

The Unstable City

Heritage and Agency

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Allan McDonald's photographs and Krystina Kaza's mapping images represent or reference buildings that were built before 1976. As such, they include both the earthquake prone and the seismically stable. The photographs were taken between November 2011 and November 2012. The mapping images were made between May 2012 and February 2013.

Preface

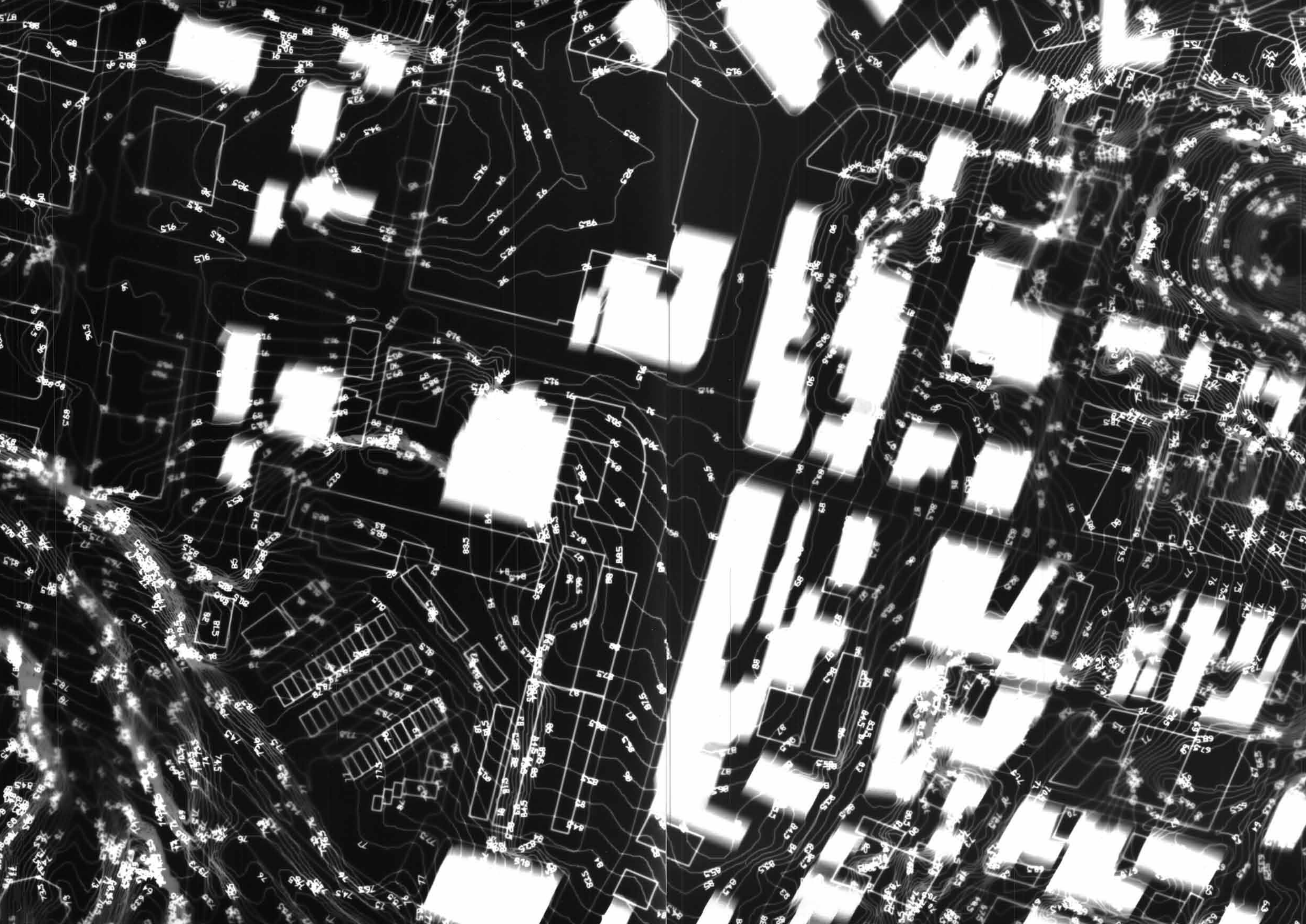
The occasion to work together came out of a jointly taught student design studio by Jeanette Budgett and Krystina Kaza in the Department of Architecture, (a studio called Seismi-city), and the photographic practice of Allan McDonald in the Department of Design and Visual Arts at Unitec Institute of Technology. While the immediate prompt for this project was the series of devastating earthquakes in Christchurch New Zealand on 4th September 2010 and 22nd February 2011¹ the Unstable City draws out a deeper sense of precarity in the project of the city. Our aim in this collaborative project is to engage with questions of Auckland's architectural heritage and to draw attention to the scale of potential loss of buildings and the communities that occupy them. This publication explores these aims against a post-quake background of heightened public concern for the city.

Allan McDonald's photographs draw attention to the uncertainty surrounding much of the commercial architecture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He is particularly concerned for that found in poorer neighbourhoods and pre-gentrified settings. These environments, which are often occupied by small businesses and diverse communities, are being squeezed by increased regulation and a diminished economy. His images, which observe the changing city against a backdrop of largely un-recognised architectural heritage, include both earthquake-prone and earthquake-resistant structures. McDonald's broad selection registers his strong appreciation for this frequently disregarded architectural layer. His work provides an invaluable archival record at a time when it seems inevitable that many buildings will disappear. As a photographic image-maker McDonald utilises one of the recognised typologies of objectivist documentary practice, that of the archivist collector. This apparent objectivity is nuanced with a deep appreciation for his subject matter that builds a layered, and sometimes lyrical, narrative of historic streetscape. McDonald's pursuit of territory between the real and the unreal is shared with Krystina Kaza

whose preoccupation with unstable cities was generated by growing up in Detroit, one of the least stable cities in the US. Attending architecture school in New York – a city characterized by successive waves of demolition and construction, and shaped primarily by the economics of land value - further strengthened Kaza's interest in this area. She works within the representational tradition of mapping, both a scientific undertaking and an act of the imagination. She manipulates site information through the technique of the photogram, in which building footprints take on a ghostly quality, hinting at their potential disappearance from Auckland's cityscape. Her ethereal image shows sites as erasures or excisions. Quantitatively and speculatively, Kaza conveys through her imagery the sheer number of buildings at risk in Auckland. Her collaged images juxtapose architectural detail to convey the materiality, history, colour, decorative detail and identity of a neighbourhood. Her intention is not to make maps that are objectively accurate documents, but to make maps, which, like cities, might be read through the subjective lens of memory.

Jeanette Budgett's research background in the colonial architectural heritage of the Pacific considered prevailing conventions in heritage thinking when transposed into non-western contexts. In this publication she writes of the contexts in which architectural heritage may be considered, in particular in Auckland, and in the emblematic 'unstable city'. How is history preserved while admitting contemporary change? Why does largely un-recognised architecture count as heritage? How do technocratic agendas dominate the public attention and unleash a series of far reaching effects in the shape of cities? In the tussle between heritage protection and the development industries how do issues of social equity get played out? Does New Zealand have a particularly local perspective that might inflect global positions on heritage and its conservation? These questions remain crucial for Auckland, a city precariously subject to the forces of development.

¹ The earthquake on 4th September 2010 measured 7.1 on the Richter scale with no loss of life. February's earthquake measured 6.3 on the Richter scale with devastating losses of 181 people.



The Unstable City

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The Unstable City

Introduction

Cataclysmic events have violent and immediate effects on the appearance of cities. Overnight buildings disappear and along with them people's livelihoods, homes and wellbeing. In a few minutes the devastation wreaks long-lasting effects. They can be life-defining moments for those who survive them. In such events the persistence of belief in the permanence and durability of architecture is profoundly challenged. Structural integrity, a condition at the heart of Western architectural thinking (and possibly all architectural thinking), simply cannot be reconciled with the forces of nature. The confidence of building – the unshakeable foundations that underpin edifices, the ethical frameworks and social structures that promote the persistent myths of durability – is shaken, dislodged, cracked by doubt.

Architecture, however modest, is one of the most “tangible artifact(s) of human occupation.”¹ Even if buildings are so commonplace in a city as to be unremarkable, they still evoke associative thinking. While stability, durability and permanence are often implicit representational givens of Western architecture; they are qualities that are explicitly played out in the architectural monument, the building type tasked with ensuring we do not ‘forget’. Cultural memory relies on coherent identity and history and these formal monuments choreograph memory in various institutional and publicly ritualized ways, e.g. the annual laying of wreaths at war memorials, the collecting activities of museums, and gardens of remembrance. This publication, however, draws attention to the architecture that participates in no less significant ways as the broad backdrop of urban life, the buildings of the city street.

We might ask whether New Zealanders expect permanence from architecture? Earthquakes have occurred with violent regularity: 1855 in Wairarapa, 1929 Murchison, 1931 Napier, 1942 Wairarapa again, 1968 Inangahua, 1987 Edgecumbe, and of course most recently the Canterbury quakes of 2010 and 2011. We have understood that wooden structure, albeit regarded through

...The town the next morning presented a most melancholy appearance. The building most injured was the Bank, a very nice brick and stone one, it cost between [?] and 8000 pounds and was scarcely completed. It is now a perfect wreck plainly telling us that wooden houses are only proper to be erected here...

George Richardson 1855

¹ Peter Wood, “Cold Comfort: Problems of Architectural Heritage presented by the Explorer Huts of Antarctica.” *Fabrications, The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand* 15, no.2 (2003): 113-126.

colonial eyes as perhaps inferior to 'very nice brick and stone', resists seismic loads more successfully than masonry structure from the earliest days of European settlement.² Long before European settlement Maori stories refer to unstable land or 'ru whenua', which means 'shaking of the land', and the god of earthquakes and volcanoes, Ruamoko.³ Indigenous tensile building traditions ensured a flexibility that would have coped well with the regular shakes. More recently New Zealanders have a tradition of moving buildings that apparently defies conventional notions of architectural stasis and foundation.⁴ The evidence suggests that we might, more than many peoples, accept the possibility of an impermanent, even provisional, architecture.

Whether or not New Zealand's local conditions inflect our response, in conventional terms historic rupture is strongly suggested by the disappearance of architecture. So the loss of buildings through natural disaster or the dominant trope of modern progress has wider implications for the retention of cultural memory, yet to think of cities as only collections of physical artefacts is to underestimate them as crucibles of culture, always molten. Physical demolition, decay and devastation intensify questions of what has been called the "spurious vision of a stable world"⁵ and the destruction popularly associated with violent natural disasters, results too, from the effects of social, political and economic revolutions. Such profound change unsurprisingly calls forth response and reaction from all parts of society.

Beijing artist Liu Wei's work responds to the cataclysmic urban change that is taking place in China today.⁶ The clearance of traditional Chinese courtyard housing started in the Communist era and subsequent changes in the last two decades, as a result of the Chinese 'opening up', have seen the high rise city replace older typologies at unprecedented rates.⁷ Liu Wei's art draws attention to a notional *ahistorical* present through "mindless material changing, decay, demolition, and construction." Pauline Yao continues, "In Liu Wei's city, a person can no longer organize his or her experiences based on a historical narrative. One can only live in the chaotic present."⁸

The Industrial Revolution provided another instance of social and physical cataclysm. Fortuitously the 19th century impulse to record and categorize the world coincided with the technological possibilities of photography. Largely made up of amateurs the photographic survey movement between 1885 and 1918 in England was concerned to record the world around them as it changed. Occasionally nostalgic, the movement aimed at a scientific objectivity and practical utility in the recording of a variety of topics, from architecture to folkloric custom, before they disappeared.

*Cities are reality; all
of China is a city
under construction...
we feel numbed most
of the time...*

Liu Wei

The photographers were able to articulate the 'popular historical imagination' of a specific time.⁹

The Christchurch earthquakes have profoundly affected the way we see New Zealand cities. Auckland's risk of earthquake may be lower than that presented by volcanic activity or the growth projections that drive development¹⁰ yet the perceived threats will apparently unfurl a reel of far-reaching impacts. Images in the *Unstable City* cohere not only around the looming physical destruction of buildings through disaster or development but also around gathering economic, cultural and political forces. Reception of McDonald's, and Kaza's images is sharpened in the context of Christchurch's experience. Collectively these images unsettle, evoking the uncertainty that hangs over many of Auckland's buildings and the instability that marks the city per se.

Defining heritage

Since Christchurch's loss of so much significant heritage there has been a palpable sense of anxiety about the fragility and vulnerability of Auckland's remaining built heritage. The sense of urgency has been fueled not only by the implications for public health and safety¹¹ but the subsequently unfolding narratives of identity, loss of history, economic growth, structural technology, property

*Despite the active
engagement with
modernity and the
present that marked the
photographic surveys, at
least in part the survey
movement's dominant
temporal impetus, that
of disappearance and
loss cannot be ignored.*

Elizabeth Edwards

² George Richardson, Letter written to his sister in England, giving an account of the Wellington earthquake of 23 January 1855. Alexander Turnbull Library Reference: MS-Papers-1720 <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/historic-earthquakes/3/3> (accessed October 20, 2012).

³ <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/historic-earthquakes/1> (accessed January 24 2013)

⁴ While the moving of timber houses is relatively commonplace, this tradition asserted itself with the moving of the 8-story concrete framed Museum Hotel in Wellington across Cable St in 1993. <http://www.museumhotel.co.nz/wellingtons-iconic-hotel/a-historic-move> (accessed January 7 2013). The 1885-6 masonry Birdcage Hotel, in Freemans Bay, Auckland, was moved off its site in 2010 while underground work was completed for the Victoria Park tunnel and then moved back to its original location.

⁵ Samuel R. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), xiv. Post 9/11 in New York Delaney recounts the realisation that the "the city, for the first time in its long history, is destructible".

⁶ Xiaoyan, Guo. Breaking Forecast: 8 Key Figures of China's New Generation Artists. "LIU Wei." Hong Kong: Timezone 8, 2010

⁷ <http://djcadchina.wordpress.com/module-outline/block-one-rise-of-the-middle-kingdom/%E4%BA%8C-the-modernisation-of-beijing/week-2-hutong-life/>

⁸ Yao, Pauline J (Jan 2012). 'Pauline J. Yao on the Art of Liu Wei', *Artforum* 50 (5) 176 -181.

⁹ Elizabeth Edwards, *The Camera as Historian, Amateur Photographers and Historical Imagination*, 1885-1918 (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 163.

¹⁰ Population projections indicate that the Auckland region's population will grow substantially through to 2031. http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/people_and_communities/Geographic-areas/mapping-trends-in-the-auckland-region/population-density.aspx (accessed November 28, 2012)

¹¹ Bernard Orsman NZ Herald, 14 May 2012 http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10725491 (accessed September 16, 2012)

investment, urban design and, not least, who decides on and who funds the enormous task of securing the city's architectural history.

Questions about what constitutes architectural heritage and what has been referred to as the massive “under-recognition of heritage”¹² all point to a need for urgent advocacy. The role of education in raising public awareness, before it is ‘too late’ is a common theme in heritage discussions. Whether the vernacular character of a row of Edwardian shops or the preservation of a canonical Modernist architectural exemplar is at stake, both ends of the spectrum are felt to be under recognized and valued inconsistently.

The process of preserving ‘heritage’, however, may put ‘character’ at risk.¹³ Character, that elusive quality like patina, is easily scrubbed off. This touches the heart of the ‘preservation’ versus ‘restoration’ theoretical debate. Over-zealous restoration that removes all traces of time threatens the preservation of character. Yet preservation of such character is not without its theoretical problems either.¹⁴ By way of example 18th century garden follies were constructed from new as ruins, evoking historic styles and the passage of time, precisely for the pleasurable associations they produced in the viewer. The sensation of historical time was evoked but little that could reliably equate to an understanding of architectural history. Architectural conservation might, in this instance, be confused with period restoration.

Aesthetic categories and sensibilities aside what else is important about old buildings? Many streets of old buildings are not distinguished by any standout heritage gem yet collectively remain vital urban fabric, even while subject to the intrusions of private development and processes of renewal. Jane Jacobs puts the matter plainly, when she says, “Cities need old buildings...”¹⁵ She argues the case not on grounds of visual character but economics. Old ideas, she says, can occupy new buildings – old ideas represent low

Many of Auckland's old town centres are studded with character buildings that could tumble and kill in an earthquake, [...] A preliminary “earthquake-prone building register” released by the Auckland Council lists 393 unreinforced masonry buildings in the former Auckland City area likely to collapse in a moderate earthquake.

Bernard Orsman

Repair and meaningful restoration take time, and time seems to be the enemy to those dictating the pace of the city's recovery. ... Increasingly, and justifiably, the citizens of the city are frustrated that they have so little say about the fate of buildings, which have served as the landmarks of their lives.

Thomas Fulton
and Tony Ussher 2012

risk economically- but new ideas need low rent, low yield environments in which to incubate. There they can flourish or fail on their merits. Without old buildings in cities to harbor the creative innovators, she argues, we immediately limit diversity. Much as biodiversity is key to the environment, Jacobs recognises that social and economic diversity is the key to vital cities.

Regulation to save heritage is a contentious topic. Too much regulation or too little, the arguments swing both ways between the poles of preservation and innovation. International cities with successful heritage retention typically impose draconian controls yet recognize the crucial role new architecture plays in the contemporary city to advance cultural identity amongst other ends. Regulation is a blunt tool certainly but it is worth noting how expectations of property rights and the sovereign rights of the individual to determine control of private property have shifted. Property owners are not allowed to mine their land, discharge pollutants, nor remove valued trees – increasingly heritage fabric can be seen not only as personal property but also as the collective legacy of a cultivated society.

What price heritage? Architectural historian Christine McCarthy echoes the views of heritage economist Donovan Rypkema, “Heritage restoration and earthquake strengthening make no economic sense if we continue to assume that heritage buildings are the sole financial responsibility of individual building owners.”¹⁶ Heritage listings by local authorities and the New Zealand Historic Places Trust offer slight enough protection and little or no financial incentive. Many old buildings lack any recognition and here is the nub of the problem. In a city such as Auckland with the

...The cost of seismically improving the nation's stock of 3,384 unreinforced masonry buildings (UMB) which are below 67% NBS – think Wellington's Cuba Street and Auckland's Britomart precinct – to 67% NBS, could be as much as NZ\$2.1 billion, according to a report by Jason Ingham at Auckland University's Department of Civil Engineering and Professor Michael Griffith from Adelaide University.

Alex Tarrant

¹² Alan Matson, in “Conversation on Heritage”, *Architecture NZ* 6, (Nov-Dec 2012): 49.

¹³ Anthony Matthews, in “Conversation on Heritage”, *Architecture NZ* 5, (Sept-Oct 2012): 37. Matthews talks about the ‘erosion of character’ in Auckland's Residential 1 zone and an example he provides is the impact of double garaging being inserted under Victorian villas,

¹⁴ Wood, “Cold Comfort”, 122. “Unlike restoration, preservation clings to an idealized state by making the past demonstrable.” Wood criticizes the restoration attempts of Hut Point hut in the Antarctic for arranging the interior with domestic objects. “It is apparent here that architectural restoration was being confused with period restoration”, 116.

¹⁵ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities: the failure of town planning*, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1965) “Cities need old buildings so badly it is probably impossible for vigorous streets and districts to grow without them.” 244

¹⁶ Christine McCarthy, <http://www.listener.co.nz/commentary/letters/after-the-quake/> (accessed Nov18, 2012)

mounting pressure of population growth and the growing financial responsibilities of making old buildings safe,¹⁷ issues of social equity quickly emerge.

Studies show that the drive to higher population densities pushes up land values and this has uneven effects for property owners, property tenants and prospective property purchasers.¹⁸ Developing older buildings is often financially unattractive to developers and, in order to achieve the returns possible from new development, the refurbished buildings typically aim at a higher market sector. Previous tenants and prospective purchasers are priced out of the new commercial economy dictating their neighbourhood, putting at risk the socially diverse communities that lived there.

After the 2010–11 quakes in Christchurch the calls from insurance companies for additional earthquake strengthening to meet higher percentages of the seismic code, and Government proposals to enforce more stringent strengthening on earthquake-prone buildings, make the economic feasibility to retain old buildings look ever more marginal. Contemporary media reports suggest that the cost of strengthening in many cases exceeds the value of the buildings.¹⁹ A snowballing effect that skews investment rationales and erodes investor confidence inexorably builds the case against the retention of old buildings. (Ironically this same set of forces may apply to many more recently constructed buildings were they to receive the same structural scrutiny.²⁰) Auckland's old buildings are at risk, not only from earthquake but also, from the repeatedly destabilizing and uneven effects of capital and onerous regulation.

Recording history

McDonald's, and Kaza's work looks at Auckland's town centres. In general they do not address residential or institutional buildings but rather commercial premises, retail shops and service lanes. Some of these buildings may have had apartments above street level or at the rear of the shop so there is no strict taxonomy in their selection. Not a catalogue, nor an attempt to be exhaustive, their work nevertheless addresses the very broad number of buildings, recognised and unrecognised heritage, at risk from a variety of fronts.

...The cost of seismically improving the nation's stock of 3,384 unreinforced masonry buildings (UMB) which are below 67% NBS – think Wellington's Cuba Street and Auckland's Britomart precinct – to 67% NBS, could be as much as NZ\$2.1 billion, according to a report by Jason Ingham at Auckland University's Department of Civil Engineering and Professor Michael Griffith from Adelaide University.

Alex Tarrant

The buildings shown in this publication correspond broadly to the period between the late 1890s and the 1930s: by no means a definitive historical category, yet to write about buildings is to necessarily confront issues of architectural history. At risk of oversimplifying the many ways to write architectural history, one approach may denote architectural types, styles and chronologies. This description of buildings in classificatory and formal terms remains a useful tool in assessing architectural heritage especially in non-academic contexts.²¹ Canonical examples are useful for evaluating lesser projects.

More complex accounts of architectural history, however, owe a great deal to the "extra-architectural forces"²² that shape buildings. Cultural history provides a valuable approach to the architecture of the vernacular and quotidian. As Nancy Steiber puts it architectural historical attention has turned to "posing questions about the relations between objects, their makers, their users, and the relationship of all those to social processes..."²³ "The focus of the architectural historian is no longer solely with formal taxonomic concerns but with social contingency and agency.

Many of McDonald's images display a strikingly dualistic formal composition that lends itself to a discussion using both of the approaches described above. Above the street verandahs remain the Victorian and Edwardian facades in contrast with the scenes of contemporary street life below. The eclectic range of stylistic approaches, including stripped classical, Italianate, Gothic and Spanish Mission influences, typifies the period of these buildings. Styles varied broadly and offered builders

What is the cultural work that architecture does? ... What happens when architectural history starts to look at those spaces that are indeterminate, rather than looking only at places of order or (to) find the indeterminacy in places of order as they are used, distorted, reinvested with meaning?

Nancy Steiber

¹⁷ Alex Tarrant, *Multi-billion dollar costs of earthquake strengthening and higher insurance premiums beyond Christchurch only now dawning on landlords, tenants and insurers*, <http://www.interest.co.nz/node/57817/property> (accessed September 16, 2012).

¹⁸ The Grimes and Liang (2007) find that there is a positive association between high population density and land value. Higher land values are good for property owners, but not for prospective buyers.

¹⁹ Chris Barton reports that the estimate value of the more than 3800 unreinforced masonry buildings in NZ is \$1.5 billion whereas the estimated cost of upgrading them is \$2 billion, 'Legacy at risk as city crumbles' in Saturday Jan 14, 2012 *Weekend Herald*.

²⁰ Chris Barton, 'Demolition Derby' in *Weekend Herald*, December 17, 2011. Barton points out that many buildings fall outside the purview of city councils' earthquake-prone building (EPB) registers. As at the time of writing Auckland Council's earthquake-prone register has focused on unreinforced masonry buildings and buildings built prior to 1976, and requests upgrading to 34% of New Building Standards (NBS). In fact Christchurch's earthquakes demonstrated that numerous buildings built after this date are also susceptible, the CCTV and Grand Chancellor Hotel being just two built in the 1980s.

²¹ Andrew Leach, *What is Architectural History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010) 50.

²² Ibid. , 66.

²³ Nancy Steiber, 'Space, Time and Architectural History', in Dana Arnold, Elvan Altan Ergut and Belgin Turan Ozkaya (eds), *Rethinking Architectural Historiography* (Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2006) 172-3. Quote in text box, ibid, 178.

and clients a new level of architectural sophistication. Magazines and stylebooks, which proliferated from the mid 1800s, aided their promulgation. The 19th century revival of styles recalled ideas of the past and this widespread historicism has been variously discussed as symptomatic of a cultural anxiety about the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution.

Not only does McDonald's selective gaze bring attention to bear on the tenuous future of Auckland's older buildings, he finely observes social change and a vulnerable social fabric. Below the verandahs of the now faded shop fronts, signage, racks of goods and paraphernalia all display the messy vitality of the commercial strip. Migrant communities have clustered in many parts of the city. Ethnic and economic diversity mark these buildings and their marginal physical condition amplifies the precariousness of both their social and economic stability.

Viewing the buildings through an economic lens offers another perspective. Built to return incomes commensurate with the investment, the procurement of commercial buildings is most often driven by economic contingency. Telling, however, is the naming of the buildings. Many are inscribed with the family name – a display of entrepreneurial vigour and family pride. Boldly cast in plaster, the naming of buildings gives a clue to the monumental hopes and aspirations of their original owners. Further to this the *Always Building* (1929) in Surrey Crescent, the *Progressive Building* (1927) in Otahuhu, and R.J. *Cates Progress Stores* (1922) in Dominion Road Balmoral suggest the progressivist ideals of the late 19th century which informed social reform and political movements in both early twentieth century Britain and America. Ideals of modern progress resonate in this historicist architecture. These shop buildings become complex artefacts, as they look both forward and back.

In Kaza's images, collaged detail is superimposed on the abstracted ground plane of the map. The surface treatment, paint and plaster signage, patterns of screens and window elevations show a layering of periods and history, a shifting ad hoc character over time. The images, like McDonald's, refute the conventional view of architectural heritage as one of pure historical categories. They assert that the representational life of buildings does not stop at any particular stage in history but is an accretive process reflecting both grander ideas and the daily rub of existence. The flat two-dimensional qualities of Kaza's collaged images can be distinguished from the play of light and shade characteristic of traditional classical massing. Her images lack architectural substance in classical terms and this works strongly to sharpen the intangible qualities of instability and vulnerability.

Approaching conservation

The buildings in this publication are mostly unprotected though Auckland City character controls for suburbs of 19th century villas have been bickered over by planners and architects for some time. Architects argue that such blanket controls stifle good design solutions while planners argue that they, at least, prevent the worst crimes against heritage. Not so in many of the city's older commercial strips where it was possible to remove an Edwardian shop building until relatively recently. Business zones, such as small town centres, have been largely exempt from the controversial character controls applied to residential zones. Changes in 2004 to Auckland City's District Plan nominated six commercial centres as 'traditional town centres' with recommendations for development to preserve their particular urban character and heritage.²⁴

Interpretations of the past play an active function, a political function, in legitimating the present context, naturalizing the past so that it appears to lead logically to present social practices and values.

Gero and Root

Ironically, the gradual loss of economic vigour that threatened the viability of some of these town centres, due in part to the replacement of 'Main Street' by mall, has swung around in certain parts of the city. This is a result of, what might be called, an appetite for 'authenticity'. In particular the notion of the authentic community fuels the argument for preservation. The notional 'Corner Store' and 'Little Grocer' reflect a nostalgic desire to return to the commercial streetscape that existed prior to the supermarket and mall phenomena of the 1960s. This tendency, which notably occurs in wealthier suburbs of the city, is most pronounced in the Auckland suburb of Parnell and its development of the 1970s.²⁵ In these suburbs the preservation and outright replication of history becomes problematic too. It begs the question of who is defining the terms? Architectural conservation theorists Gero and Root ask what is being conserved and whose heritage and identity is being preserved?²⁶ A consequence of preserving the past is the tendency to aestheticize it, sanitize and de-politicize it by romantic nostalgia.

²⁴ In 2004 the Auckland City Proposed District Plan Change 132 identified Grey Lynn, Kingsland, Eden Valley, Ellerslie, Upper Symonds Street and West Lynn, dating from the late 1800s to early 1900s, as traditional town centres. This list has since been updated to include a number of other town centres.

²⁵ "Les Harvey was a millionaire businessman and property developer who owned dozens of Auckland's historic buildings, including much of Parnell. Called an "eccentric visionary", he created Parnell Village in the 1970s, rebuilding old houses at the top of Parnell Rise into a collection of boutiques and restaurants. He saw himself as a custodian and many of the parts used in his projects were salvaged from other demolished buildings." <http://www.theaucklandner.co.nz/news/parnell-rises-again/1065825/> (accessed 18 November 2012)

²⁶ Gero and Root (Gathercole and Lowenthal 1990) cited in Thomas A. Markus and Deborah Cameron, *The Words between the Spaces* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 133.

Contemporary accounts of conservation have broadened their view of heritage and some query the techno-scientific bias of conventional approaches that have focused primarily on tasks of preservation or restoration of the object itself. They argue that to search after the truth, or the original state, of the object may be to ignore the active cultural status and meaning of such objects in their social, political and aesthetic contexts. A 'communicative turn' in conservation thinking places emphasis on the subject's ability to derive a message from the object. "In contemporary conservation theory, the primary interest is therefore no longer on the objects but rather on the subjects." This more complex approach does not relate conservation to 'truth' but rather to 'meanings'.

In this new light, conservation architecture's ability to act 'performatively' relies less on specific detail and more on context. Performativity reflects current theoretical interests in which culture and society are described as unfolding rather than fixed realities. Nancy Steiber's questions are relevant. "What is the cultural work that architecture does? What happens when the passivity of 'symbolise, represent and reflect' is replaced with active verbs such as 'transform, perform, inform?'"²⁸ How does Auckland's late 19th and early 20th century commercial architecture negotiate the contemporary globalizing tendencies of capital and consumption, migration, development and heritage protection? Does contemporary conservation policy have anything to offer?

The International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites, (ICOMOS) sets out the central precepts of contemporary conservation practice and is an essential tool for the conservation industry. The ICOMOS New Zealand Charter²⁹ specifically addresses the conservation concerns of New Zealand Maori cultural heritage. The Charter proposes that present day cultural, social and spiritual values are as important as the object. It suggests that functional, value-led or adaptive decision making about heritage may deviate from strict preservation of historical fabric and the conventional strategies of minimum intervention.³⁰

In the Pacific traditional non-durable building fabric of thatch and woven fibre was routinely replaced. Social custom revolved around such activities, reinforcing family ties while passing on traditional knowledge and practices. Cultural memory was thus ensured through oral traditions and a re-iterating of architectural forms and techniques.³¹ This re-iteration of cultural practice contrasts greatly with Western concerns for the durability and permanence of original architectural fabric and offers a

*Indigenous conservation precepts
are fluid and take account
of the continuity of life and
the needs of the present as
well as the responsibilities of
guardianship and association
with those who have gone before.
ICOMOS Charter*

local inflection on the global practice of conservation.

Between forces for change and the desire to protect heritage lie a range of interventions that sit between demolition and preservation. Architectural conservation theorist D. Cosgrove provocatively asks if demolition is cultural vandalism or an autonomous culture re-inventing the present?³² Does preservation treasure history or defer to it? Compromise positions may diminish a building's usefulness as historic evidence, while remaining culturally, functionally or socially relevant. Heritage advisor Robin Byron sees the opportunities of heritage architecture as, "...the chance to think about the kind of legacy that we have architecturally [...] a way of thinking about architecture as a continuum."³³ "She argues for a reflective dialogue with architectural history, one that might admit modern development. Most critically her view recognizes continuity within change.

The images in this publication draw our attention to Auckland's late 19th and 20th century commercial buildings without judgment or rhetoric. Any attention paid to a building is an expression of care that may lead to a re-evaluation of it and what it stands for. Dialogue of any kind stimulates questions and presents opportunities to re-examine definitions of cultural and national identity, both past and present. Global movements of capital remain powerful shapers of the contemporary city and increasing social inequity. Regulatory building codes may continue to miss their real target. Earthquake-devastated Christchurch has drawn out hotly contested positions and counter positions on architectural heritage and thoroughly challenges 'the spurious vision of a stable world.' Such attention supports the provocative premise by Cosgrove that, "it is the act of conservation itself that makes an object part of the cultural heritage, not the cultural heritage that demands conservation."³⁴

*Conservation may thus be
regarded as itself a creative
intervention, subject to the
same individual and social
negotiations and struggles over
meaning and representation as
any other action (...).*

D. Cosgrove

²⁷ Salvador Munoz Vinas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation* (Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth Heinemann, 2005), 147.

²⁸ Steiber, "Space, Time and Architectural History", 178.

²⁹ ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value, is an adaptation of the original ICOMOS (International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites)

³⁰ ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value, 1995, ICOMOS NZ Te Mana O Nga Pouwhenua O Te Ao – The New Zealand National Committee of the International Council On Monuments and Sites,

³¹ Bill McKay has written extensively in this area, See Bill McKay, "Maori Architecture: Transforming Western Notions of Architecture", *Fabrications, The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand*, 14, no.1 & 2, (2004)

³² D.E. Cosgrove, "Should we take it all so seriously? Culture, conservation and meaning in the contemporary world", W.E. Krumbein, P. Brimblecombe, D.E. Cosgrove, and S. Staniforth, (eds), *Durability and Change. The Science, Responsibility, and Cost of Sustaining Cultural Heritage* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1994), 259-266.

³³ Robin Byron, in "Conversation on Heritage," *Architecture NZ* 5, (Sept–Oct 2012): 34.

³⁴ Cosgrove, "Should we take it all so seriously?" 259-266.

In Defence of Old Buildings
Allan McDonald

I treated myself to a taxi. I rode home through the city streets. There wasn't a street, there wasn't a building that wasn't connected to some memory in my mind. There I was buying a suit with my father. There, I was having an ice cream soda after school.

Wally Shawn narration, *My Dinner with Andre*
Dir. Louis Malle. New Yorker Films, 1981. Film.



Poynton Terrace, Auckland Central



Poynton Terrace, Auckland Central



Poynton Terrace, Auckland Central



Hobson Street, Auckland Central



Ponsonby Road, Ponsonby



Karangahape Road, Auckland Central



New North Road, Kingsland



Edinburgh Street, Newton



East Street, Newton



Cook Street, Auckland Central



Dominion Road, Balmoral



Ponsonby Road, Ponsonby



Union Street, Auckland



Service Lane, Newmarket



Karangahape Road, Auckland Central



Williamson Avenue, Grey Lynn



Williamson Avenue, Grey Lynn



Dominion Road, Balmoral



Dominion Road, Balmoral



Symonds Street, Eden Terrace



Khyber Pass Road, Grafton



Khyber Pass Road, Grafton



Galatos Street, Auckland Central



Saint Benedicts Street, Newton



Poynton Terrace, Auckland Central



Saint Benedicts Street, Newton



Ponsonby Road, Ponsonby



Service Lane, Sandringham



Service Lane, Sandringham



Service Lane, Papakura



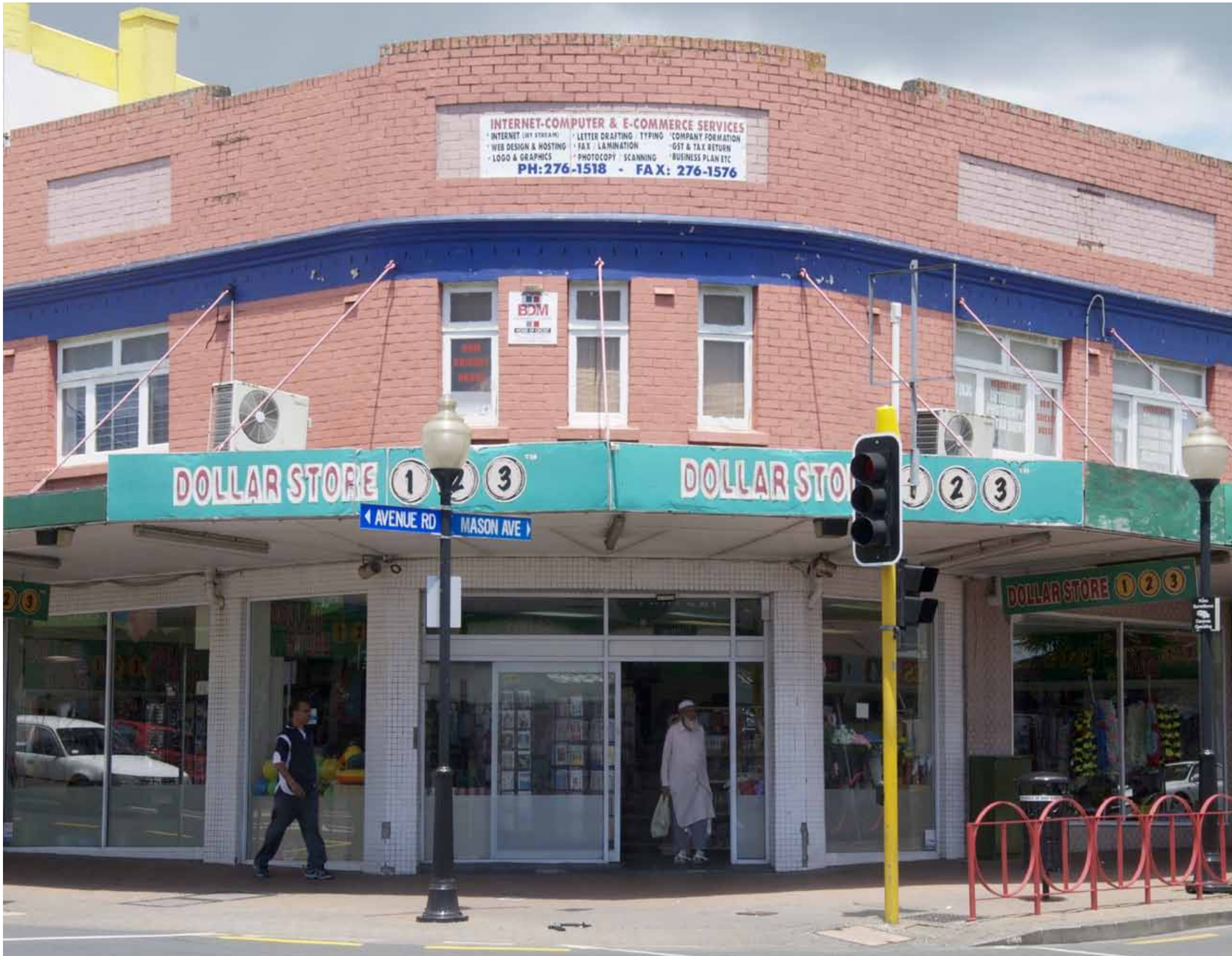
Galatos Street, Auckland Central



New North Road, Morningside



Queen Street, Otahuhu



Great South Road, Orahuhu



Service Lane, Devonport



Upper Queen Street, Auckland Central



Service Lane, Mt. Albert



Service Lane, Point Chevalier



Newton Road, Newton



St. Georges Road, Avondale



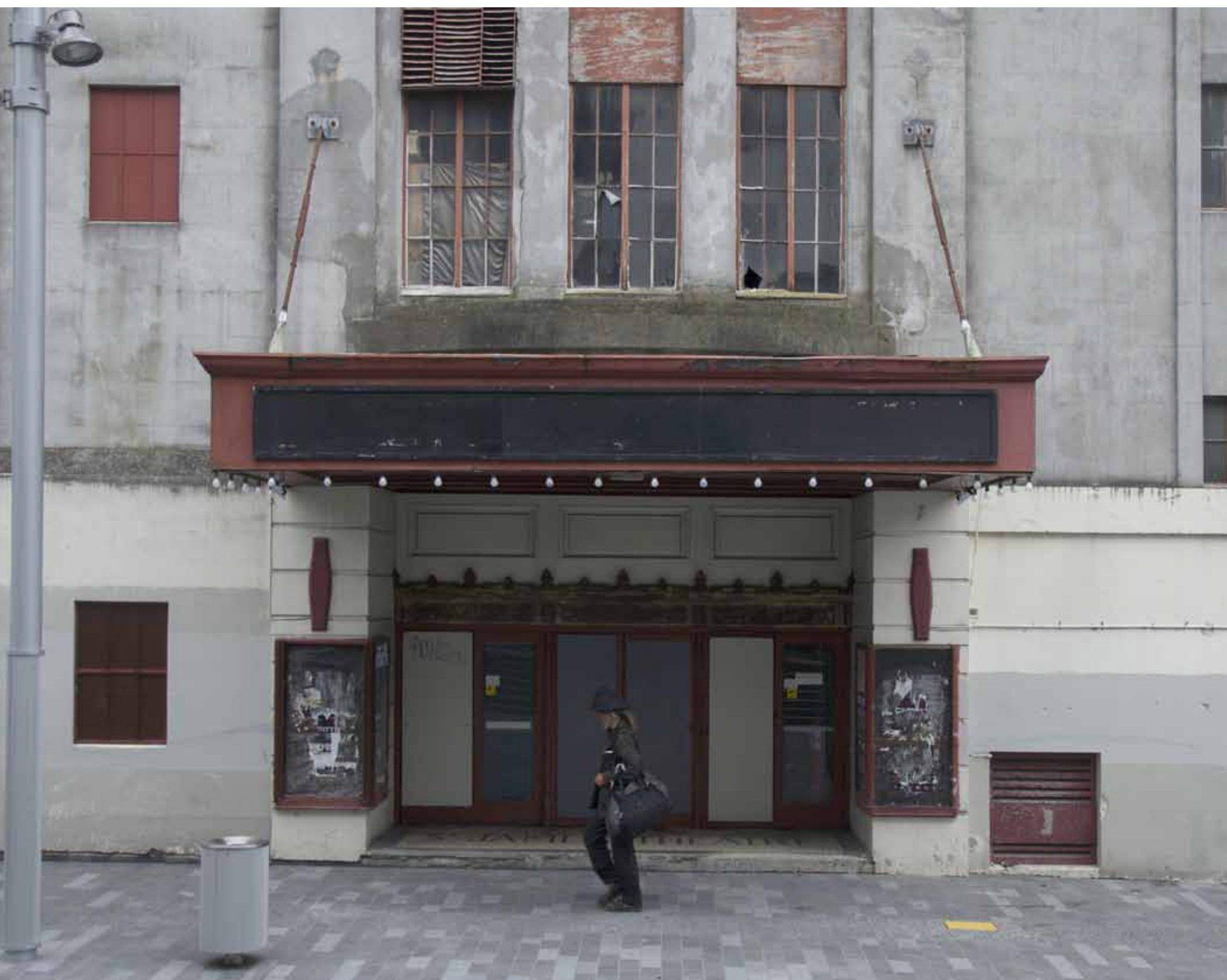
Great North Road, Point Chevalier



Khyber Pass Road, Grafton



Victoria Street West, Auckland Central



Lorne Street, Auckland Central



Cook Street, Auckland Central



Galatos Street, Auckland Central



Station Road, Otahuhu



Calliope Street, Devonport



Symonds Street, Eden Terrace



Symonds Street, Eden Terrace



Dominion Road, Balmoral



New North Road, Kingsland



Great South Road, Otahuhu



Great South Road, Otahuhu



Karangahape Road, Auckland



Karangahape Road, Auckland



Broadway, Newmarket



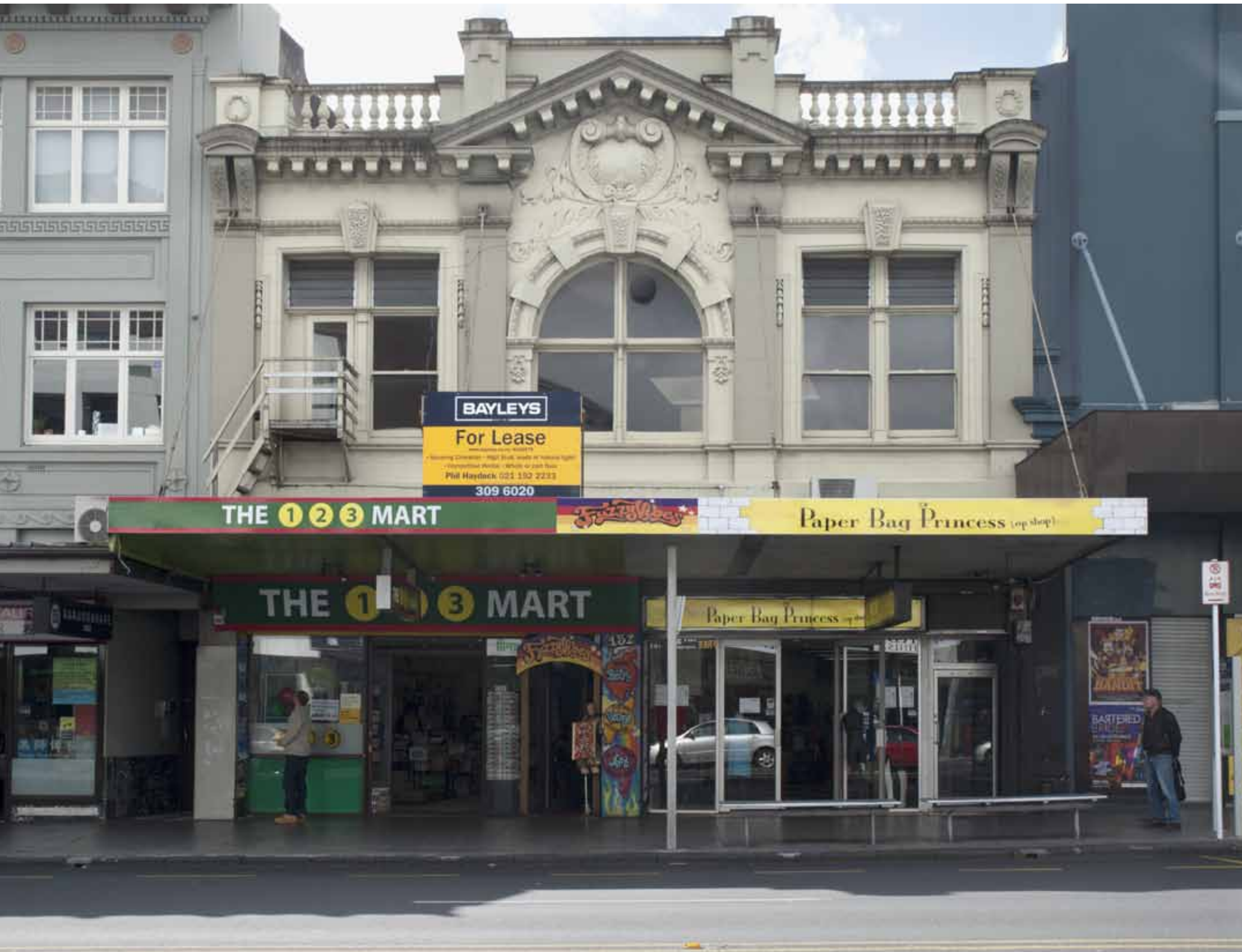
Khyber Pass Road, Newmarket



Victoria Street, Auckland



Symonds Street, Eden Terrace



Karangahape Road, Auckland Central



Symonds Street, Auckland Central



Symonds Street, Auckland Central



Queen Street, Auckland Central



Queen Street, Auckland Central



Karangahape Road, Auckland Central



Karangahape Road, Auckland Central



Hobson Street, Auckland Central



Hobson Street, Auckland Central



Hobson Street, Auckland Central



Great South Road, Otahuhu



Great South Road, Otahuhu



Great South Road, Otahuhu



Beaumont Street, Auckland Central

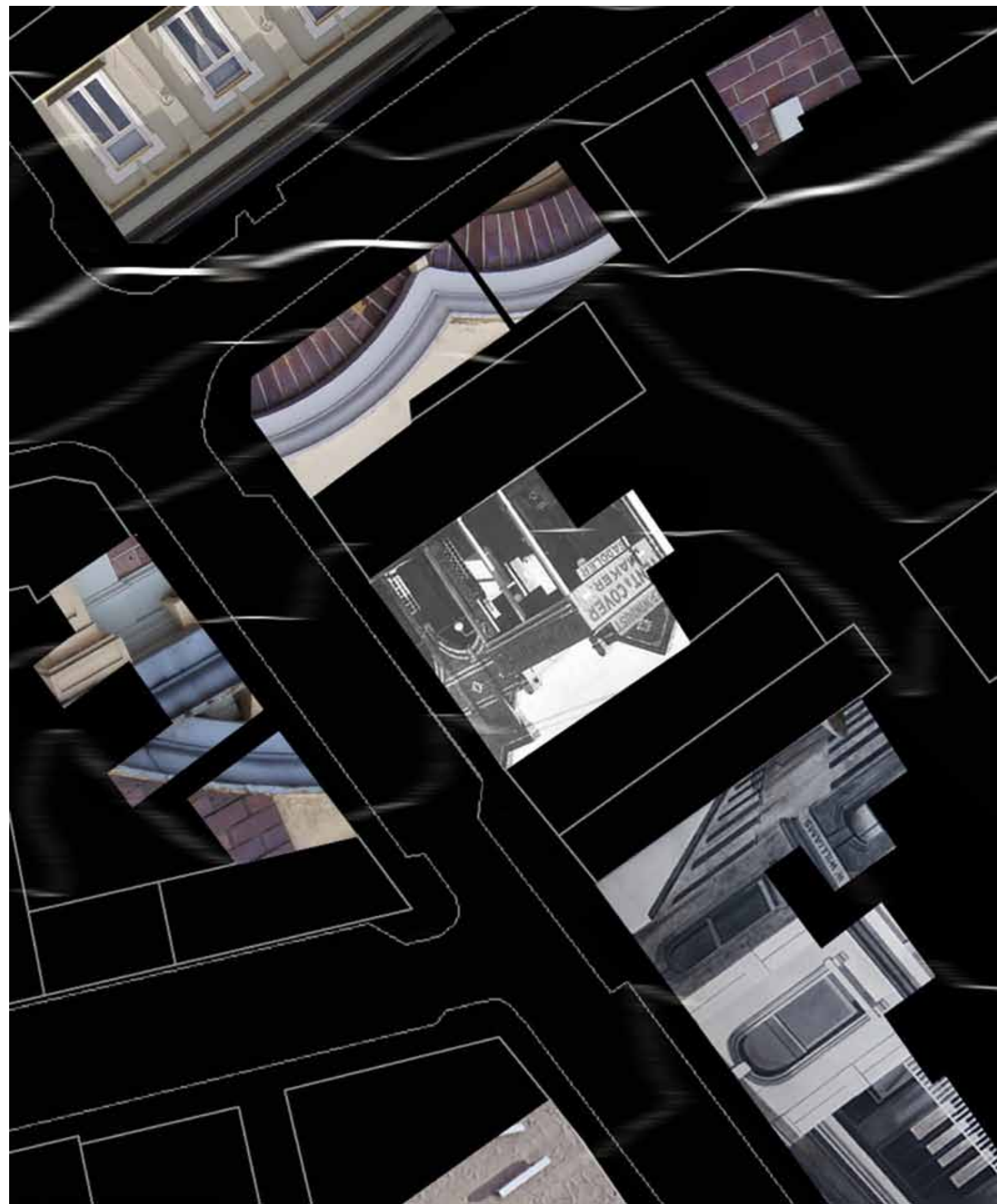
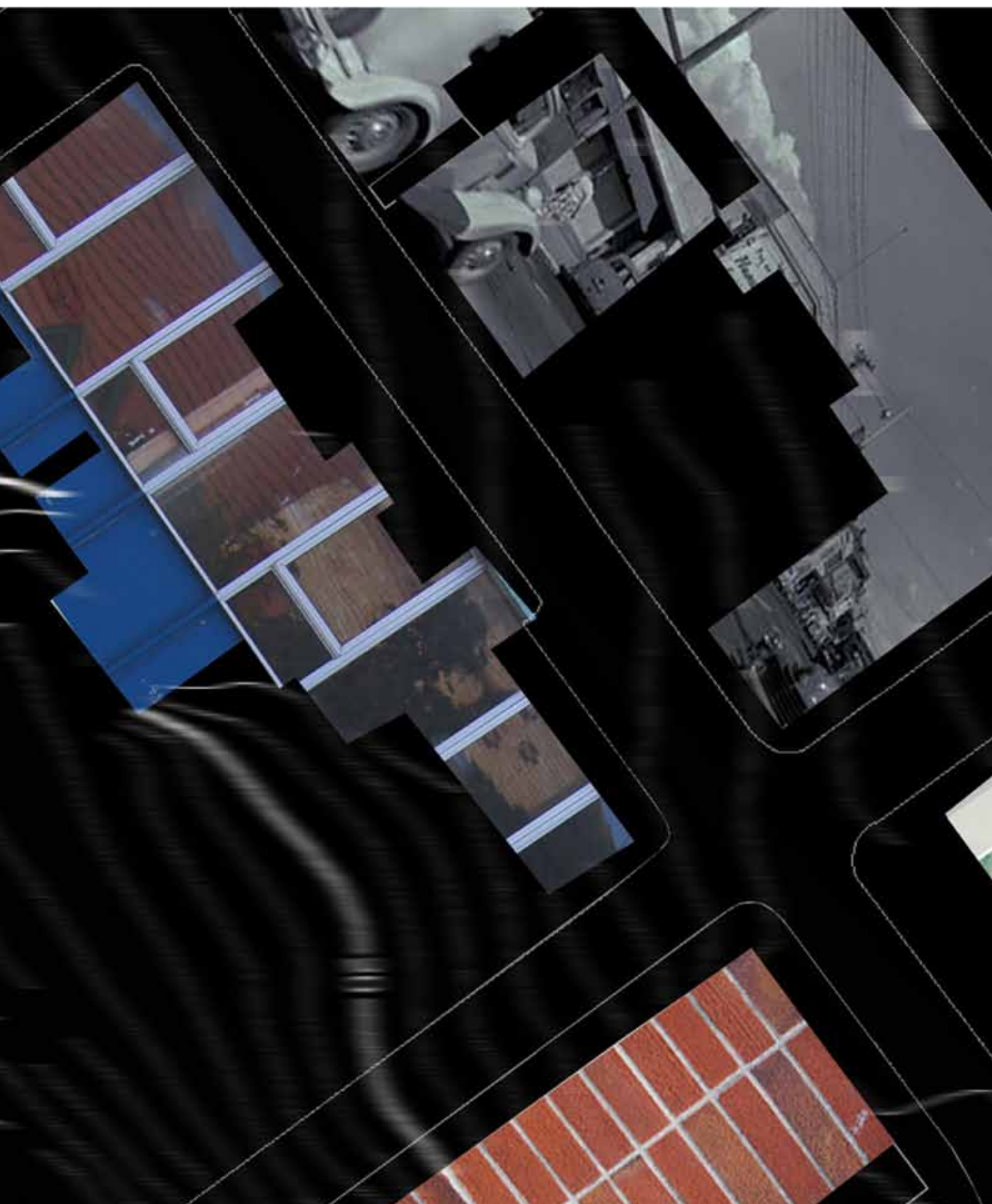


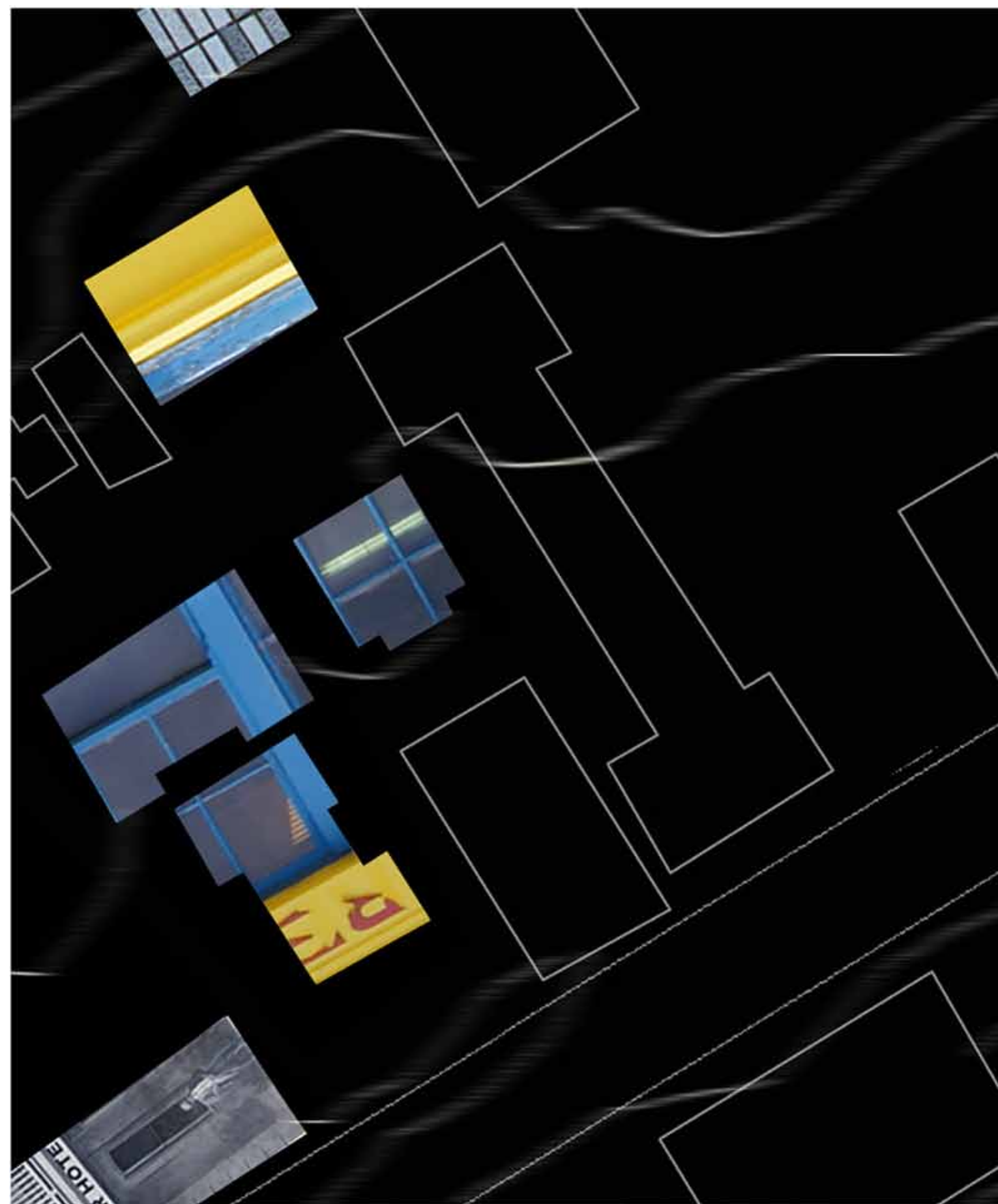
Vernon Street, Auckland Central

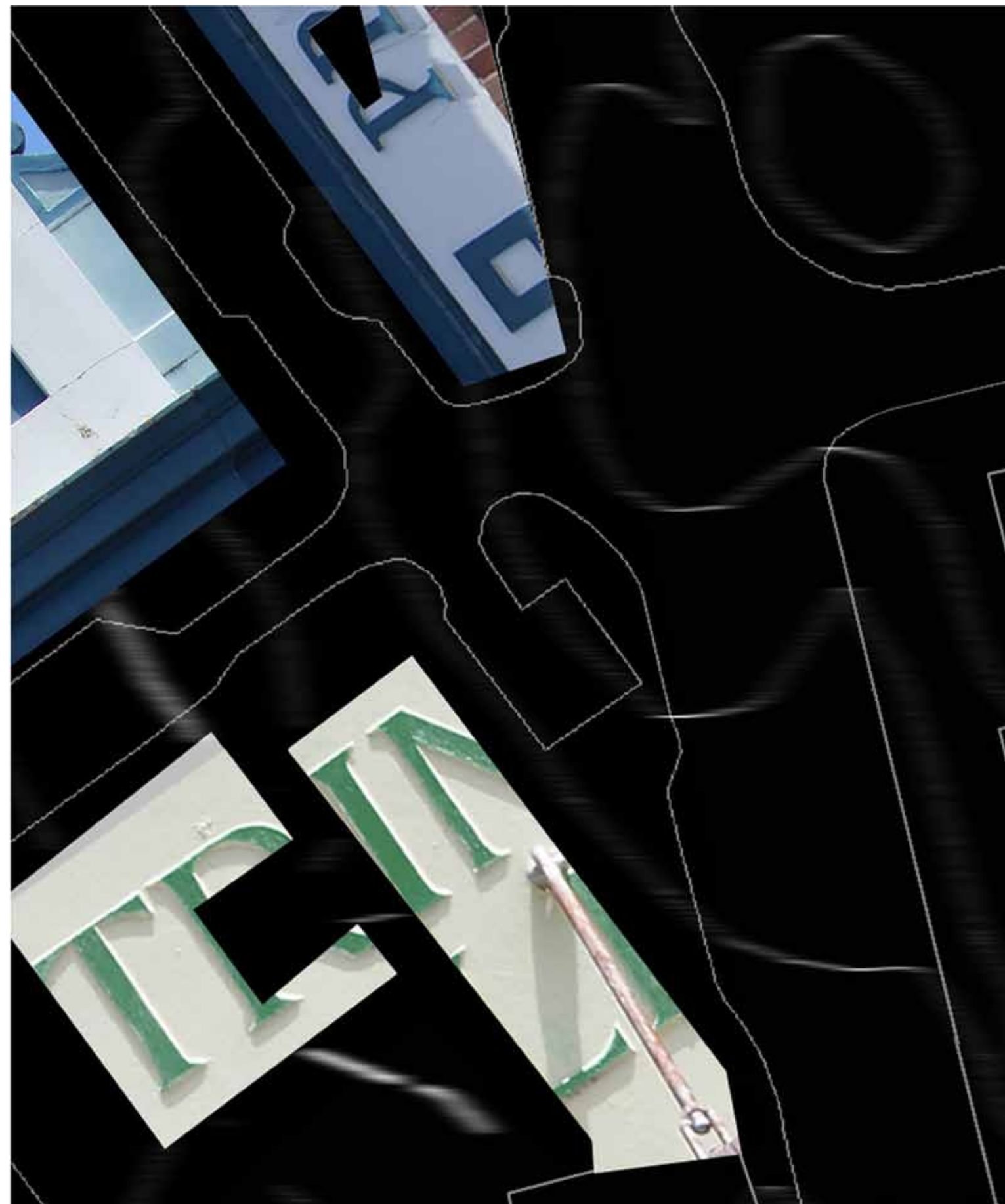
Imagining Auckland
Krystina Kaza

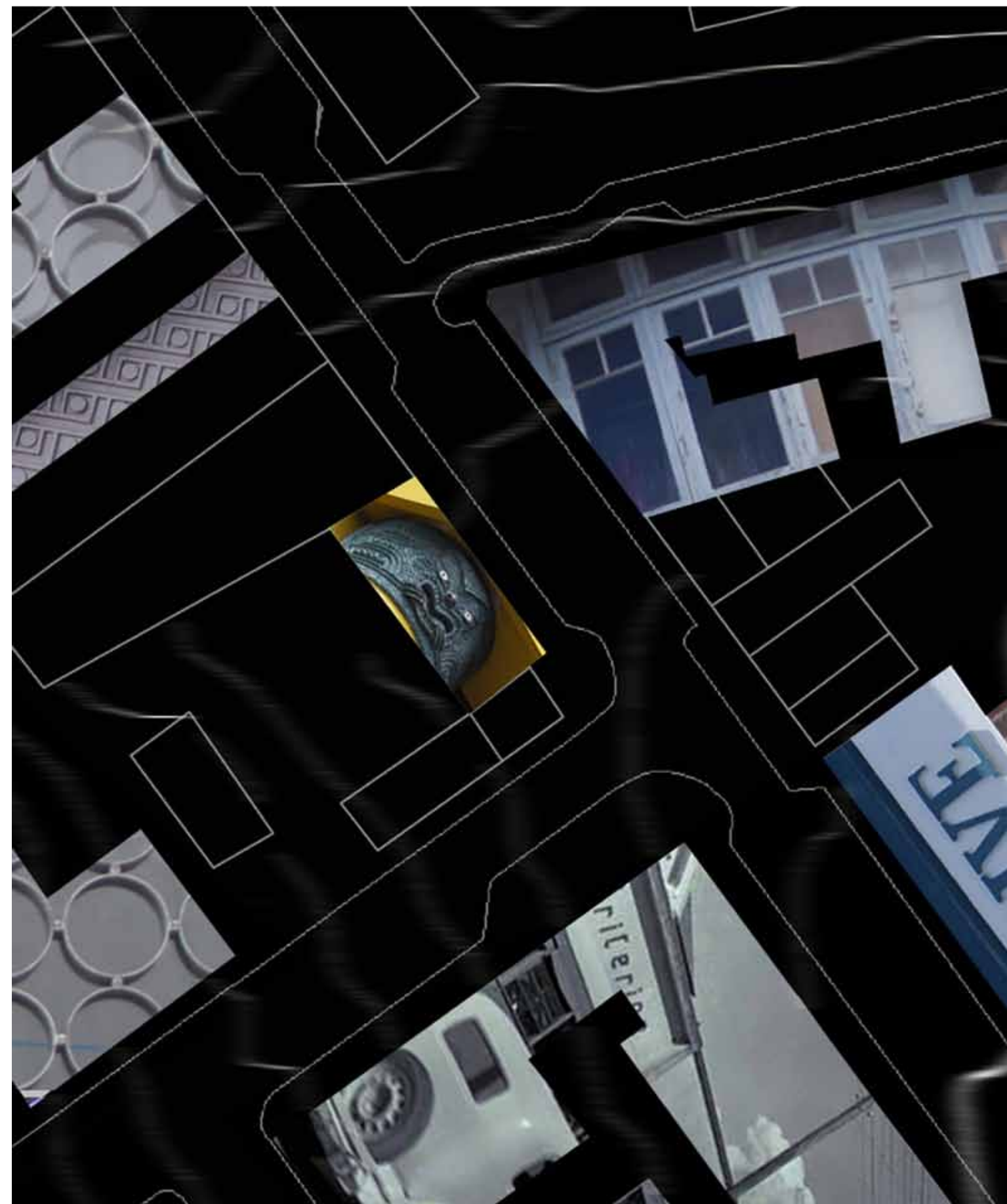
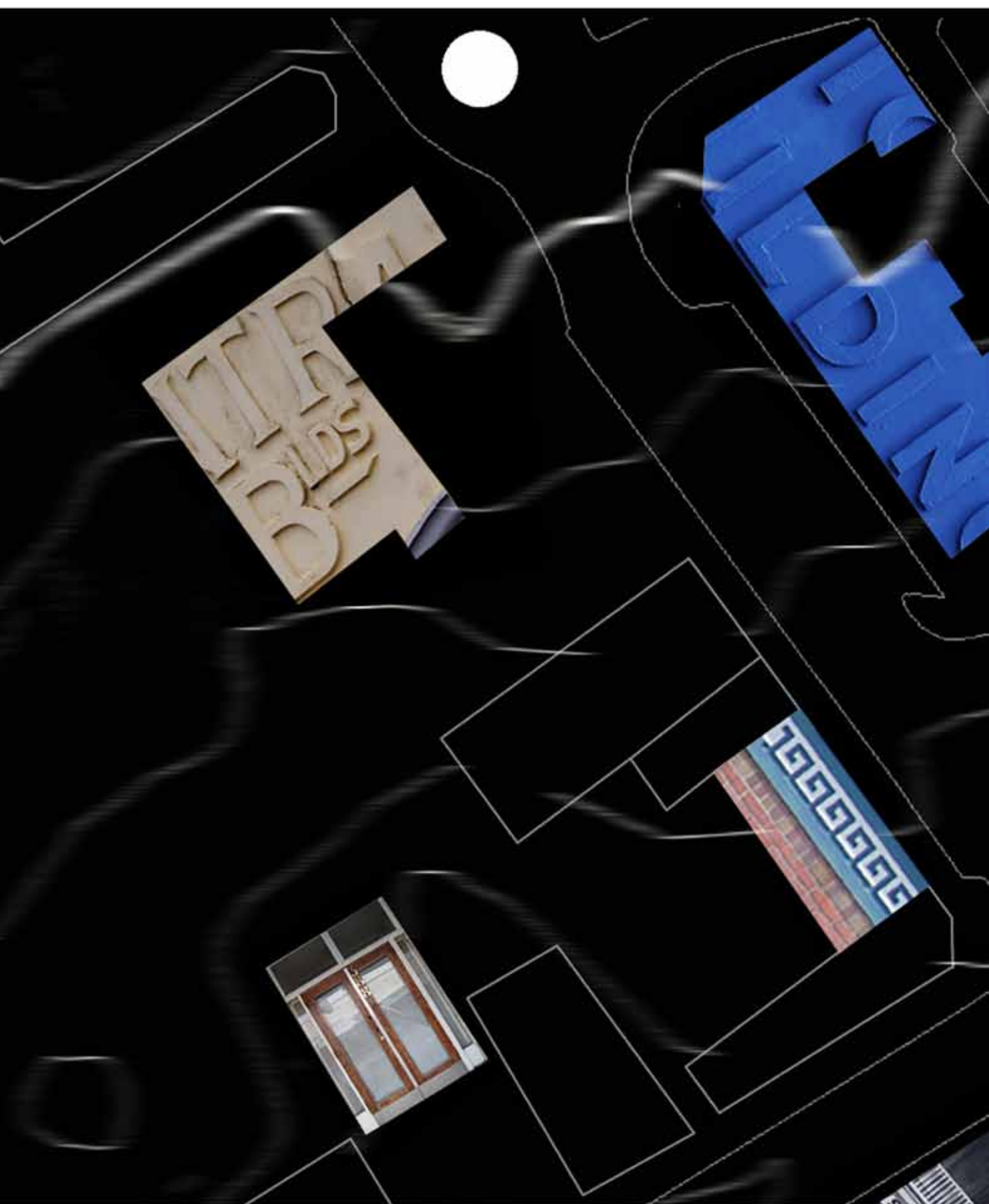
“It is hard to look at a map without sensing, in our bones, private hopes and secret fears about change. In my Mercator daydreams, I see: An erasure, perhaps, of the laid-down lines of the past. A willingness to draw new meridians. A reconfiguration of the private globe. A silent earthquake.”

Stephen Hall in the essay *I, Mercator* published in *You are Here: Personal Geographies and Other Maps of the Imagination* Princeton Architectural Press. 2003









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ALLAN MCDONALD holds an MFA from RMIT in Melbourne. He has recently worked on a series of overlapping projects documenting historic environments in danger of disappearing. In 2006 he was included in ***Wonder-land***, a survey show of New Zealand Photography that travelled to photography festivals in Rome and Pingyao. He has curated the exhibitions ***Terrain Vague: a Short History of Creative Trespass and Love*** and ***Food: The Family Photographs of Bob Raw*** for the Auckland Festival of Photography in 2006 and 2009. In 2009 a selection of works documenting the phenomena of the Second Hand shop was shown at the Auckland Art Gallery. He is represented by the Anna Miles Gallery and teaches photography at Unitec Institute of Technology in Mt. Albert.

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Allan McDonald

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