Zealand campground. The mobile nature of the caravan also means that it belongs to no one place- it is a floating domestic vessel. Each campground is interchangeable with another and they all represent the same style of living. My intervention has the potential to sit in any of these spaces. The mobile nature of the caravan led to a non-site specific design however they are not physically mobile. The idea is that the families will be the mobile unit and they can travel to any campground and find these small retreats which contain all the same luxuries as home in a condensed form. On any holiday a family can experience a different variation of their domestic arrangements. This project is an attempt to establish a typology for this style of living.

### *The Camping Ground Details*

As the caravan's 'functional reality' disappears, the new caravan typology will be constructed at various campgrounds. This will happen in stages as the caravan will not completely vanish at one time, it will fade out incrementally. The camping ground owners will have years of site experiments with the arrangements and layouts of caravans and tents to help determine the placement and orientation of each new module. Particular families and groups of friends often return year after year and have reasonably stable compositions, which could be mimicked with these new structures.

The steel deck, stilt and stair structures are also strategically arranged based on the habits of the campground uses. The taller stilted designs allow for height opportunities not previously available with a caravan. The decks range in size, height, and number of connections to other units. Some stand alone for a private module, some make connections with two or more modules for groups of families and friends. The expandable

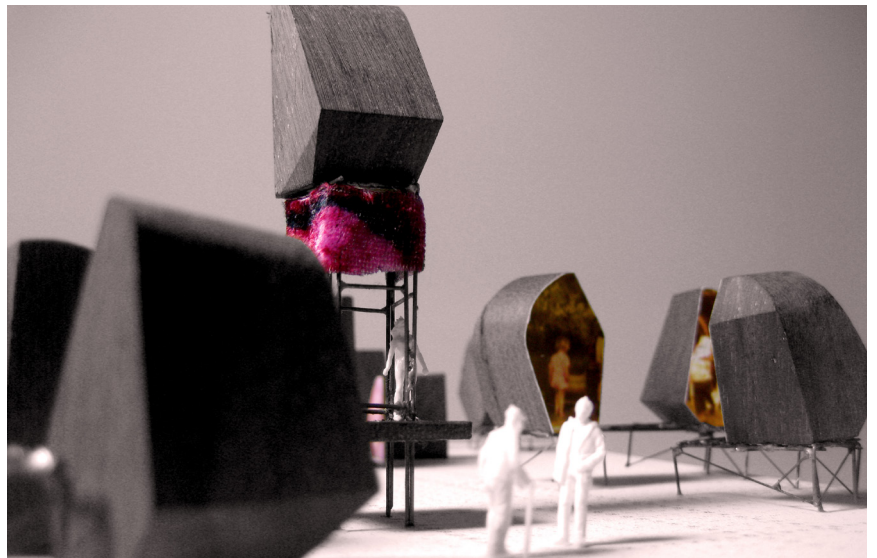
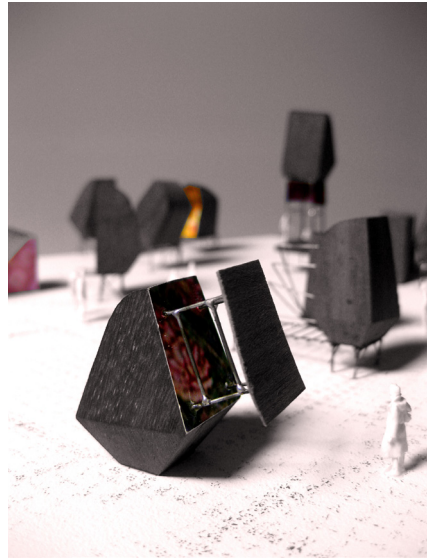
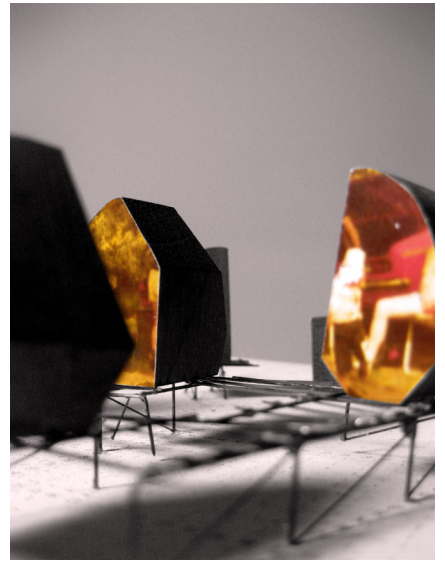
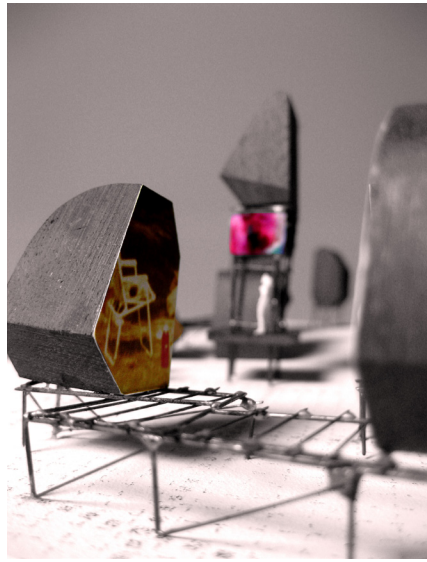
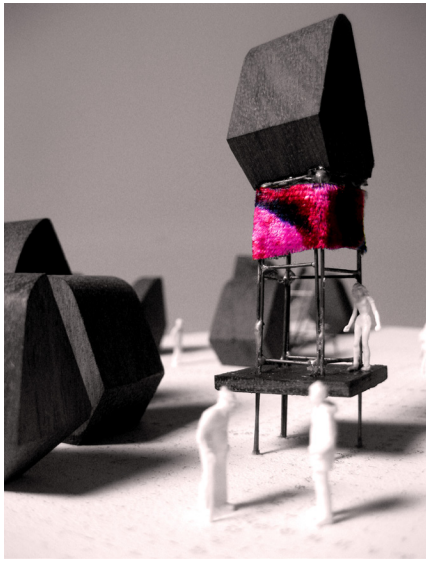
Figure. 71. Man standing on his deck outside his 'architectural egg' in the new camping ground





Figure. 72. Left. Image series of the new designs being intergrated into an existing camping ground  
 Figure. 73. Below Left. Drawing of Mapua Leisure Park at full capacity with caravans  
 Figure. 74. Right. Photographs of final camp scenario model

fabric elements can also stand alone or connect with other fabric elements to create large, enclosed shared spaces. These expandable temporary elements also allow for the fluctuation in vacancies between summer and winter. The majority of extendable spaces will contract in the winter when the occupants retreat back to their permanent homes. In summer the campground will open out and flourish with colours, fabrics and patterns- the designs express and celebrate the seasonal change into summer.









# THE SHELL

The Shell can be described as the external shape and form of the caravan. It is an iconic image familiar from postcards. However the image of the caravan in its natural habitat like a vast coastal landscape is much different. The perception an outsider has on a caravan slips between intrigue and suspicion. This is because of the caravan's inward physicality. I have tried to capture this same language when detailing the exterior of my designs. I focused quite strongly on the way I dealt with the shell openings. Just as the caravan has a layering of thresholds before entering the 'Nest', (which is provided by the canvas awning) I have treated any opening with some kind of obscuring device. This protects the secret nature of the interior from being exposed and acts as a play upon the mobile nature of caravan elements.

## *The Shell Details*

It is the distinctive controlled curves and angles that give caravans their iconic forms. Although the forms were originally derived for functional reasons such as aerodynamics, I am interested in them for their iconic qualities. The exterior forms of my designs are plays upon these shapes through exaggerated, asymmetrical transformations. These curves and angles begin to reference back in memory to the caravan.

The external cladding is detailed to appear seamlessly wrapped. The window and door openings sit flush through these hidden details. Again, this design device is an exaggeration and intensification of the already inward physical nature of the caravan. The objectification of the individual module is more enhanced through its pure form which also keeps the internal environment secret and concealed. To soften the hardened uncanny aesthetic of these forms, a collection of different openings, shutters, and fabrics are employed. They allow for glimpses into the internal space which contrasts against the more subtle external plywood cladding. The colours, patterns, and textures are exploited through this contrast with the simpler materials. Each vibrant element is a memory of the 'retro' origins of the caravan and architecturalises as a 'kitsch' feature.

Figure. 75. Window detail of tallest final model. The nest materials are projected out from the exterior shell

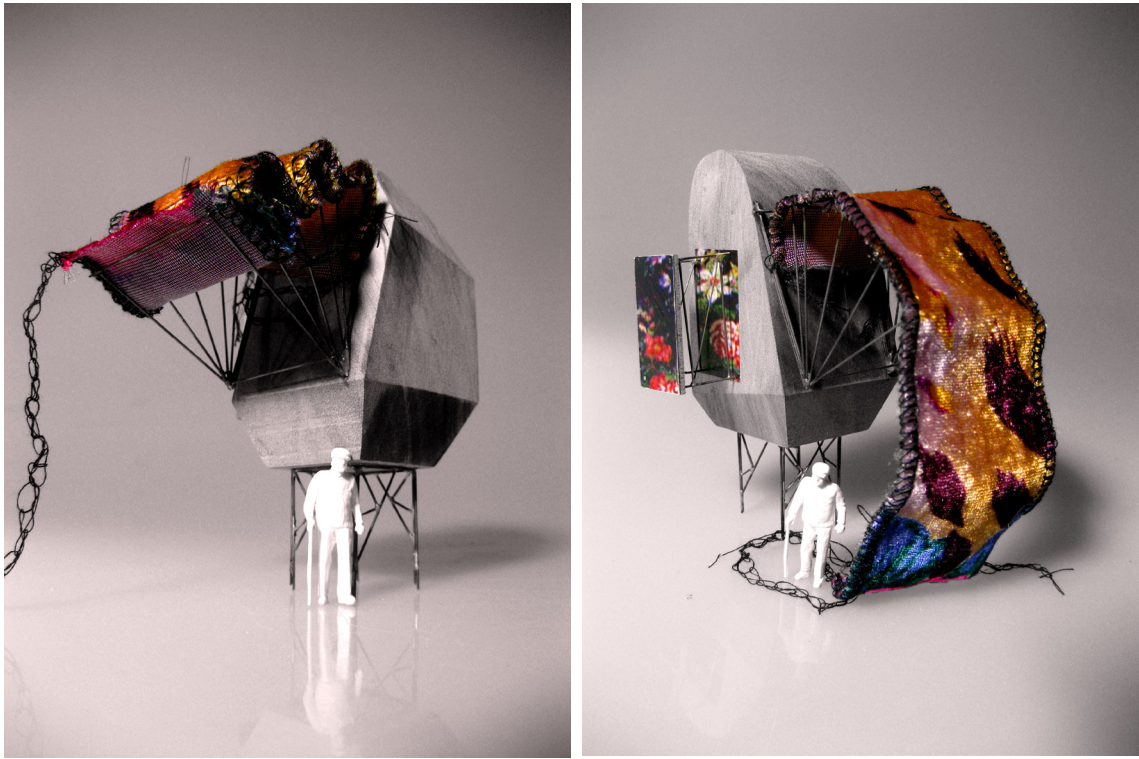
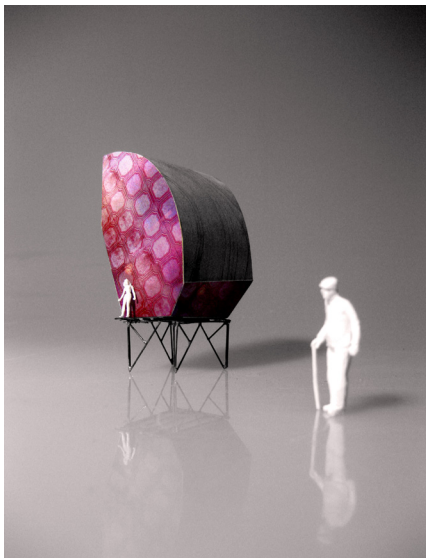
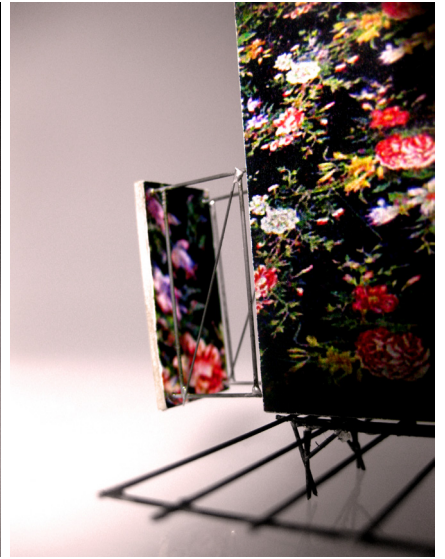
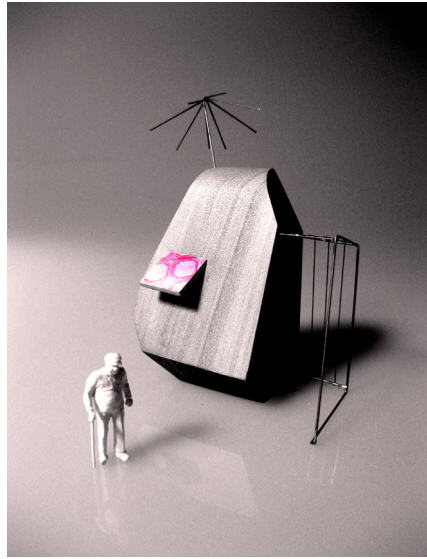
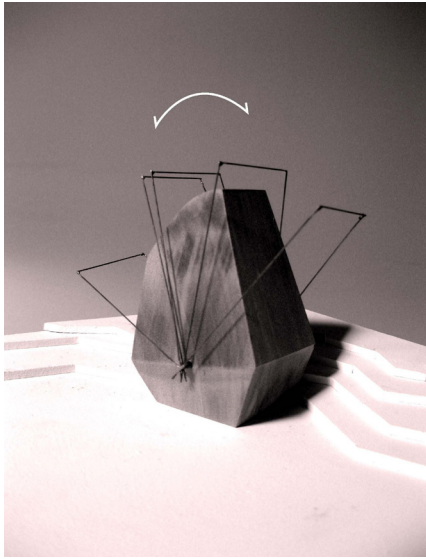
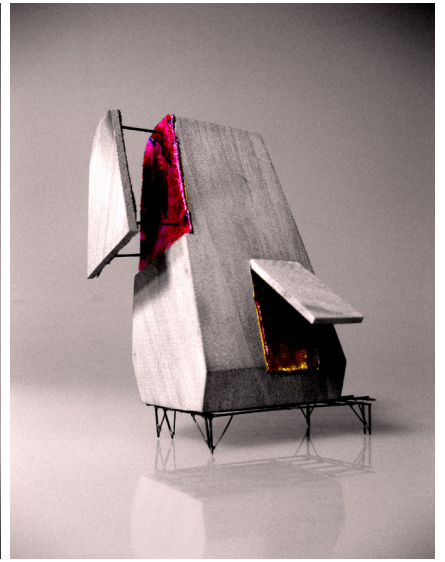
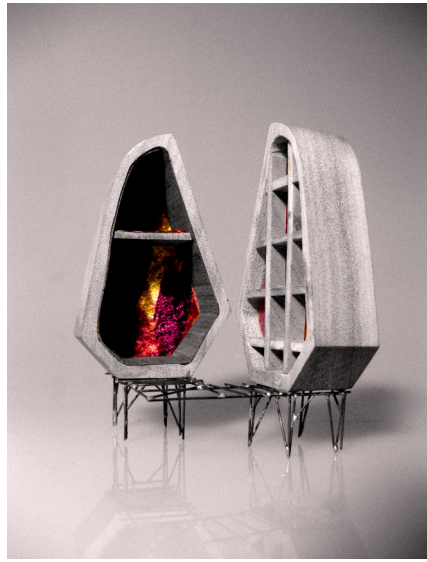


Figure. 76. Above. Images showing the retractable 'awning' device  
 Figure. 77. Right. Nine final designs, each with their own characteristics, materials & structures

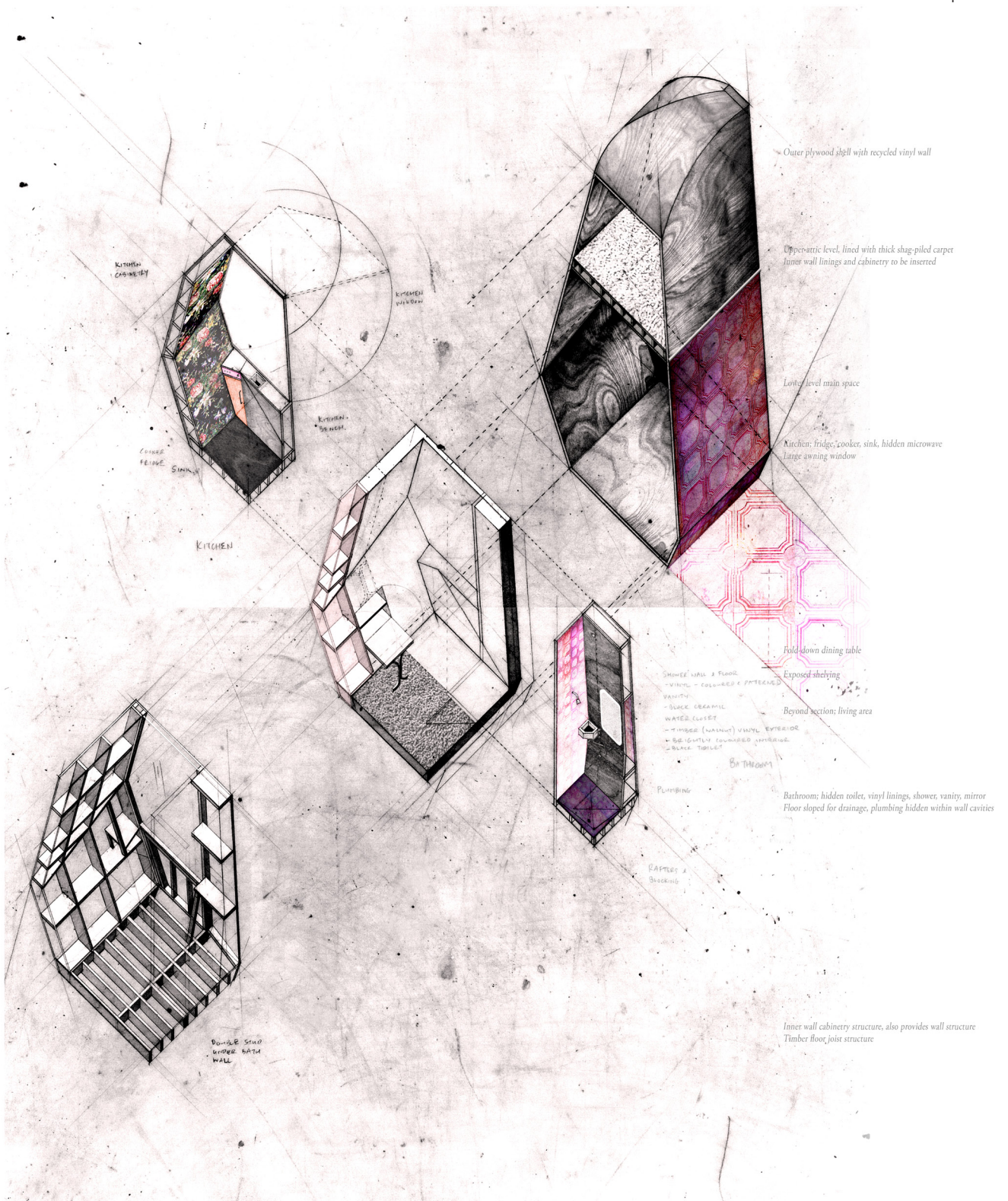
The caravan chassis and 'landing gear' (the retractable steel footings) were inspiration for the steel structural elements (such as decks, stilts, and stairs) surrounding the external shell. They provide a secondary, more obscure layer of marking territory in a similar manner to the way deck chairs and other outdoor furniture elements create invisible spatial boundaries. On completion of the modules that contribute to the creation of the new camping ground typology, it became evident they also possess an anthropomorphic quality in the way that caravans do. Each has its own personality and unique characteristics.



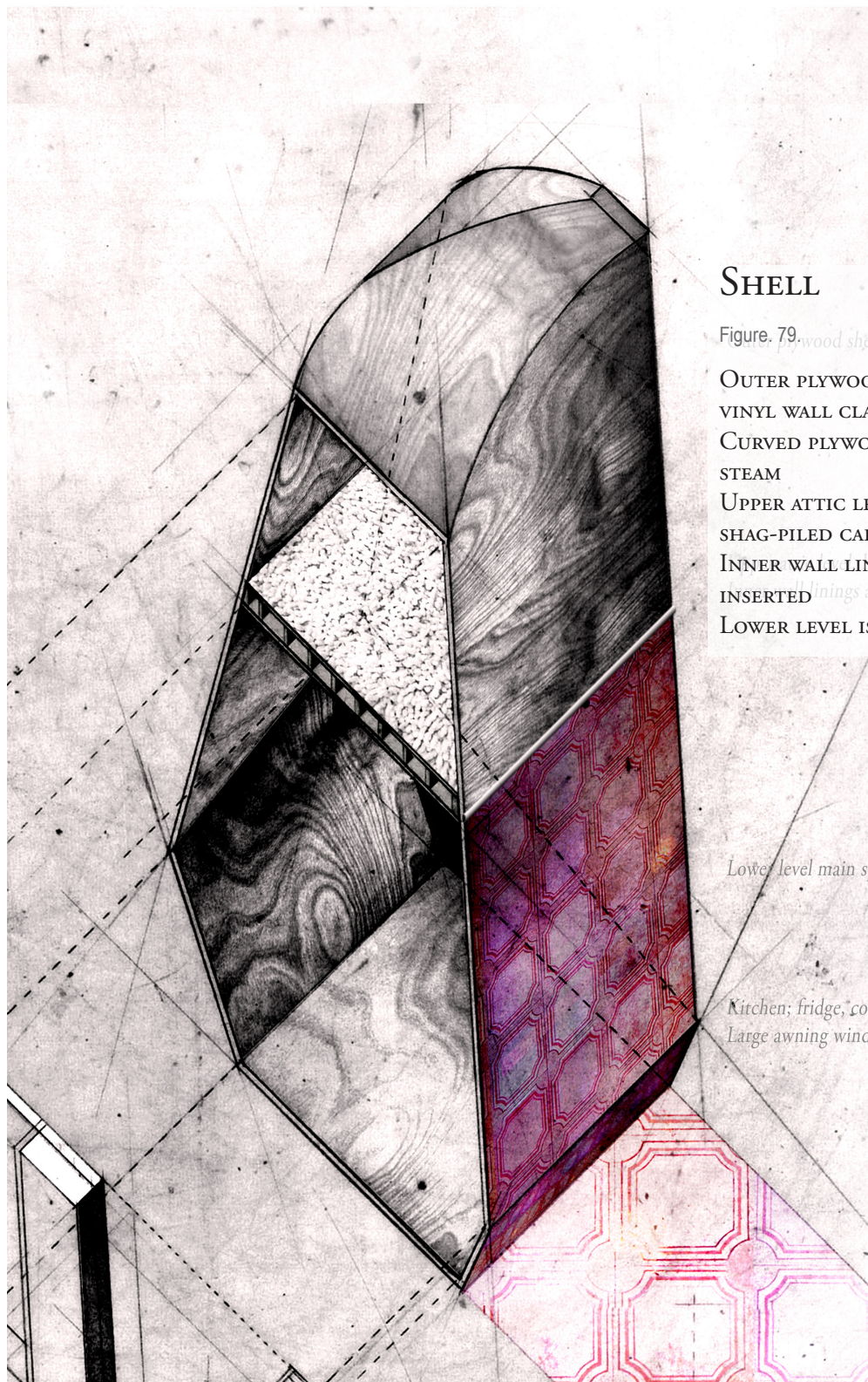


# EXPLODED AXONOMETRIC

Figure. 78. Exploded Axonometric of one design showing external shell, structure, kitchen, bathroom, dining. Original 1:50 @ A1







## SHELL

Figure. 79. *wood shg*

OUTER PLYWOOD SHELL WITH RECYCLED  
VINYL WALL CLADDING IN ONE SECTION  
CURVED PLYWOOD CLADDING SHAPED BY  
STEAM

UPPER ATTIC LEVEL, LINED WITH THICK  
SHAG-PILED CARPET

INNER WALL LININGS & CABINETRY TO BE  
INSERTED *linings a*

LOWER LEVEL IS MAIN SPACE

*Lower level main sp*

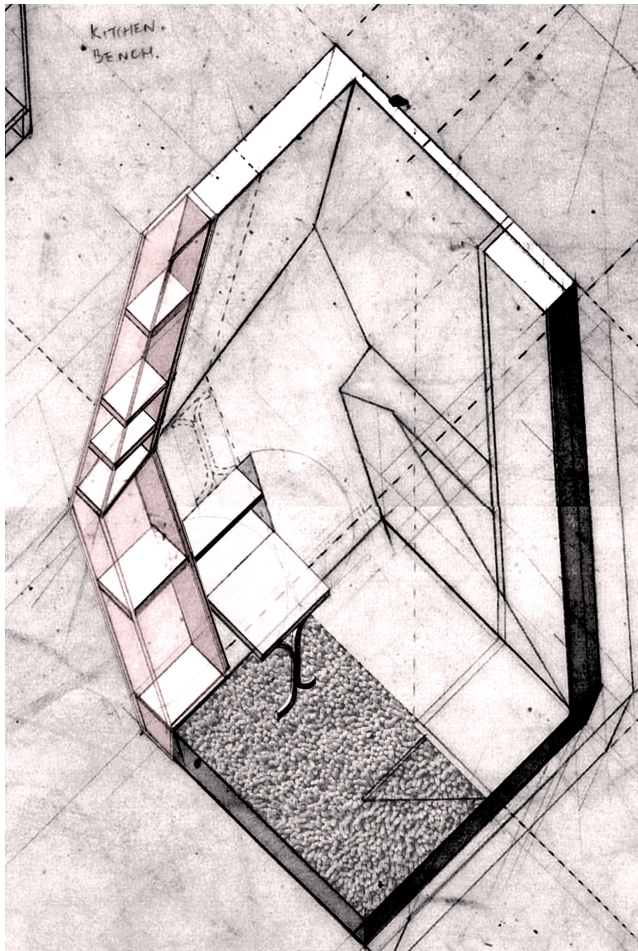
*Kitchen; fridge, coo  
Large awning wind*



## DINING

Figure. 80.

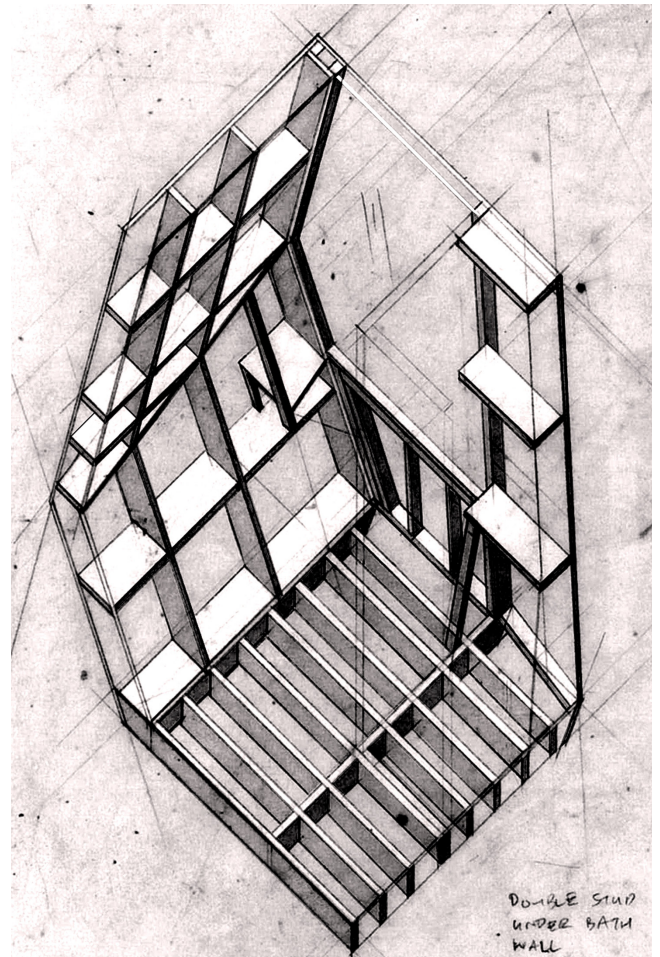
FOLD DOWN DINING TABLE- REVEALS MORE SHELVES  
EXPOSED SHELVING  
SHAG PILE CARPET  
DINING CHAIRS ADDITIONAL  
BEYOND THIS SECTION IS LIVING ROOM

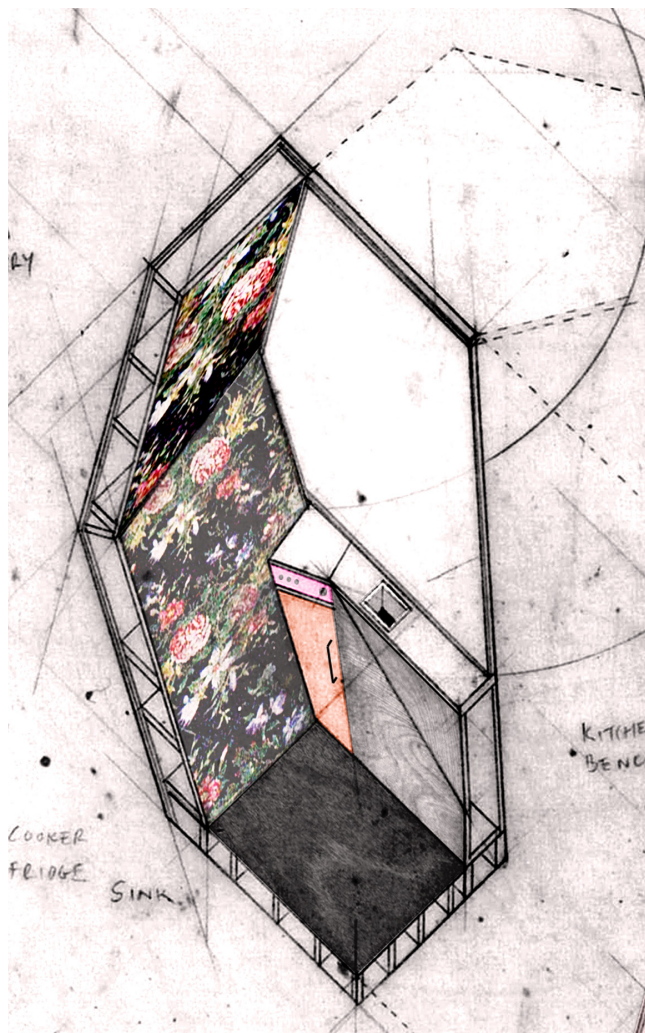


## STRUCTURE

Figure. 81.

450MM CENTRED 290 X 45MM TIMBER FLOOR JOISTS  
90, 250, 350, 450 X 45MM TIMBER WALL STUDS  
SHELVES ACT AS LATERAL BRACING  
DOUBLE GLAZED WINDOWS WITH ROTATING OPENING  
LEVER



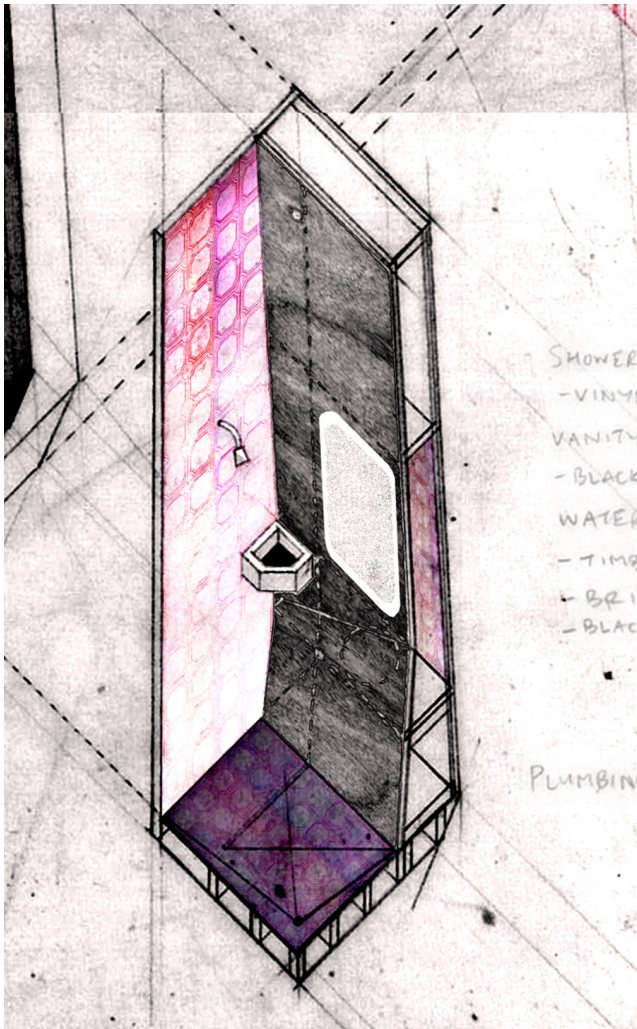


## KITCHEN

Figure. 82.

FRIDGE & MICROWAVE HIDDEN IN WALL CAVITY  
 COOKER & SINK VISIBLE  
 LARGE AWNING WINDOW & SHUTTER  
 HIDDEN CUPBOARDS IN WALL





## BATHROOM

Figure. 83.

TOILET HIDDEN WITHIN PLYWOOD WALL, WALL  
WIDENS AT BASE

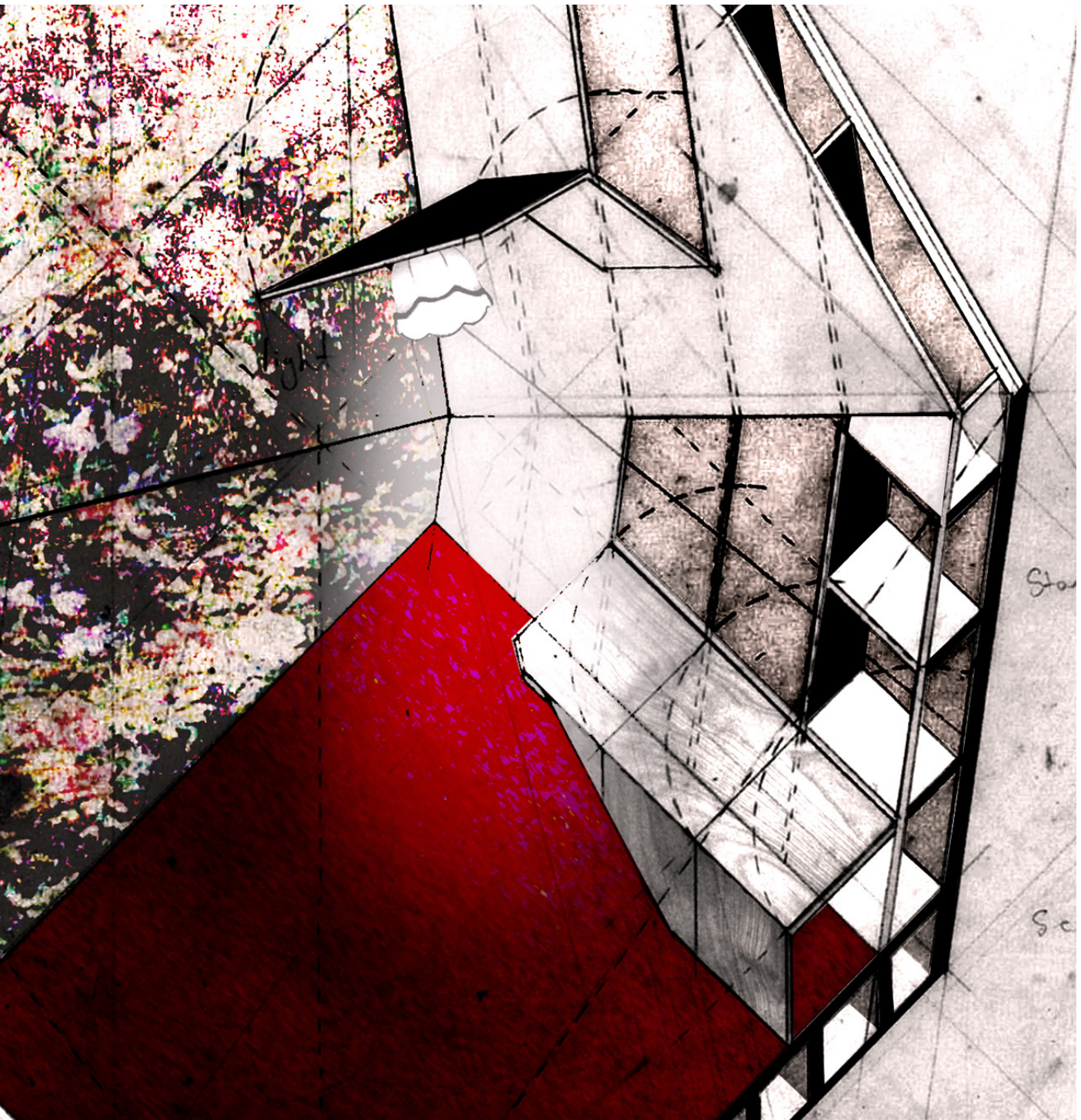
VINYL SHOWER LININGS

VANITY AND MIRROR

FLOOR SLOPED FOR DRAINAGE

PLUMBING HIDDEN WITHIN WALL CAVITIES





## THE NEST

Sitting within the immense New Zealand landscapes, the caravan provides a relief from the expansive surroundings by becoming the only small space within the vicinity; it provides a 'Nest'. It offers a comfortable situation sheltered from the weather, where one can be settled and embedded into. The intimacy of the safe internal environment develops into a nest for dreaming, sheltering a space for the imagination.<sup>104</sup> The layering of thresholds and privacy expressed on the exterior shell is projected inwards creating a layering of concealed cupboards and nooks for hiding things. This includes toilets, kitchen appliances, seating, tables and beds.

### *The Nest Details*

The four walls envelope the small space and provide the backdrop to the activities within the predominately singular volume. Odile Nouvel-Kammerer writes in *The Papered Wall*- walls are the fundamental structure of a dwelling- the confines of a space, or 'the guardians of an individual's privacy.'<sup>105</sup> This last phrase about walls as the guardians of privacy is highly evident within the caravan. The external 'shell' is the primary barrier that mediates the outside world with the internal 'nest'. Nouvel-Kammerer goes on to write that no matter how simple a wall's function may be they make a 'powerful decorative statement...the wall becomes a site of discourse, whether consciously or unconsciously.'<sup>106</sup> The surface of these walls became greatly important and was carefully considered in relation to the caravan. The caravan interior is rich with colour, pattern and texture of an aesthetic which mimics the decade it was created. Experiencing the caravan over the duration of one's childhood means these interiors become engrained in memory. In Gill Saunders 2010 book, *The Walls are Talking*, he considers wallpaper as a 'signifier of home', one that is powerful and evocative in triggering memories of the

Figure. 84. Folding panels inside nest. Light folds over to bench. Bench reveals shelving

<sup>104</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at how we Experience Intimate Places* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1969), 103.

<sup>105</sup> Odile Nouvel Kammerer, "Wide Horizons: French Scenic Papers", In Lesley Hoskins, *The Papered Wall: The History, Patterns and Techniques of Wallpaper*, 2nd ed. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2005), 94.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.



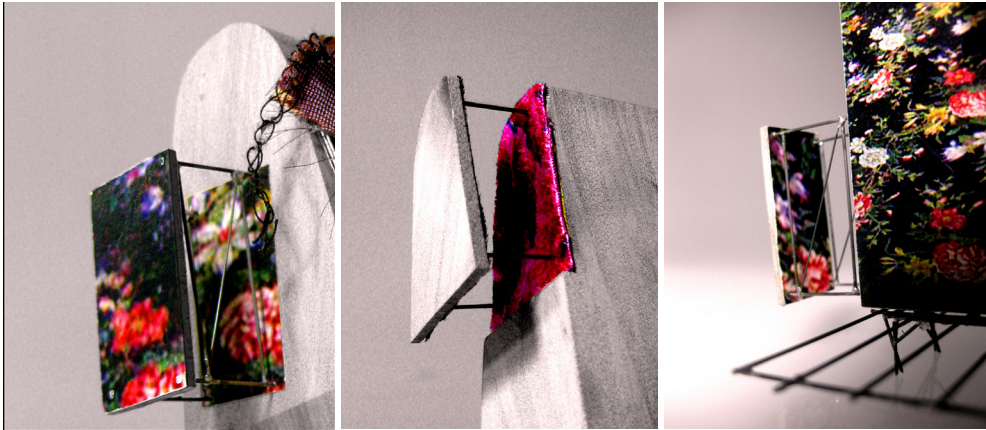


Figure. 85. Left. Opening details and textures revealing the nest qualities on the shell

Figure. 86. Developmental axonometric composite drawing. From the bottom right: Mapua Leisure Park, camping scene, deck chair motions, entire structure, internal nest. Original @ A1

past, 'particularly memories of childhood and early life'.<sup>107</sup> Within my designs I treated the walls as potential 'memorative signs'<sup>108</sup> which could become triggers of nostalgia in the future. The patterned surfaces offer an easy aesthetic to get lost in for daydreaming.

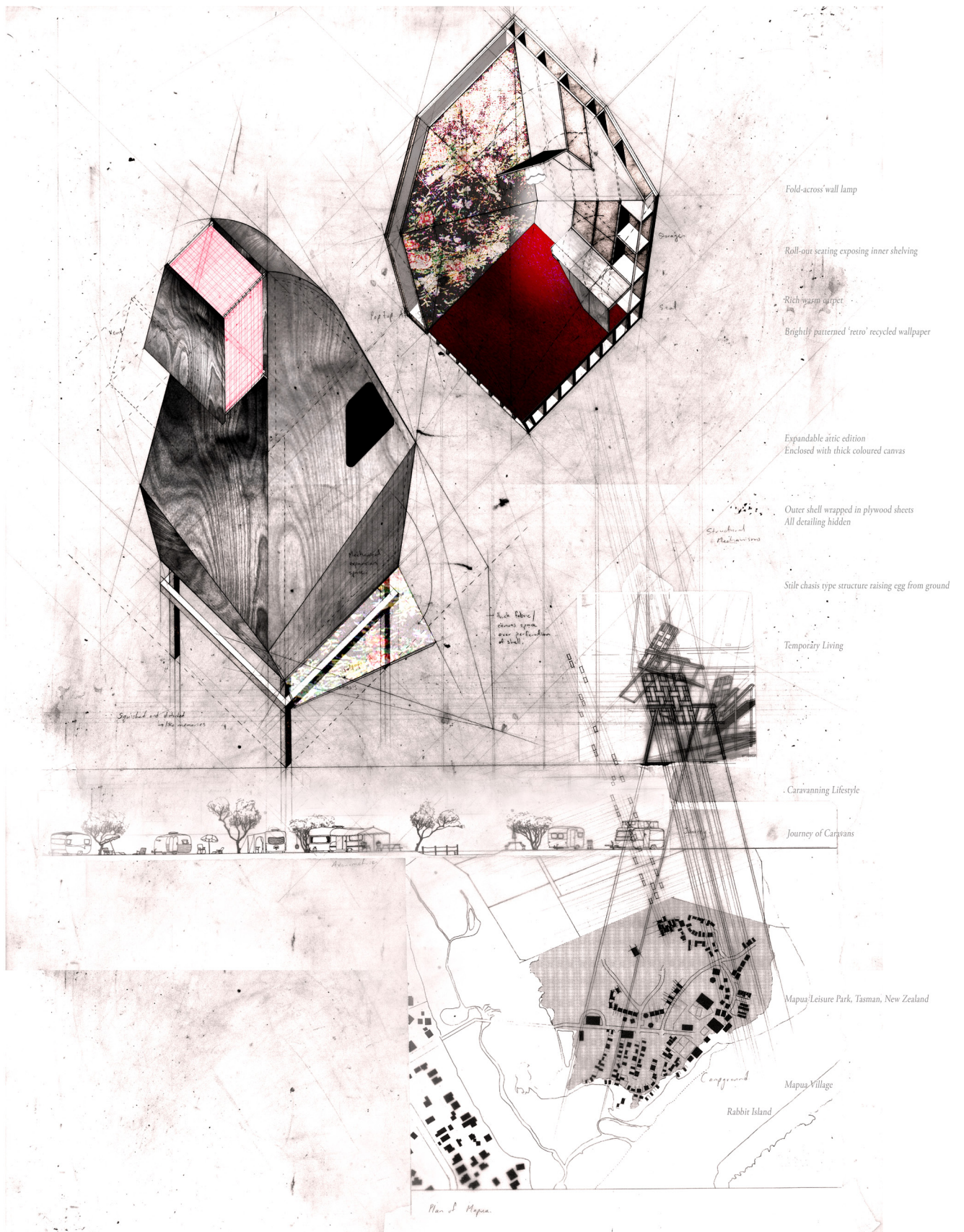
Not only are the walls in my designs lined in various colours, textures and patterns, they have been given physical depth. They are the mediators of private and public, inside and outside, personal and shared, secret and revealed. Behind the internal flush wall surfaces are a variety of cupboards, shelves, drawers, tables, chairs, beds, kitchen appliances, and bathroom accessories. When the surfaces open and fold out into the space, they reveal how the wall linings wrap into the voids created. These 'nooks' are secret spaces for the physical collection of memories. The window shutters project outwards from the 'nest' and hence project the linings outwards from the shell also. From the exterior these flashes of colour and pattern allow for a relief from the otherwise flush enclosed external cladding.

The functional space-saving benefit of the fold-away furniture has a secondary design purpose. Any additional furniture (for example- dining chairs and floor lamps) introduced into the space becomes objectified. It will be the only piece of furniture in the space which will give it the appearance of an artefact in a gallery. In keeping with the 'retro' aesthetic of each module's internal space, the additional furniture will be distinguished for its 'kitschness'.

<sup>107</sup> Gill Saunders, *Walls Are Talking: Wallpaper, Art and Culture* (Manchester: The Whitworth Art Gallery, the University of Manchester, 2010), 28.

<sup>108</sup> As described in chapter one in relation to the term used by Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (USA: Basic Books, 2001), pXIX.

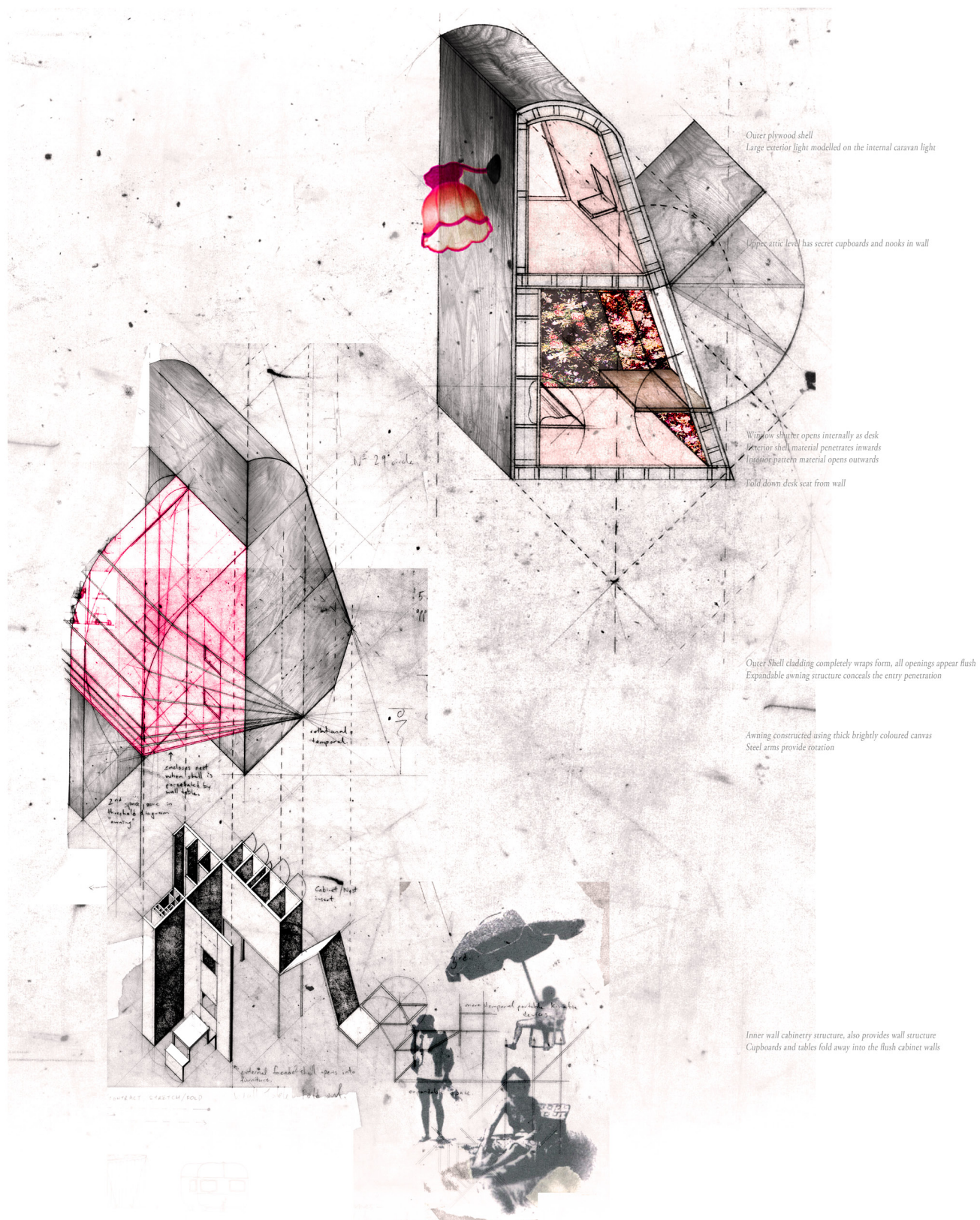




# 3 STOREY ARCHITECTURAL EGG

Figure. 87. Three Storey Architectural Egg. From bottom right: Family photographs, internal nest cabinetry structure, entire building, cut-away of top two floors. Original @ A1.







# NEST

Figure. 88.

TOP TWO FLOORS ONLY

OVERSIZED KITSCH LIGHT MODELLED ON AN INTERNAL  
OXFORD CARAVAN LIGHT

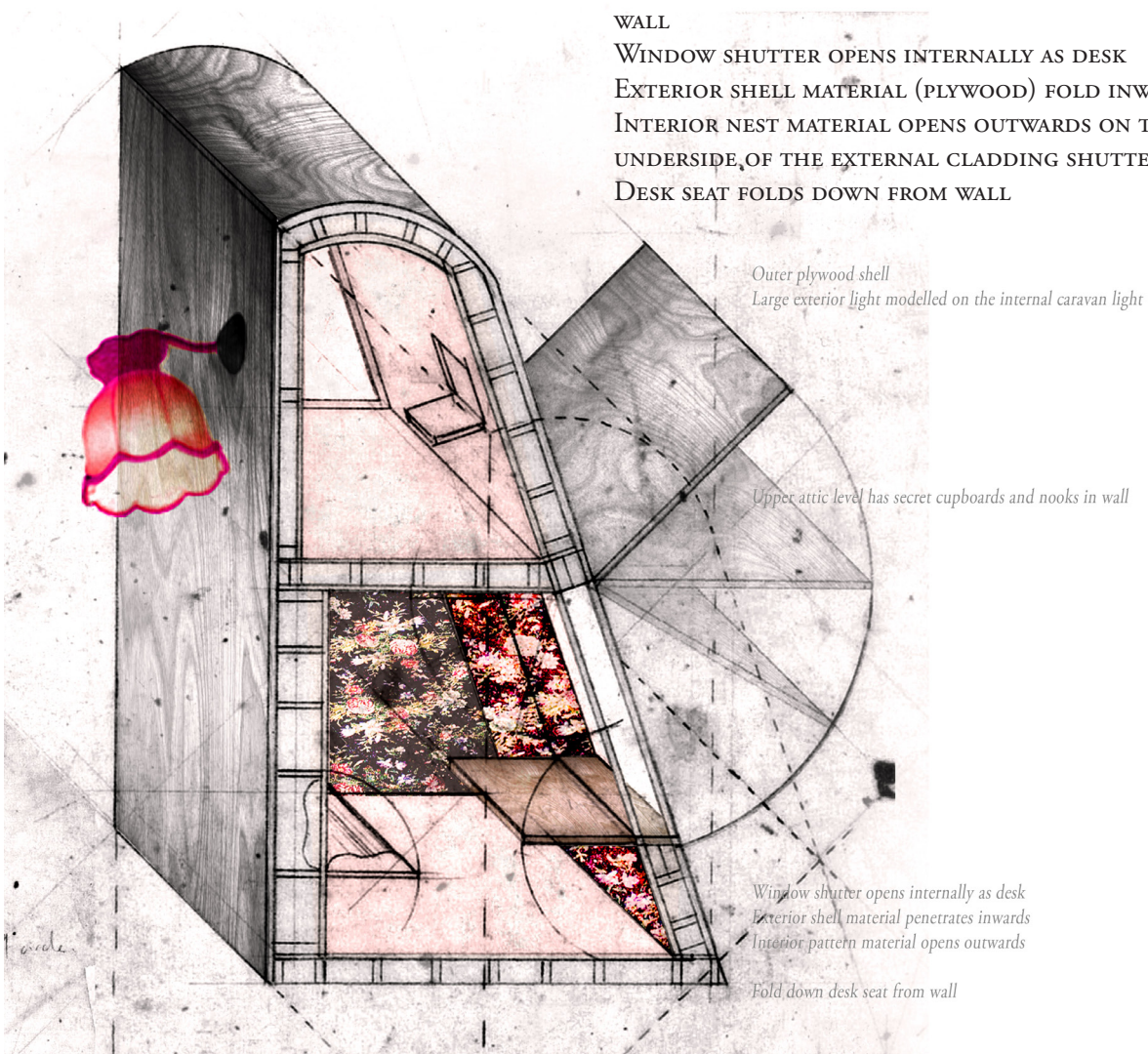
UPPER ATTIC LEVEL HAS SECRET CUPBOARDS & NOOKS IN  
WALL

WINDOW SHUTTER OPENS INTERNALLY AS DESK

EXTERIOR SHELL MATERIAL (PLYWOOD) FOLD INWARDS

INTERIOR NEST MATERIAL OPENS OUTWARDS ON THE  
UNDERSIDE OF THE EXTERNAL CLADDING SHUTTER

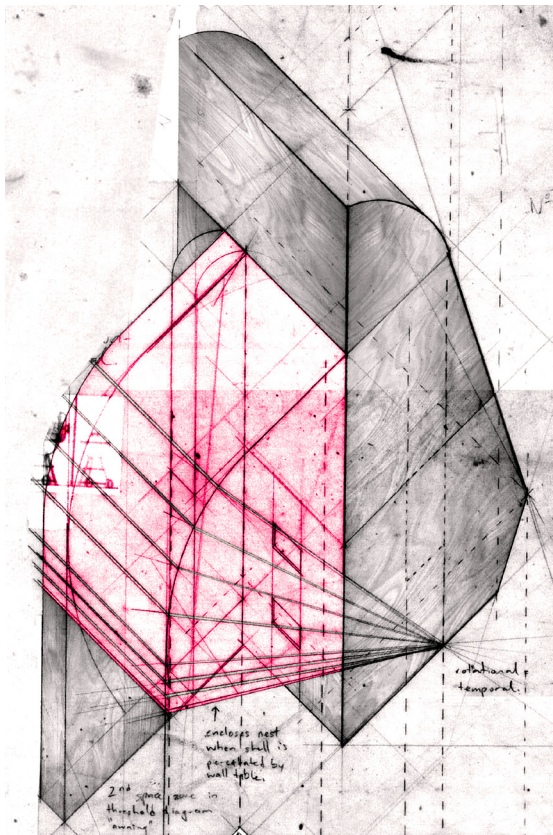
DESK SEAT FOLDS DOWN FROM WALL



## SHELL

Figure. 89.

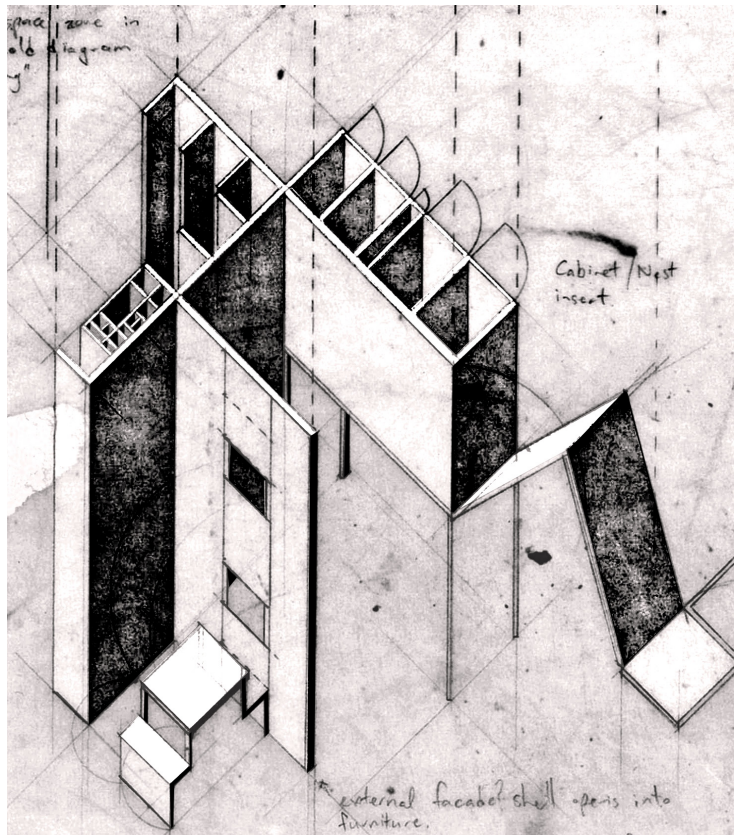
PLYWOOD EXTERNAL CLADDING  
 CLADDING DETAILED TO APPEAR FLUSH,  
 COMPLETELY WRAPS FORM  
 EXPANDABLE AWNING STRUCTURE CONCEALS  
 ENTRY POSITION  
 AWNING CONSTRUCTED WITH THICK BRIGHTLY  
 COLOURED CANVAS  
 STEEL ARMS ALLOW FOR AWNING ROTATION



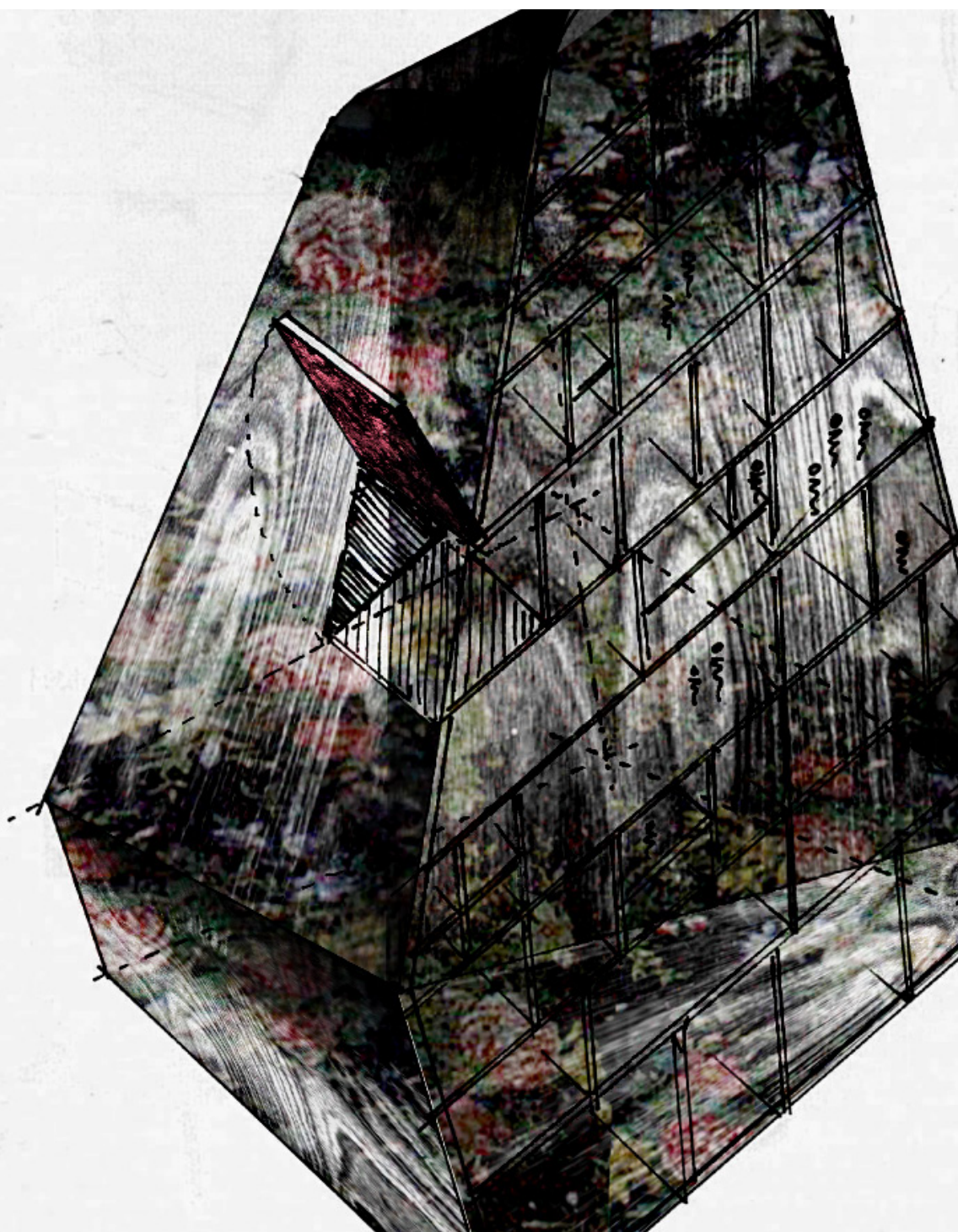
## CABINETRY

Figure. 90.

INNER WALL CABINETRY ALSO PROVIDES WALL STRUCTURE  
 CUPBOARDS & TABLES FOLD AWAY INTO THE CABINET WALLS  
 TABLE ELEMENT FOLDS OUT FROM EXTERNAL SHELL TO PROVIDE  
 OUTDOOR TABLE  
 CUPBOARDS VARY IN SIZE, THERE ARE SMALLER CUPBOARDS  
 WITHIN LARGER ONES





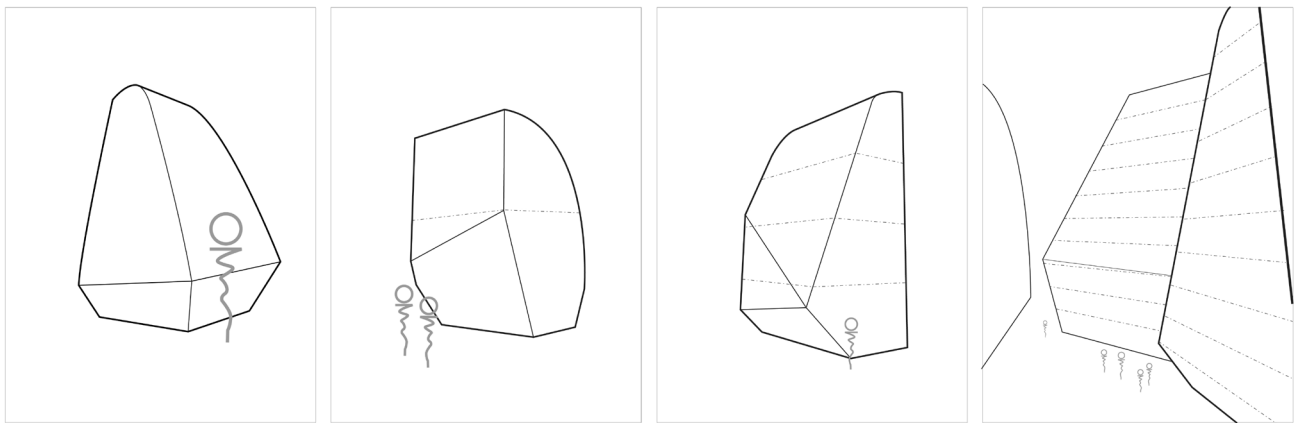




## LARGER SCALE EXPLORATION

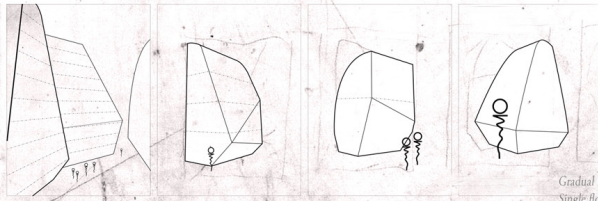
Appendix one is a taxonomy of caravans. This document influenced the way I think about every caravan being unique from the next. Even ones of the same year make and model are different through things like upholstery upgrades, personal renovations, dents, and a new coat of paint. This meant that there was never going to be one solution to re-interpreting the caravan but a series of criteria which can manifest in a variety of designs. I wanted to explore this idea on a more extreme scale to push the caravan design language to its limit. Through a series of diagrams I have visually expressed an incremental increase in size of the new forms. The smallest represents the camping ground typology which is sized for one family. The second is a two storey larger family scale and the third a small motel block. The last and largest represents an urban scale hotel.

The same caravan extracted characteristics established within chapter two are formed at each scale; however they are all magnified proportionally with the increase in size. The external perception of the largest volume is even more uncanny and threatening when it is completely closed because of its ominous scale. This changes dramatically when it is completely opened up to its environment when it adopts a more whimsical aesthetic due to the colours and patterns of the nest revealing themselves on the underside of the window shutters. The intimacy of the smallest scale design is achieved within the largest hotel scale through a modular insert of small rooms. The thick wall depth is mimicked at each scale creating an extremely intricate structural system for the largest design. This brings me back to the writing of Edmund Burke where he talks about the infinitely downscaling of size and detail, which eventually becomes sublime. In each of the different sized modules, there is a layering of spaces within spaces until there is no more internal wall cavity left. The remaining space is lined with wallpaper- this continues the level of detail and intricacy into the spaces of the pattern.

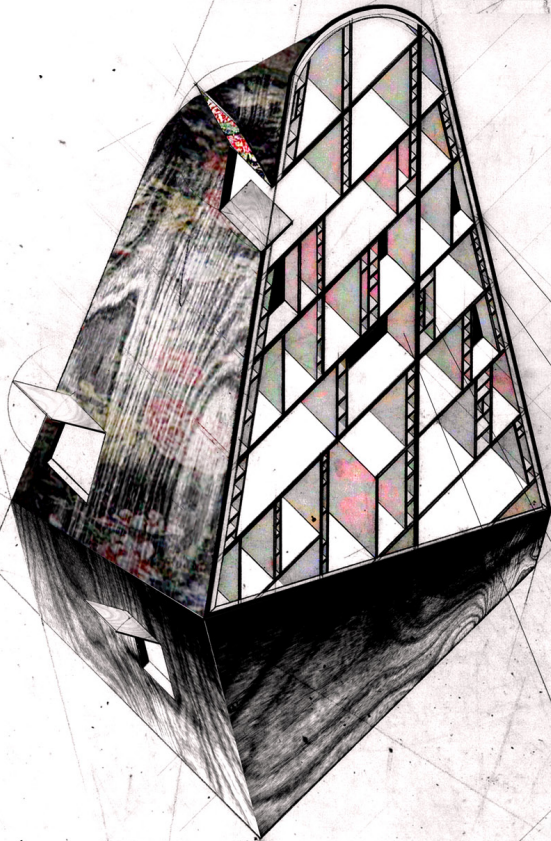


## CARAVAN HOTEL

Figure. 92. Above. Diagram of the scale increase of designs. From one storey, two, three then multi-storey  
 Figure. 93. Right. Caravan hotel. From bottom right: A kitchen / dining segment of building, cut-away exposing floor structure of hotel. Original @ A1



Gradual increase in size of design:  
Single floor with attic  
Two storeys  
Four storeys  
Multi-storey apartment building



Multi-storey apartment building acts as an urban, vertical campground

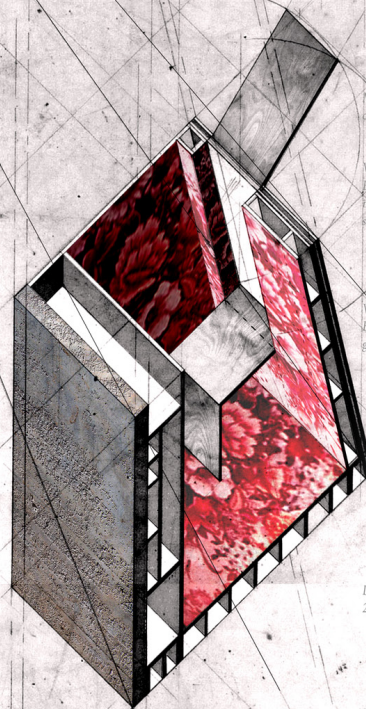
One Shell houses several nests for numerous families

Windows are staggered around the apartments to ensure a shutter below does not obstruct the view of the apartment above

Mechanical window crank concealed within wall cavity

Wall Structure:  
Exterior cladding (in this case plywood), cavity + membrane layer, plywood substrate, cupboard structure

Window Structure:  
External shutter (same as cladding), cavity, triple glazing, window sill void space, fold down table



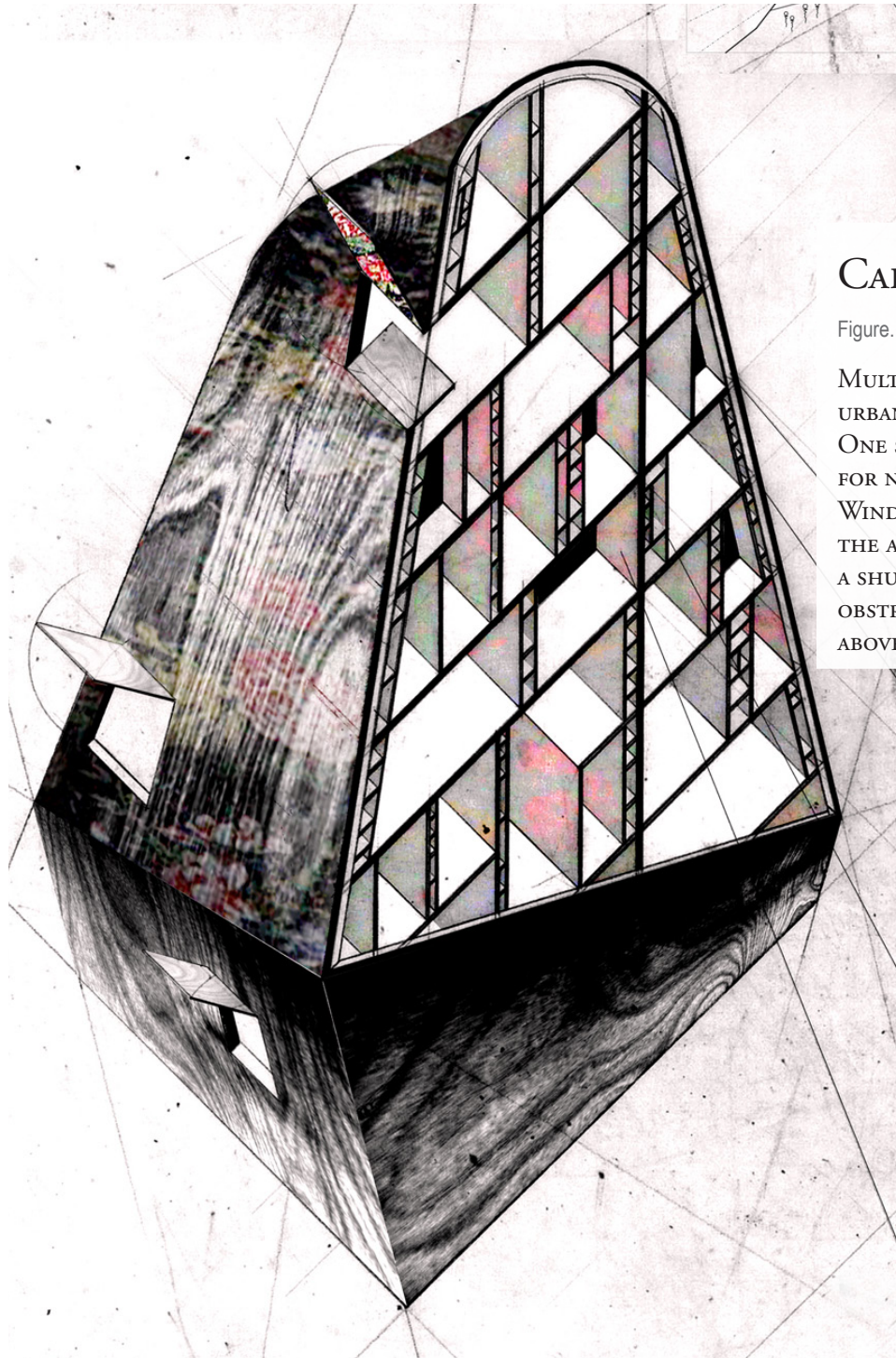
Dining & Kitchen Unit:  
2m breadth x 3.2m length x 3m height

Internal reinforced concrete shear wall

## Exploration: Pushing Design Criteria Further

The architectural language extracted and developed from the caravan is tested at various scales. The same results are formed within the largest scaled design to the smallest; however they are all magnified proportionally with the increase in size. The external perception of the volume is even more uncanny and threatening when it is completely closed due to its ominous scale, this changes dramatically when it is completely opened up to its environment when it adopts a more whimsical aesthetic.

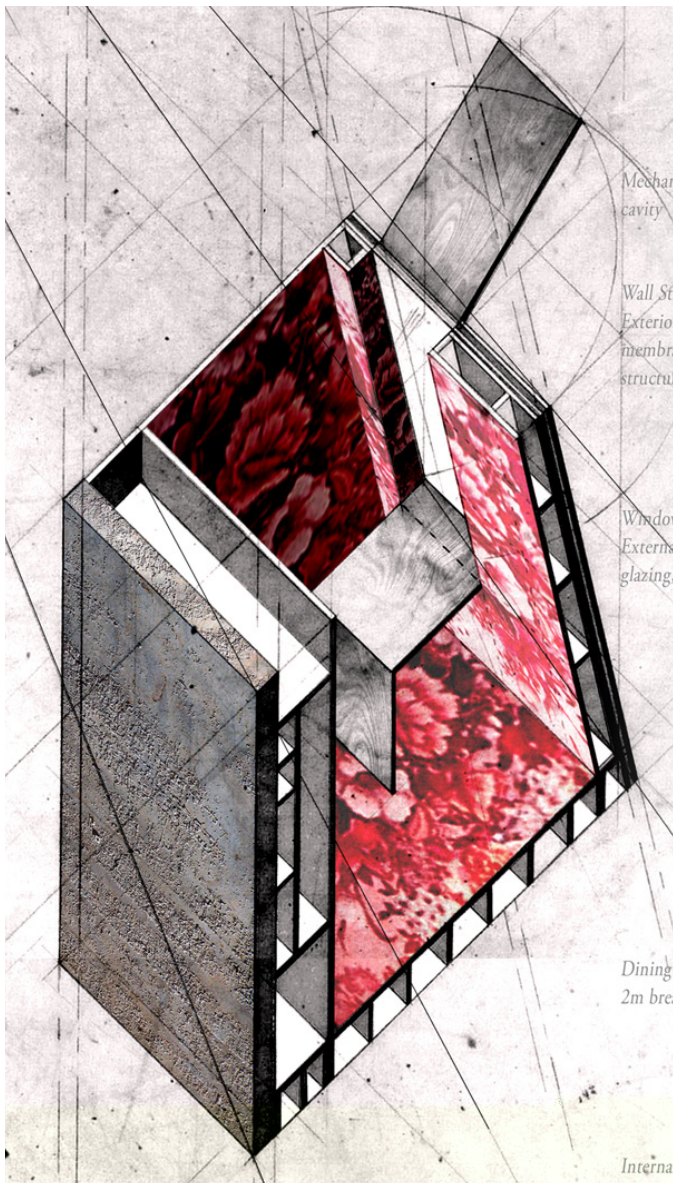




## CARAVAN HOTEL

Figure. 94.

MULTI-STOREY HOTEL ACTS AS AN  
URBAN VERTICAL CAMPGROUND  
ONE SHELL HOUSES SEVERAL NESTS  
FOR NUMEROUS FAMILIES  
WINDOWS ARE STAGGERED AROUND  
THE APARTMENTS TO ENSURE  
A SHUTTER BELOW DOES NOT  
OBSTRUCT THE VIEW OF THE NEST  
ABOVE



## NEST- DINING & KITCHEN

Figure. 95.

KITCHEN FACILITIES HIDDEN WITHIN THICK  
INTERNAL WALL

DINING & KITCHEN AREA:

2M BREADTH X 3.2M LENGTH X 3M HEIGHT

WALL STRUCTURE:

EXTERNAL SHUTTER (SAME AS CLADDING), CAVITY,  
TRIPLE GLAZING, WINDOW SILL VOID SPACE, FOLD-  
DOWN DINING TABLE

INTERNAL REINFORCED CONCRETE SHEAR WALL

MECHANICAL WINDOW CRANK CONCEALED  
WITHIN WALL CAVITY

## *Discussion*

The design outcome is as much about New Zealand as it is about the caravan- they have become entwined and inseparable. The previous chapters argued that the New Zealand Caravan is uniquely appreciated and celebrated here as a nostalgic national icon. The design developed from this wide perspective of New Zealand within the globe and progressed towards the more intimate scales of the internal caravan. This small domestic holidaying vessel has many architectural qualities to re-interpret into the new built typology. As well as referencing the past caravan, I considered how these new built environments may become cultural artefacts themselves in the future. This process has become an architectural method which has the potential to intensify our vernacular identity. By continually referencing or building upon already established cultural relics, a coherent tectonic language may form.

The emphasis of wall linings within my design is a continuation of the high culture vs. low culture theme throughout my thesis. Saunders notes that by the late 20<sup>th</sup> century ‘wallpaper had become a bit of a joke, a cliché with connotations of kitsch...’<sup>109</sup> Repetition, pattern and the use of bright colours are motifs of both kitsch and wallpaper. Caravans and wallpaper also share a link that until very recently has seen them dismissed from the architectural realm- they are domestic. The domestic had negative connotations because of its association with traditional conventions of conformity. All references to the domestic were stripped from art galleries. The present-day views of wallpaper are changing, artists and architects are using it as an effective medium for exploring ideas about ‘home, identity, memory, and childhood, as well as engaging with aesthetic issues around the contested categories of pattern, decoration, and representation.’<sup>110</sup> These are the qualities I attempted to keep united in the new architectural interpretation of the caravan.

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<sup>109</sup> Gill Saunders, *Walls Are Talking: Wallpaper, Art and Culture* (Manchester: The Whitworth Art Gallery, the University of Manchester, 2010), 27.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.





Figure. 96. Taxonomy of new designs

The dual relationship of 'homely' versus 'unhomely' is amplified in summer comparatively to winter due to the stationary nature of the new structures. They appear more 'uncanny' or potentially sinister during the winter months which in turn contrasts further with their transformation into summer. In summer the structures will be vibrant, colourful and full of activity and inhabitants. In winter they will be enclosed and the vibrant 'nest' features will be concealed. The buildings themselves will transform into objects in what may appear to be a sculptural park. This new stationary solution meant a realistic design sacrifice was made which contributed to one of the heterotopian qualities discussed within chapter two. It is the metaphor of the caravan as a 'landboat' that will not be realised within the new architecture. It became a necessary decision due to the nature of the fast pace modern family being more concerned with destination than journeying. The family is the mobile element of the new solution, for which the architecture provides the retreat and escape into the parallel miniature world. The final design is a new built holiday typology for New Zealand. The original camping ground characteristics are embodied into the composition, form, detailing, colour, texture, and pattern of the re-interpreted caravan designs.



Figure. 97. Janet Bayly, Waikawa Bay,  
Picton, 1986 (Polaroid SX-70 print)

*‘Caravans have always represented the promise of mystery and an alternate space to me. They are a small world within the larger one, the exterior enclosing an unknown, and therefore tantalising interior life. This is probably truer of the older-style ones. Their more rounded shapes also make them small spaceships, grounded for a short period of time. A miniature portable home, their nifty cupboards and foldaway beds allow flexibility (of the imagination) and the thought of packing a whole life away into such an edited space seems a dazzlingly exciting proposition.’*

Janet Bayly





# Conclusion

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The caravan was transformed into a cultural relic of New Zealand during the golden period of holidaying, between the 1950s and 1980s. Its aesthetic fate was sealed with four decades of our recent past which we now associate as 'retro'. As the modern world rapidly continues to influence our lifestyles, the traditional New Zealand camping ground adapts to keep pace, in some scenarios this has meant selling up for larger developments. New Zealand quintessentially cherishes artefacts of its relatively short heritage as an item of value and nostalgia. The seemingly threatened future of the caravan has sparked a cultural nostalgia within New Zealanders which has caused a 'collection' effect. The caravan is now a cultural artefact, and commodity. I suggest that the caravan has worth beyond its iconism- it provides a function. The caravan is a domestic holidaying vessel often situated in magnificent New Zealand landscapes. It is a landscape experience. The fact that the functional reality of the caravan is fading is the generator of the aim of this thesis. The caravanning lifestyle needed to be re-interpreted into a contemporary New Zealand architectural equivalent.

The New Zealand Caravan was analysed from a compositional, phenomenal and aesthetic perspective which broadened the discussion of the potential architectural characteristics within chapter two. Various theorists and philosophers provided insight into some of the hidden aspects of both the caravan itself and the caravanning lifestyle. There are parallels between the holidaying caravan world and the everyday suburban world which led to interesting twists on the way the camping ground is perceived and experienced- it

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Figure. 98.  
Personal family photograph,  
camping, Temuka, 1988

became what Foucault describes as heterotopian. It is an ephemeral and idyllic space. The miniature themes within Stewart's writing of the fantastic and the secret also correspond to the miniature world of caravaning- it has associations with freedom, imagination, community, security, adventure, and mysteries. There is always a dual relationship shared between the caravan and its landscape context. The inward physicality of its form induces an uncanny effect described by Vidler and Bachelard. There is a strong differentiation between the security of the interior and unknown of exterior, an important architectural trait. The anthropomorphic caravan of New Zealand has an undoubtedly retro aesthetic which is adored in popular culture. This traditional aesthetic charm became a challenging but necessary involvement to the design research and outcome.

The challenge with re-interpreting a retro cultural artefact into architecture is kitsch (the 'dirty' word). This has been predominately avoided by artists and architects. Retro is an aesthetic instilled with the emotions of sentimentality, melancholic longing, and nostalgia. Dorfles puts forward the argument that kitsch *satisfies* nostalgia, that it in some way 'cures'<sup>111</sup> it. It was this argument that suggested that kitsch was an appropriate approach to adopt. Chapter three discusses contemporary and traditional theory on kitsch and in particular the work of Kulka. The three conditions of kitsch written by Kulka describe the 'ingredients' of kitsch. His third condition (*Kitsch does not substantially enrich our associations related to the depicted subject*<sup>112</sup>) offers the opportunity to alter the negative connotations of the term. By achieving the exact opposite of this condition-enriching ones association, kitsch could become beautiful, identifiable, *and* interesting. The caravan is re-interpreted as a new architectural typology that amplifies the miniature world, secrecy, adventure, mystery, and anthropomorphism of the original; as well as embracing its kitsch aesthetic alliance.

The opposition of the third condition of kitsch was achieved by the involvement of the original caravan qualities (discussed in chapter two) as they 'substantially enrich our associations'<sup>113</sup> with the caravan. The influence of these findings suggests that the replication and imitation traits of kitsch are being negated. These are two of the main

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111 Up until the 1870s nostalgia was considered a medical condition- soldiers were often diagnosed with Nostalgia when spending long periods of time away from their home land.

112 Tomas Kulka, "Kitsch", *British Journal of Aesthetics* 28, no.1 (1988): 18-27.

113 The opposite of Kulka's third condition of kitsch in Tomas Kulka, "Kitsch", *British Journal of Aesthetics* 28, no.1 (1988): 18-27.



contributing factors to the negative associations of kitsch. Although this change means that the result is not essentially 'pure' kitsch, it is a design that embodies and celebrates kitsch ideals. Cultural nostalgia is satisfied by the aesthetic of kitsch, pop-culture is evidence of this. The contribution of the caravan's compositional and phenomenological characteristics to the design is how the final architectural outcome became kitsch with a twist: a New Zealand vernacular kitsch-architecture inspired by the caravan.

The method and principles applied throughout this thesis is an example of evaluating and empowering a cultural relic. Vernacular architecture needs to be built on familiar forms even those that seem kitsch or otherwise marginal. Legacies of cultural indigenous architecture lie all around us if, and it is a big If, we are prepared to look for them against the privilege of architectural histories. The caravan is one, and there will be others. One can only imagine how with the added layers of time and constant re-evaluation of New Zealand identity, in relation to our popular culture, could enhance the specific domestic built environment associated with the caravan. How has New Zealand previously established its architectural foundations? What has our vernacular language been built upon? The architectural inclusion of these kitsch, marginal artefacts opens up the opportunity for an entirely new architectural language to develop- one that is familiar and celebrated.

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- Figure. 34. Happy family, South Island, 1975. From Christopher Hunter, *Vantastic: A Pictorial History of Caravans in New Zealand* (New Zealand, Auckland: Harper Collins Publishers Limited, 2005), 132.
- Figure. 35. Social circle at Te Awamutu rally, 1979. From Ibid., 133.
- Figure. 36. Amphibious caravan with retractable wheels, built approx. 1965. From Field-Lewis, Jane, & Chris Haddon. *My Cool Caravan: An Inspirational Guide to Retro-Style Cavavan*. London: Pavilion Books, 2010, 23.
- Figure. 37. Robin Morrison photograph, 'Caravan at Seddonville', West Coast, 1979. From <http://www.robinmorrison.co.nz/prints/photo.asp?pid=66&id=9> (accessed November 17, 2010).
- Figure. 38. Four examples of the new anthropomorphic architectural designs. Photograph by author
- Figure. 39. Starliner named Ngaire parked outside typical New Zealand dairy. From <http://www.nzlifeandleisure.co.nz/node/1422> (accessed February 16, 2011).
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- Figure. 40. Personal family caravan almost completely alone in Mapua Leisure Park, Mapua, April, 2010. Photograph by author
- Figure. 41. Caravan alone in the landscape, photograph by Peter Peryer, 1975. From Christopher Hunter, *Vantastic: A Pictorial History of Caravans in New Zealand* (New Zealand, Auckland: Harper Collins Publishers Limited, 2005), 102.
- Figure. 42. Pamela Karwowski nestled inside her caravan on a rainy day, 1980. From Ibid., 11.
- Figure. 43. Rich wooden caravan interior decorated with rugs and candles. From Field-Lewis, Jane, & Chris Haddon. *My Cool Caravan: An Inspirational Guide to Retro-Style Caravan*. London: Pavilion Books, 2010, 66.
- Figure. 44. Dining table. From Ibid., 14.
- Figure. 45. Caravan sink. From Ibid., 13.
- Figure. 46. Renovated caravan interior completely lined in wallpaper. From Ibid., 43.
- Figure. 47. The Camping Ground. From Christopher Hunter, *Vantastic: A Pictorial History of Caravans in New Zealand* (New Zealand, Auckland: Harper Collins Publishers Limited, 2005), 88.
- Figure. 48. The Shell. Photograph by author
- Figure. 49. The Nest. From Field-Lewis, Jane, & Chris Haddon. *My Cool Caravan: An Inspirational Guide to Retro-Style Caravan*. London: Pavilion Books, 2010, 54.
- Figure. 50. Diagram of the caravan awning becoming an extension of the internal nest on the exterior of the shell. Image by author
- Figure. 51. Advertisement for Pinoneer caravans, their emphasis was rested on the upmarket nature of caravans. From Christopher Hunter, *Vantastic: A Pictorial History of Caravans in New Zealand* (New Zealand, Auckland: Harper Collins Publishers Limited, 2005), 65.
- Figure. 52. Fred Flutey and his paua shell parlour. Bluff, Southland, 1979. Photograph by Robin Morrison. From <http://www.robinmorrison.co.nz/prints/photo.asp?pid=87&id=9> (accessed November 12, 2010).
- Figure. 53. Brightly coloured 'Retro' caravans. Photograph by author
- Figure. 54. 100% Pure New Zealand advertising campaign by Tourism New Zealand. The image is inherently beautiful and kitsch. From <http://theinspirationroom.com/daily/2008/100-pure-new-zealand/> (accessed January 14, 2011).
- Figure. 55. A collection of kitsch 'kiwiana'. Scans of the originals. Greeting cards made by *Home Base Collections*
- Figure. 56. Caravan Radio- Design Culture Lab for Radio New Zealand. "Open to all New Zealanders, the objective of the competition is to design a radio that captures the essence of New Zealand." From <http://www.designculturelab.org/category/stories/page/3/> (accessed January 19, 2011).
- Figure. 57. Image on the Tourism New Zealand Website. Sunsets or an afternoon glow are common motifs of their photography. From <http://www.tourismnewzealand.com/news-and-features/latest-news/2011/02/international-visitor-numbers-to-new-zealand-hit-all-time-high/> (accessed February 17, 2011).

- Figure. 58. A comfortable outdoor setting. From Field-Lewis, Jane, & Chris Haddon. *My Cool Caravan: An Inspirational Guide to Retro-Style Cavavan*. London: Pavilion Books, 2010, 49.
- Figure. 59. Judy Darragh, 'Furry Fish', 1990. Fake fur, plastic fish, wood and metal, 390x140mm. From <http://www.realartroadshow.co.nz/essays/Darragh%20Judy.pdf> (accessed February 15, 2011).
- Figure. 60. Classic 'Retro' lamp and deck chair from personal caravan. Photographs by author
- Figure. 61. Seat cushion pattern from 1970s caravan. Photograph by author
- Figure. 62. The warm tones of a retro caravan interior with matching crockery, cushions, & curtains. From Field-Lewis, Jane, & Chris Haddon. *My Cool Caravan: An Inspirational Guide to Retro-Style Cavavan*. London: Pavilion Books, 2010, 48.
- Figure. 63. Montage of developmental sketches. By author
- Figure. 64. Photograph of a final model. Photograph by author
- Figure. 65. Fat Freddie's Drop T-Shirt with an illustration of 'Cays Crays', Kaikoura. From [http://www.voxpopmusic.com/Clothing.asp?Cat\\_Code=17&Subcat\\_Code=40&categoryname=Clothing%20%20Clothing](http://www.voxpopmusic.com/Clothing.asp?Cat_Code=17&Subcat_Code=40&categoryname=Clothing%20%20Clothing) (accessed February 7, 2011).
- Figure. 66. National Bank television advertisement, 'For the Places you Go' by DraftFCB New Zealand, Robber's Dog and Dr Seuss. From [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AO00xlCEYOI&feature=player\\_detailpage](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AO00xlCEYOI&feature=player_detailpage) (accessed February 7, 2011).
- Figure. 67. Personal family photograph of Dianne Clement, 1980s
- Figure. 68. Composite axonometric drawing with textures & photographs collaged over. By author
- Figure. 69. Photograph of final model series. Made with jarragh, paper collaged patterns, velvet, and mild steel. Photograph by author
- Figure. 70. CARAVAN DESIGN TIMELINE- Bright pink path indicates the new architectural design whereas the grey path shows the path of the caravan becoming a cultural fossil. White dashed line is the introduction of the leisure tax, 1979. Image by author
- Figure. 71. Personal collection of deck chairs in Thistle Hall Gallery. Photograph by author
- Figure. 72. Images of each scale- The Camping Ground, The Shell, & The Nest. Images by author
- Figure. 73. Man standing on his deck outside his 'architectural egg' in the new camping ground. Photograph by author
- Figure. 74. Image series of the new designs being intergrated into an existing camping ground. Images by author
- Figure. 75. Drawing of Mapua Leisure Park at full capacity with caravans. Drawing by author
- Figure. 76. Photographs of final camp scenario model. Photographs by author
- Figure. 77. Window detail of tallest final model. The nest materials are projected out from the exterior shell
- Figure. 78. Images showing the retractable 'awning' device. Photographs by author
- Figure. 79. Nine final designs, each with their own characteristics, materials & structures. Photographs by author
-

- Figure. 80. Exploded Axonometric of one design showing external shell, structure, kitchen, bathroom, dining. Original 1:50 @ A1. Image by author
- Figure. 81. Image by author
- Figure. 82. Image by author
- Figure. 83. Image by author
- Figure. 84. Image by author
- Figure. 85. Image by author
- Figure. 86. Folding panels inside nest. Light folds over to bench. Bench reveals shelving. Image by author
- Figure. 87. Opening details and textures revealing the nest qualities on the shell. Photograph by author
- Figure. 88. Developmental axonometric composite drawing. From the bottom right: Mapua Leisure Park, camping scene, deck chair motions, entire structure, internal nest. Original @ A1. Image by author
- Figure. 89. Three Storey Architectural Egg. From bottom right: Family photographs, internal nest cabinetry structure, entire building, cut-away of top two floors. Original @ A1. Image by author
- Figure. 90. Image by author
- Figure. 91. Image by author
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- Figure. 93. Sketch of caravan hotel almost entirely enclosed. Image by author
- Figure. 94. Diagram of the scale increase of designs. From one storey, two, three then multi-storey. Image by author
- Figure. 95. Caravan hotel. From bottom right: A kitchen / dining segment of building, cut-away exposing floor structure of hotel. Original @ A1. Image by author
- Figure. 96. Image by author
- Figure. 97. Image by author
- Figure. 98. Taxonomy of new designs. Photographs by author
- Figure. 99. Janet Bayly, Waikawa Bay, Picton, 1986 (Polaroid SX-70 print). From Christopher Hunter, *Vantastic: A Pictorial History of Caravans in New Zealand* (New Zealand, Auckland: Harper Collins Publishers Limited, 2005), 97.
- Figure. 100. Personal family photograph, camping, Temuka, 1988





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# A Taxonomy of Caravans

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*This taxonomy of caravans covers the range of caravans that are predominant within New Zealand's fleet. The final page shows a few examples of caravan inspired designs by architects and artists.*



# Airstream

Airstream collection:

Sport, Flying Cloud, Classic, International, Panamerican, Victorinox, Bambi, Basecamp





# Alpha

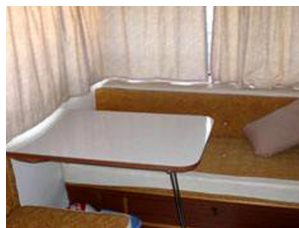
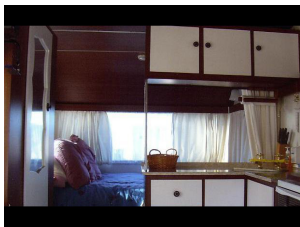
Alpha collection:  
Colonial, Clubman, Tourer, Solyte



# Anglo

Anglo collection:

Ace, Astral, Capri, Delta, Galaxy, Imp, Spacemaker, Ventura, Pullman, Cub, Go-Lo, Charger, Wanderer, Royal



# Classic

Classic collection:  
Ventouras, Classic, Courier, Diplomat, Lazar





# Crusader

*Caravans International Munro*



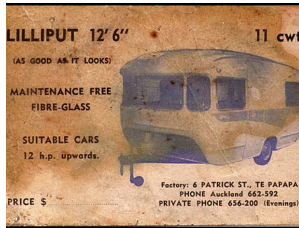
# Crusader

# Homemade



# Lilliput

Lilliput Collection:  
Gazelle

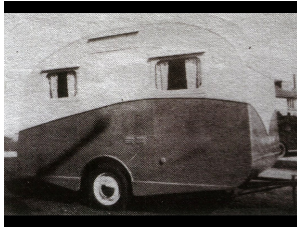




# Liteweight

Liteweight collection:

Vagabond, Five Star, Chevron, Panorama, Cavalier, Expander, Tracker, Pinto



**VAGABOND**  
*Five Star*  
**CHEVRON**  
**PANORAMA**  
**CAVALIER**  
**EXPANDER**  
**TRACKER**  
**PINTO**

**LITEWEIGHT**

# Oxford *Caravans International Munro*

Oxford collection:

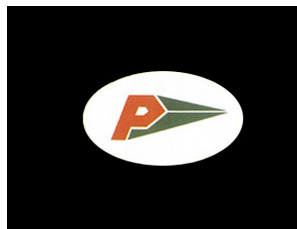
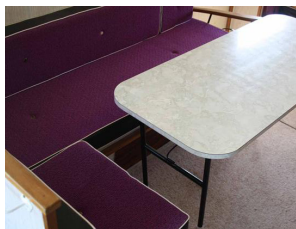
Oxford- Caribbean, Colonial, Coral, Deluxe, Pacific, Premier,  
Rambler, Royale, Sunseeker





# Pioneer

Pioneer collection:  
Petite, Shadow, Custom Designs





# Sprite

*Caravans International Munro*

Sprite collection:  
Sprite Hardtop, Carafloat, Penthouse



# Trail Lite

148 | 149



# Zephyr *Modern Caravans*

Zephyr collection:  
Zephyr, Zephette

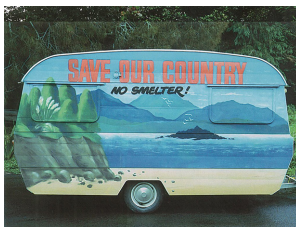




# Special Nz Caravans

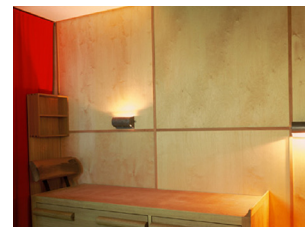
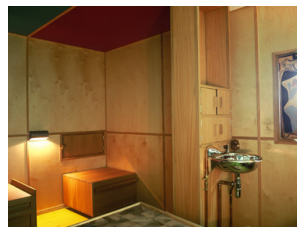
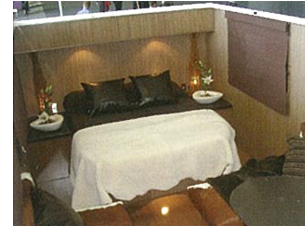
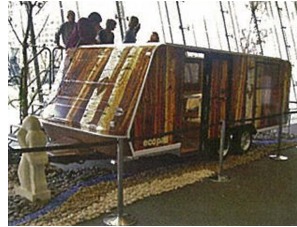
From left to right:

7ft Caroline, Caroline, Concord, Concord, Folding Proport Caravan, 25ft Furnware, Starliner, Pre.1939, Pre.1939, c1950, c1960, 1960, c1964, Fiona Clark-Save Aramoana Campaign



# Artists & Architects Projects

From left to right: Emily Pauling- As Safe As Houses, Katie Wallace- Caravan Project, Eco-Pad for Jayco, Ibid, Archigram, Paul Elkins- Mobile Homeless Shelter, Ibid, Michael Sailstorfer- Heimatlied, Ibid, Ibid, Kevin van Braak- Mobile Garden, Ibid, Le Corbusier- Le Cabanon, Ibid, Ibid, Yin Xiuzhen- Stretch Van, Michael Johansson- Rubiks & Monochrome, LOT--EK- Theatre for One, Andrea Zittel- Living Unit & Travel Trailer Units





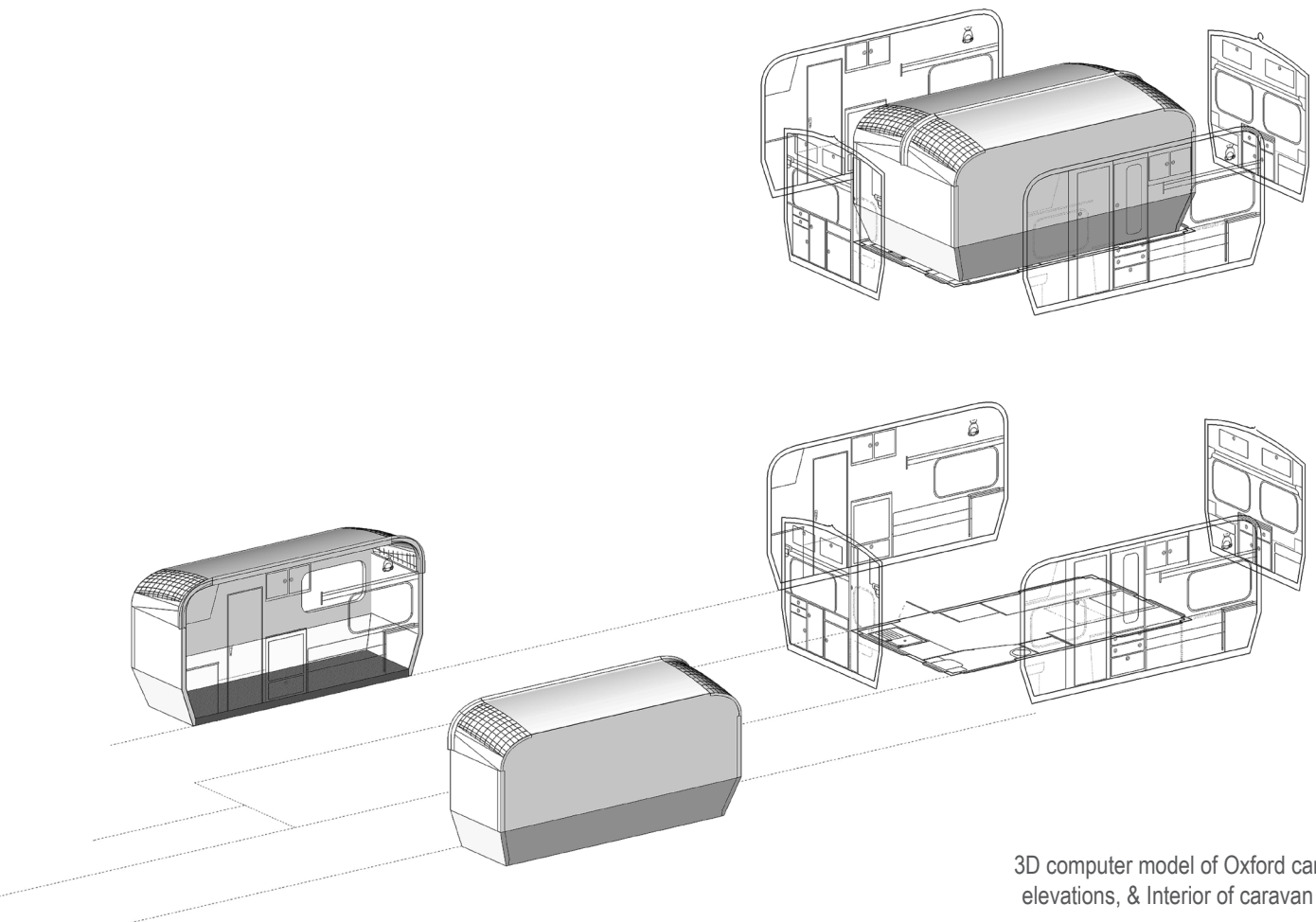




Macro-photography of folding deck chair hinges and joints

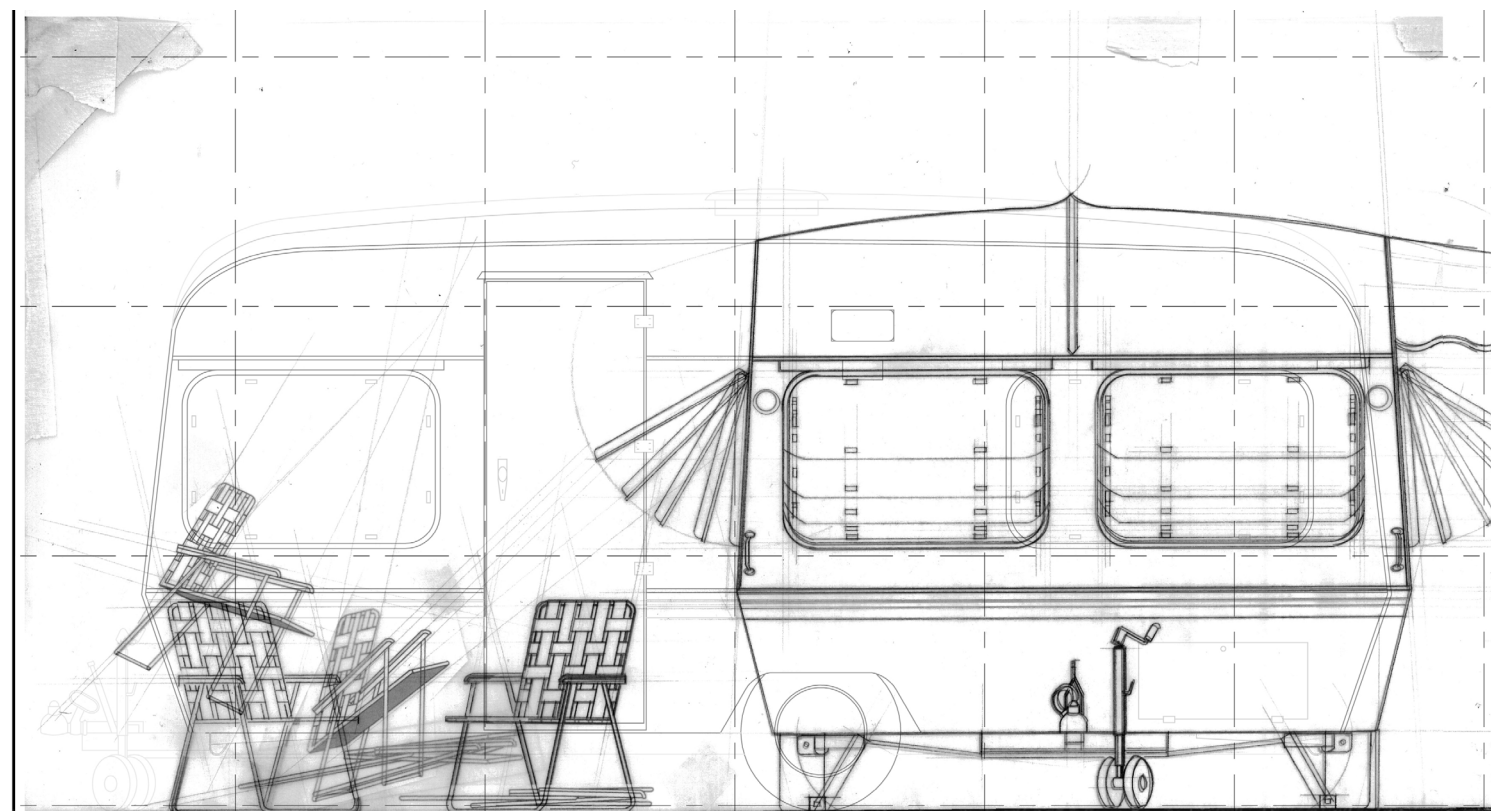
# *Design Development*

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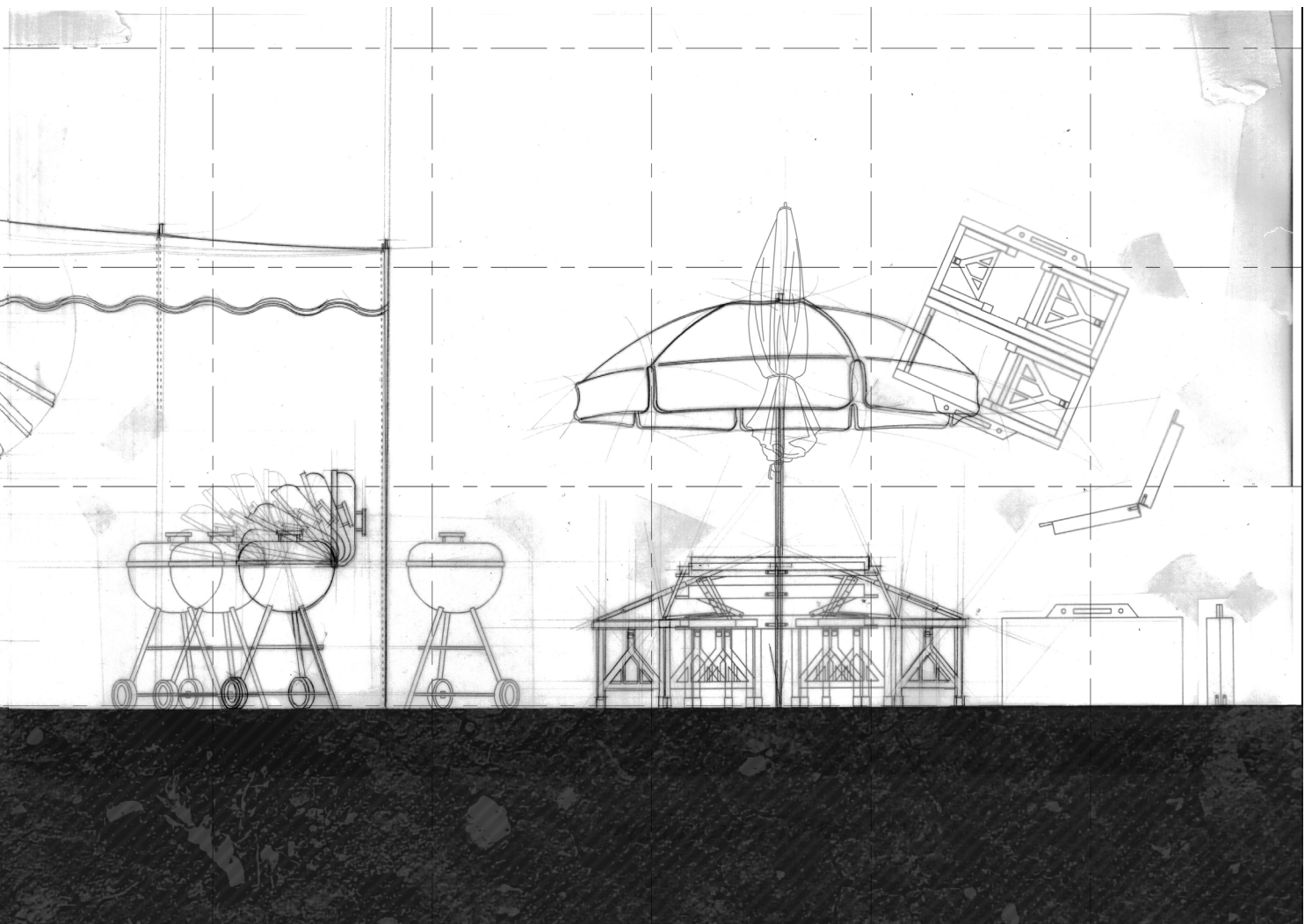
3D computer model of Oxford caravan, 2D elevations, & Interior of caravan modelled

# *Caravan Exploration*



*The Caravanning Ritual*





# Caravan Exploration

3D computer model spilt into its  
functions and furniture components



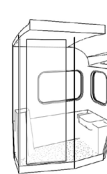
Living



Dining



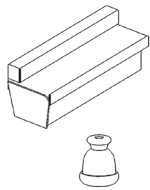
Kitchen



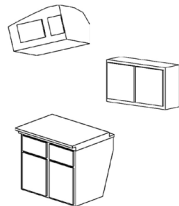
Bathroom



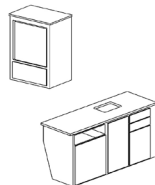
Bedroom



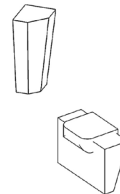
Couch / Lamp



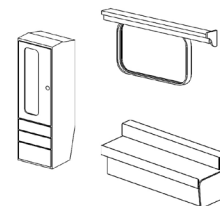
Folding Table / Cupboards



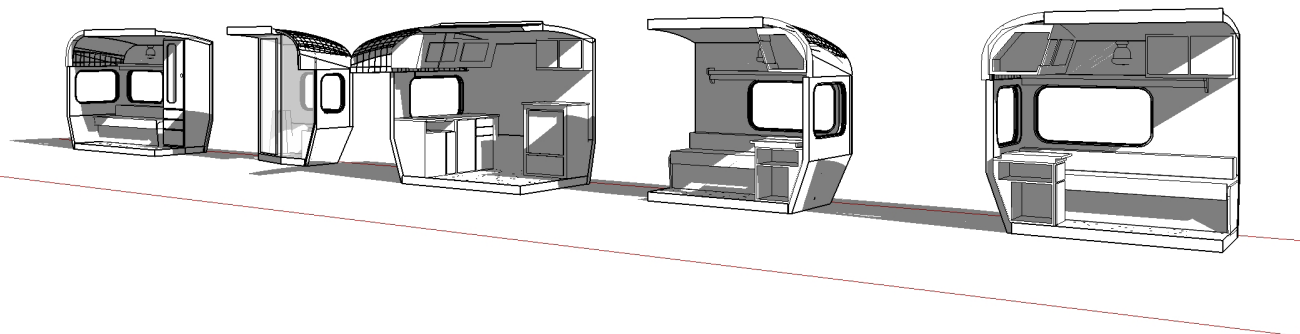
Sink / Cooker / Fridge



Toilet / Vanity

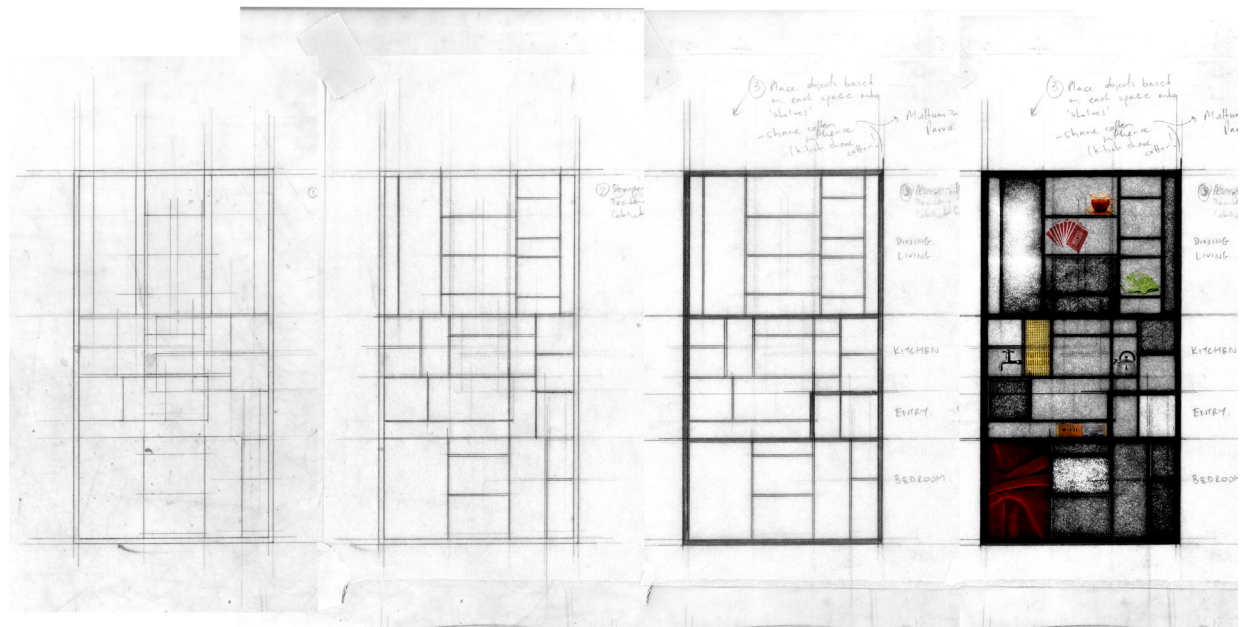
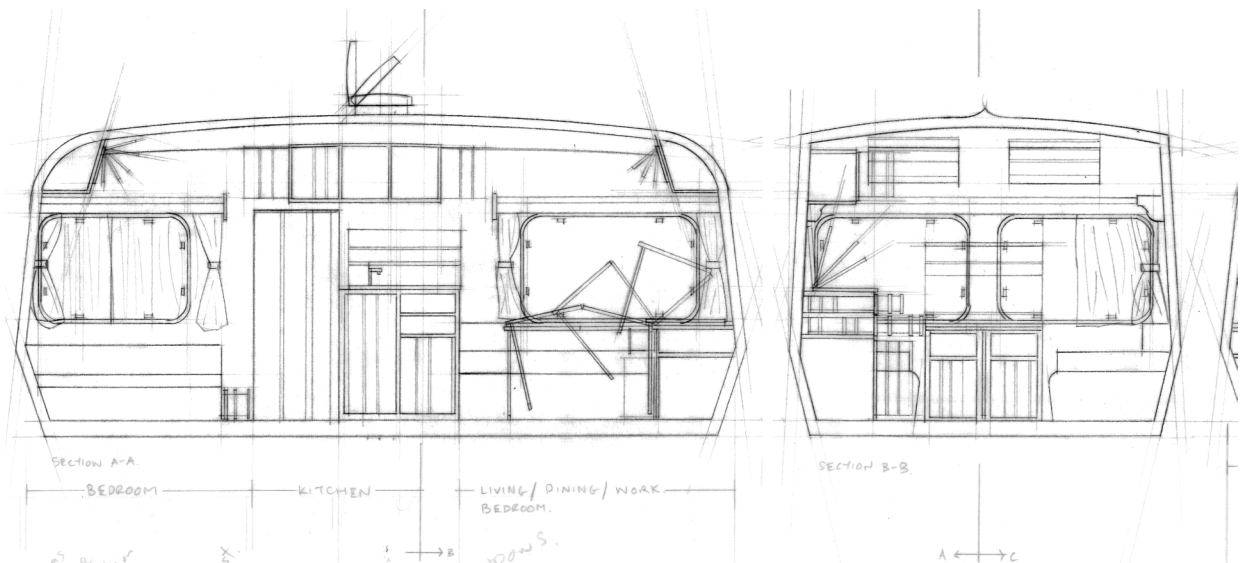


Curtains / Bed / Wardrobe



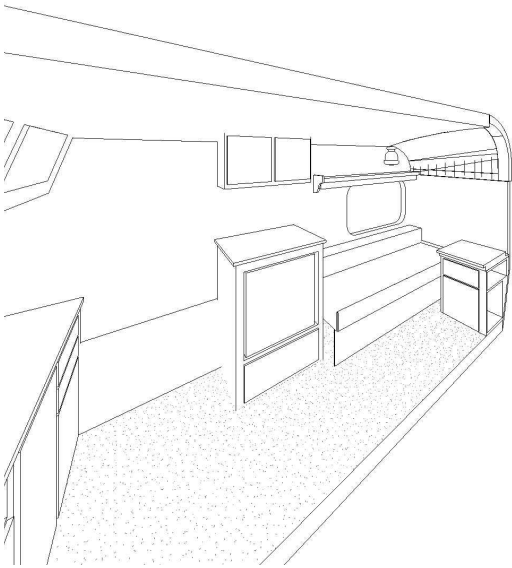
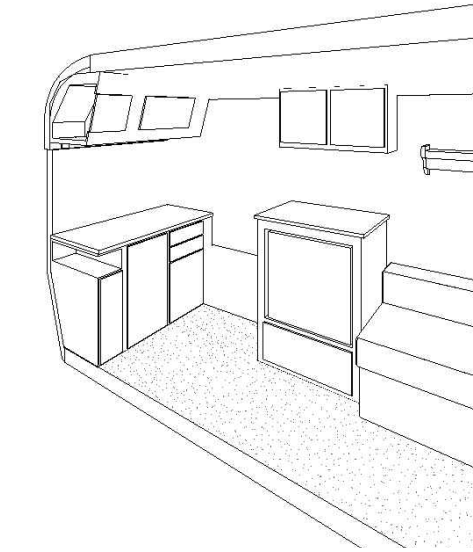
Below: Interior drawing of furniture components movement patterns. This includes table, skylight, cupboards, curtains, bench top & draws

Far Below: Floor plan of Oxford caravan showing the location of functions and the zones they occupy





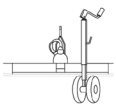
# Caravan Exploration



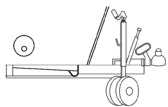
Left: Interior of Oxford caravan modelled in Revit. Lighting study of small internal lamp in 3DS Max

Right: Context explorations of designs along the Kaikoura coast. The architectural 'eggs' spill down from the higher dense forest areas onto the rocky shores.

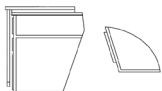




MECHANICAL  
CRANKS  
LEVERS  
WHEELS



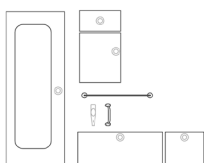
WATER TANK  
EXTENDABLE FEET



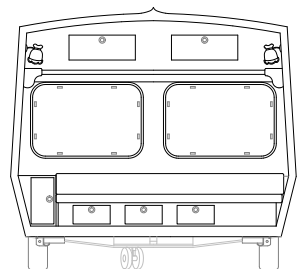
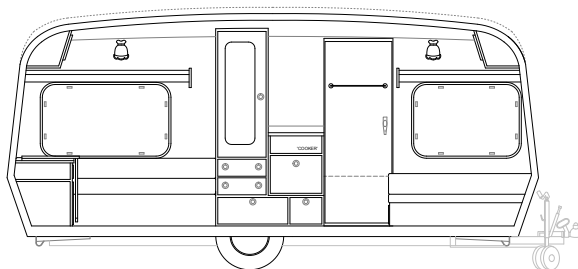
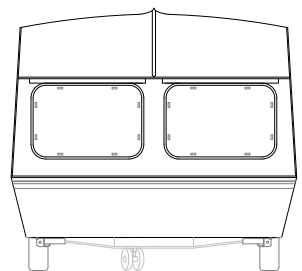
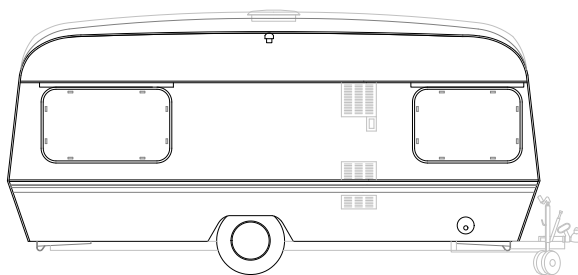
ANGLED CUPBOARDS



WALL LAMPS

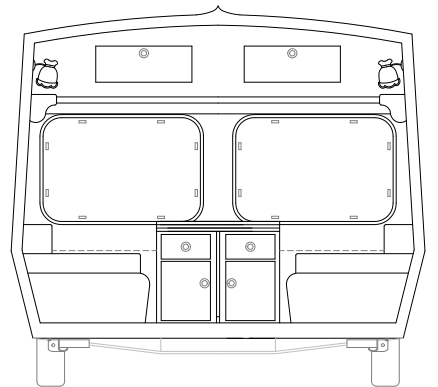
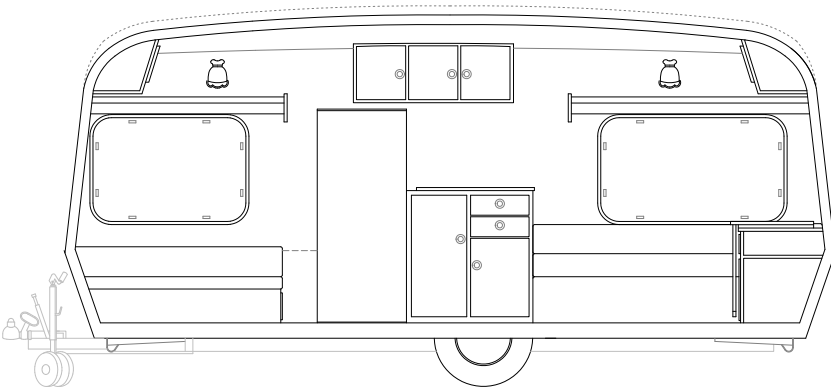
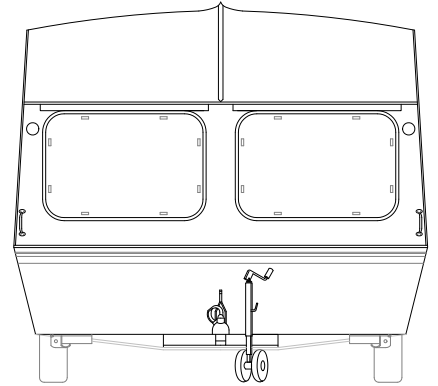
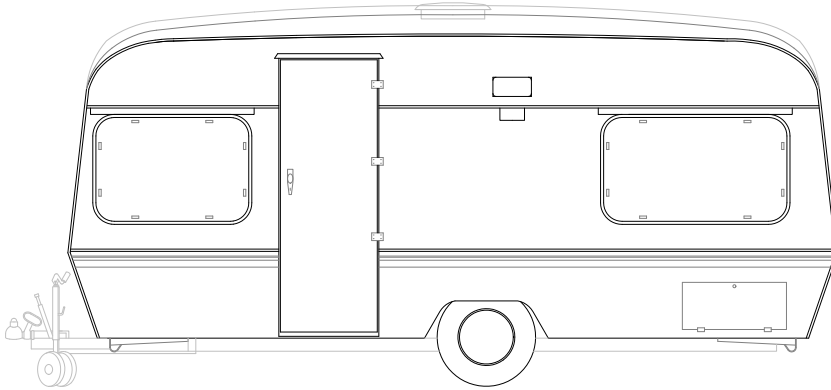


DOORS  
HANDLES  
DRAWS  
RAILS

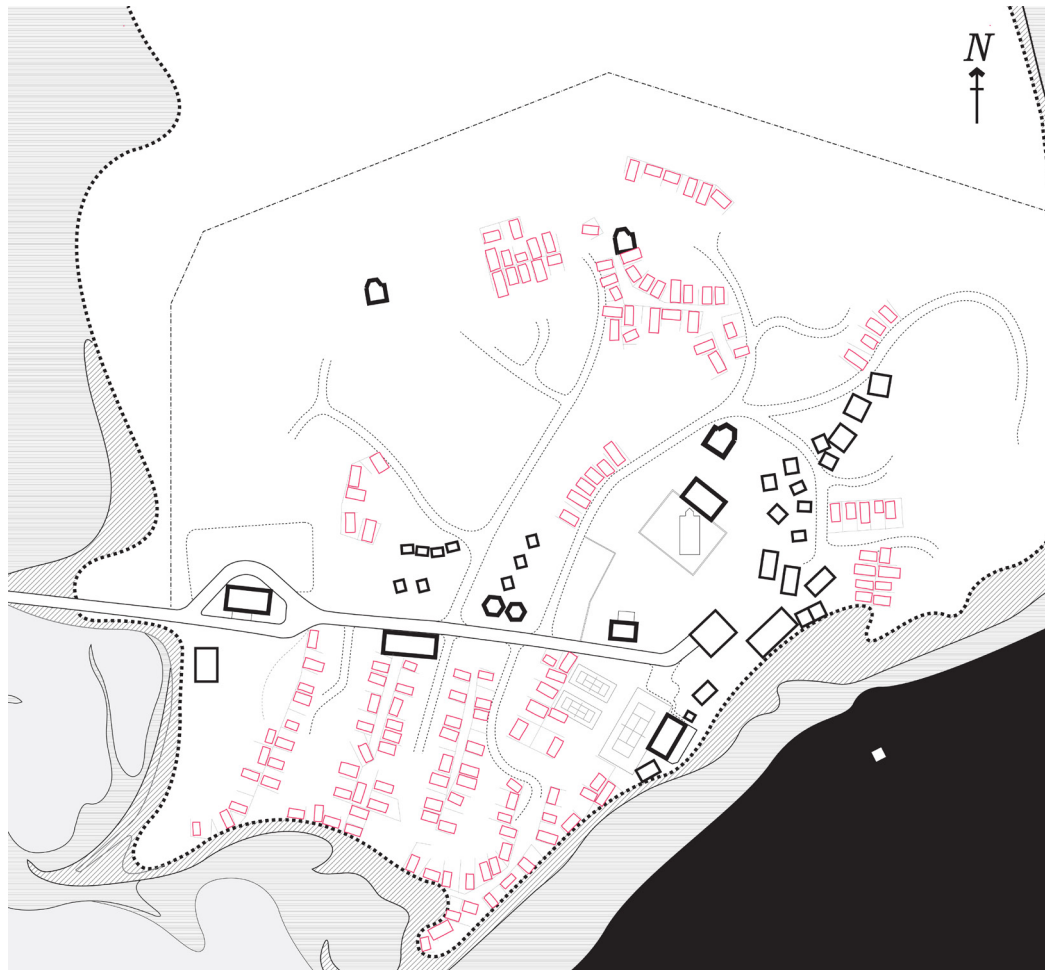




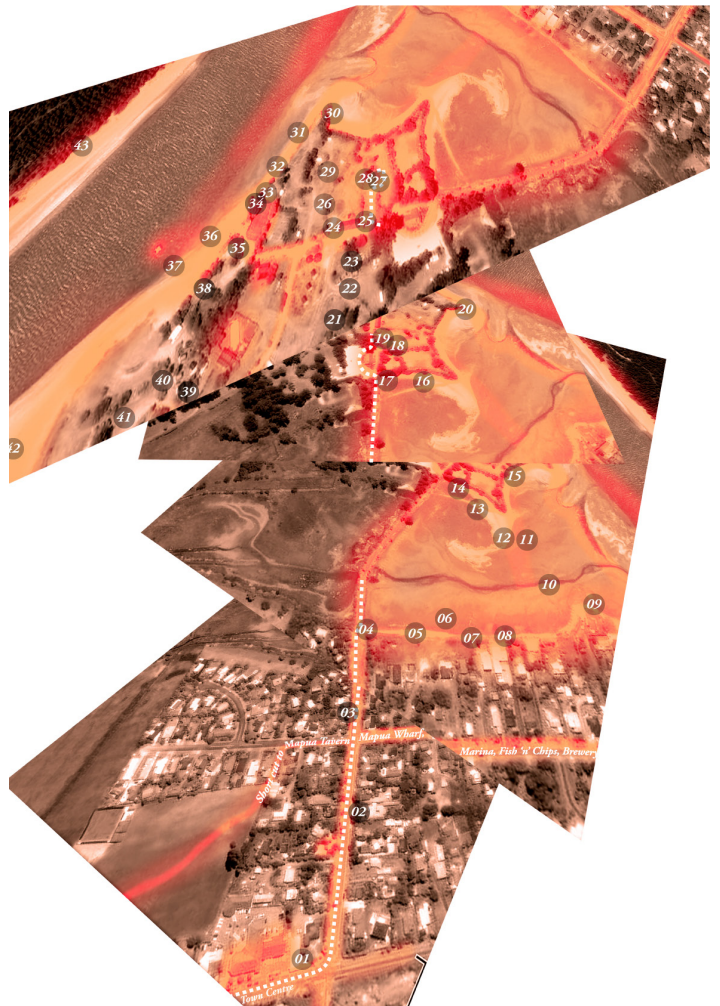
# *Caravan Exploration*



# Mapping Studies



These mapping studies are of Mapua, Tasman, New Zealand and more specifically, Mapua Leisure Park. This is my families camping ground of which I am very familiar. The figure ground diagram visually expresses the size difference in footprint of the caravans in the park and the small houses of the area. These houses are significantly smaller than larger city suburban houses. The Rose-tinted map on the right twists to orientate itself in the direction of movement. The numbers relate to specific personal photographs.



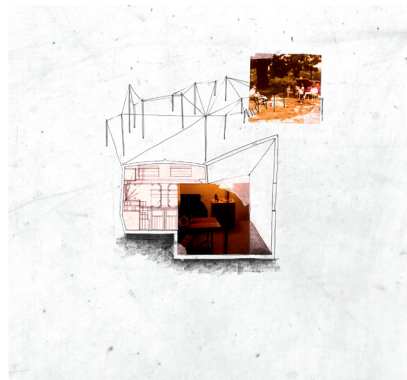
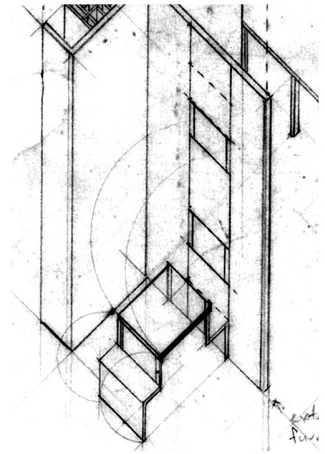
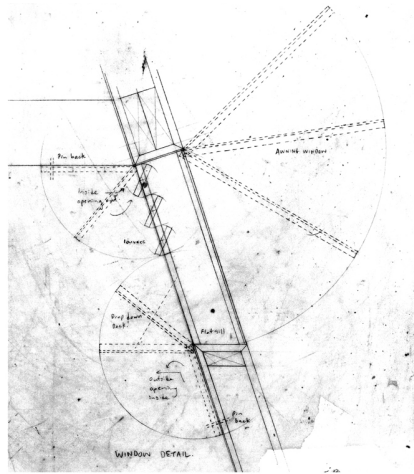
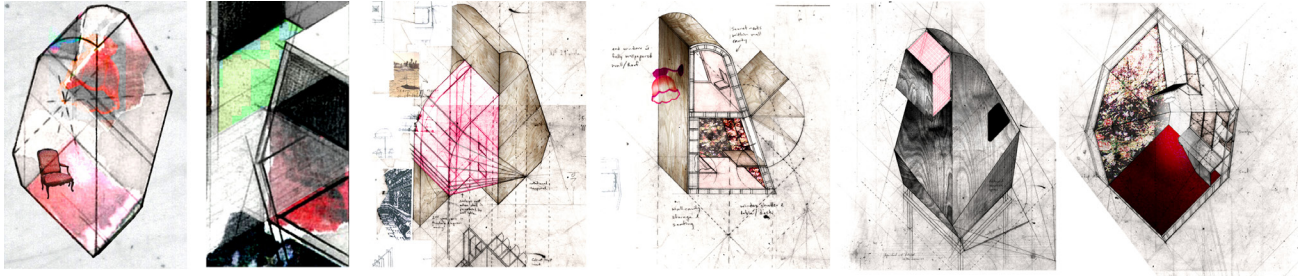




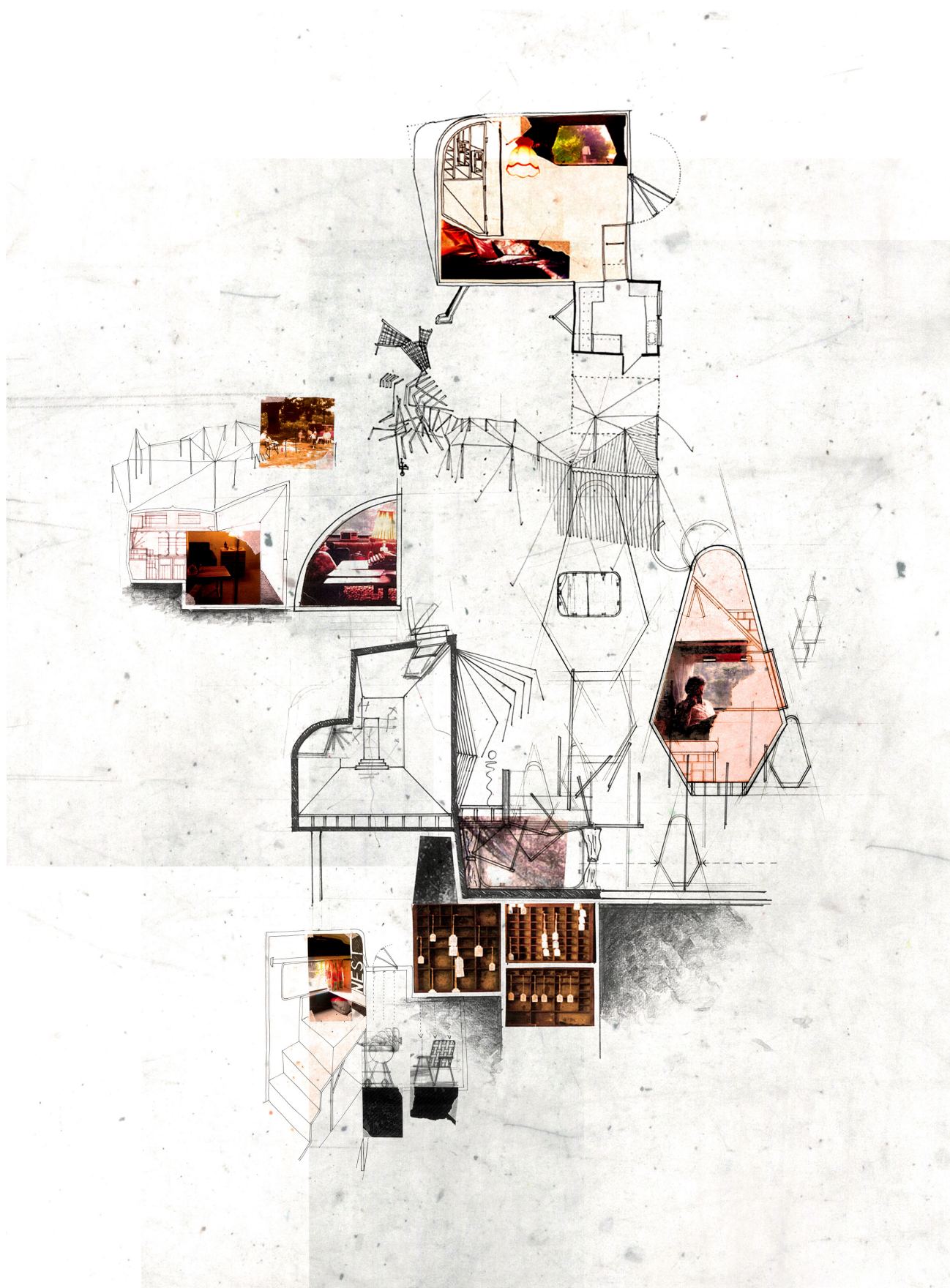


## Design Development

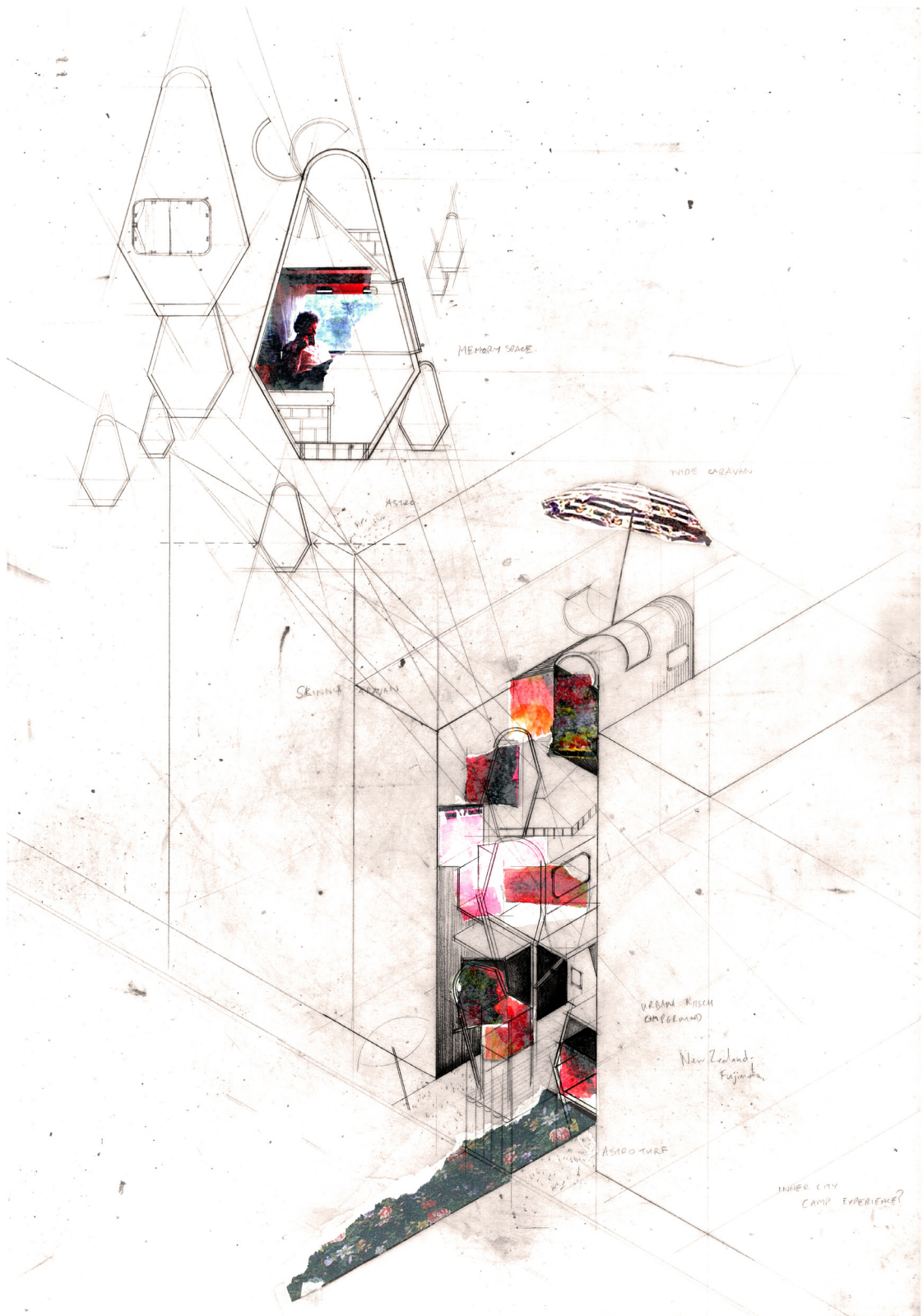
166 | 167

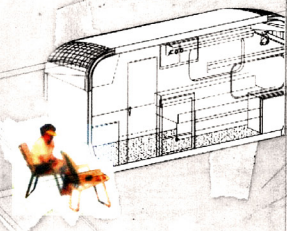
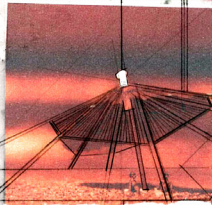
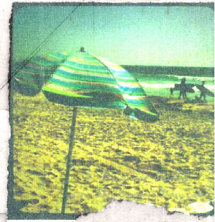
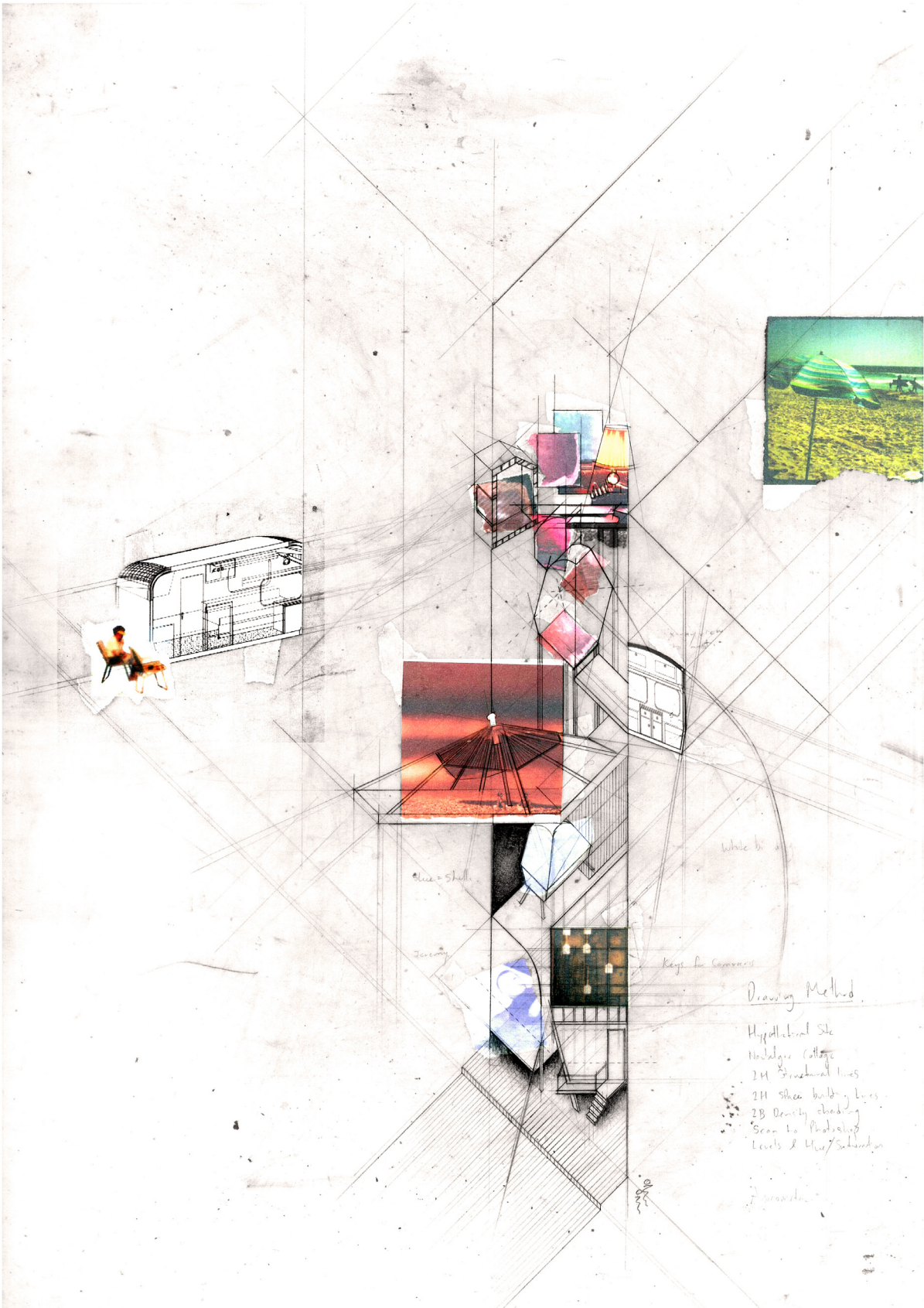










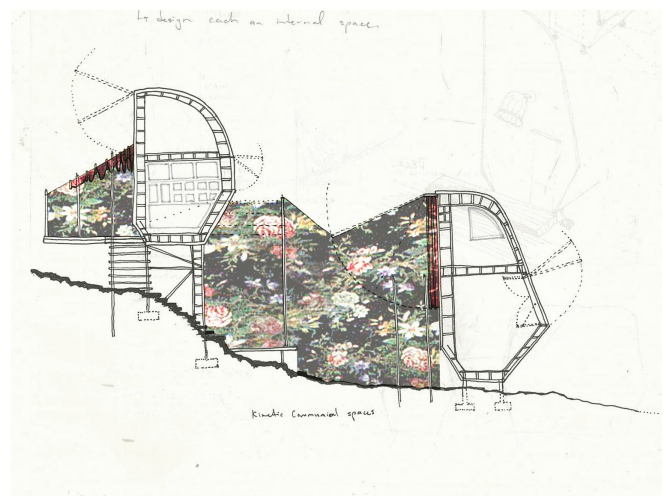
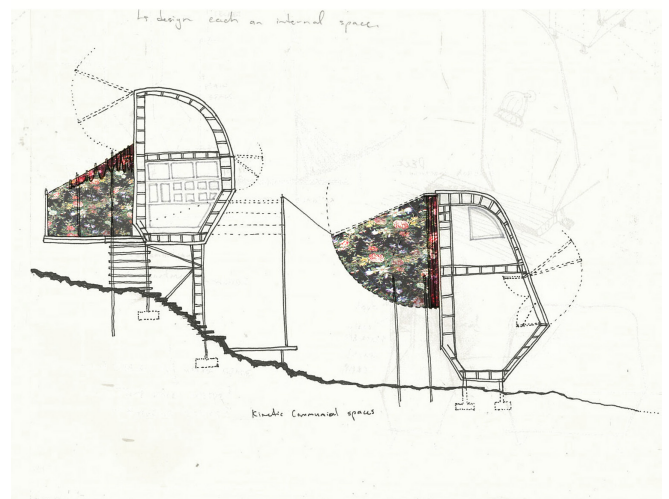
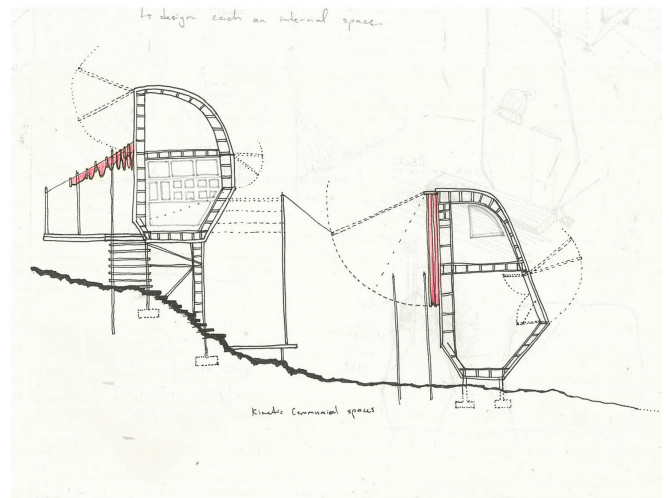


Drawing Method

- Hypothetical Site
- Nostalgic Cottage
- 2M Structural lines
- 2M Silver building lines
- 2B Density shading
- Scan to Photoshop
- Levels & Hue/Saturation

2/2/2010





The expansion of awning components which connect with neighbouring awnings



# Deck Chair Gallery Study

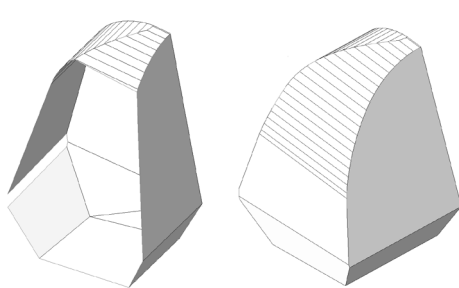
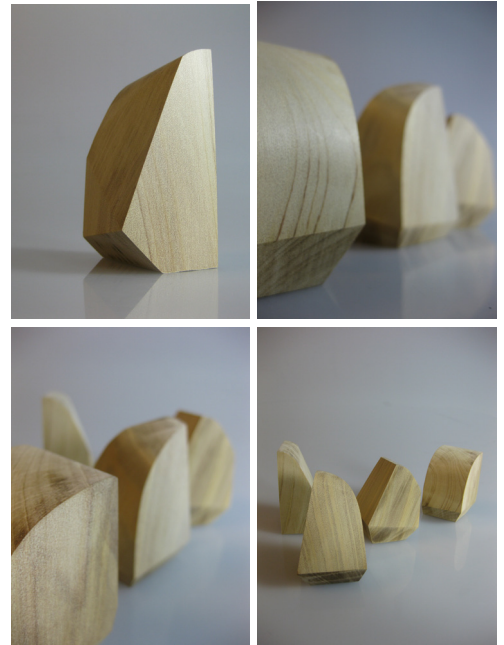


## 'Kitsch out of Kitsch'

A study to see the effects of taking a 'retro' original object of the caravanning lifestyle & placing it in an art gallery (Thistle Hall Gallery). This process is essentially what I am attempting architecturally with the caravan-taking it out of its 'natural habitat' and placing it within higher culture.

# Creation of forms

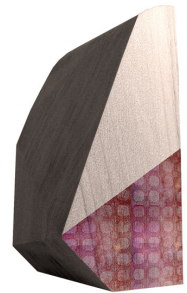
172 | 173



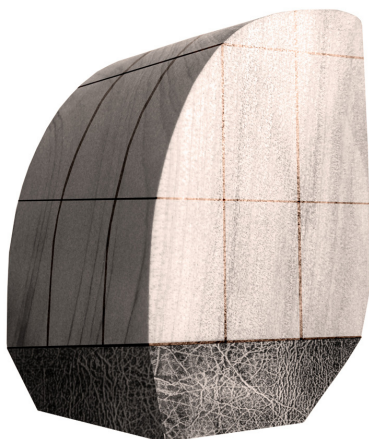
mal



vivid light



linear burn



Plywood

Stretched leather

