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Architectural Historicism Revisited: The Case of Twentieth-Century Traditionalist Architecture in Queen Street, Auckland

By

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Abstract

Originating from the fields of philosophy and history, the term historicism is often used by architectural historians. In historiography about twentieth-century architecture, the term historicism is most commonly associated with traditionalist pre-Second World War buildings, designed with the eclectic use of historical styles. Considered anachronistic and outdated, this architecture is widely neglected in the architectural histories of the twentieth century, most of which are focused on the Modern Movement, or other modernising tendencies leading toward it. However, in reality, modernising architecture constituted the minority of the overall building construction during the first four decades of the twentieth century. Inspired by architectural history, the traditionalist – or historicist, as numerous historians have dubbed it – architecture was the period’s mainstream. Aiming to contribute to the comprehensiveness of the histories of twentieth-century architecture, this research addresses this issue. It focuses on pre-Second World War production inspired by principles, forms, and elements from history of architecture. The main commercial thoroughway of New Zealand’s biggest city, Queen Street in Auckland, was selected as a case study. Attracting some of the largest public and private investments in the country, Queen Street architecture was designed by the most renowned architects of the period and widely appreciated by the public. Therefore, it is considered as a representative sample that reflects broader architectural tendencies in New Zealand.

To develop a theoretical framework for the analysis of historicism using the example of Queen Street architecture, the thesis explores the meaning of the concept in its native fields of philosophy and history. It continues by discussing the use of the term in the context of architectural historiography. The thesis asks the questions of whether historicism can be applied in the research of architecture, and, if so, what its meaning is in the context of architectural history. Attempting to understand the essence of traditionalist design methodology, the thesis seeks to find the motivation behind the eclectic use of forms from the architectural past. What were the sources of influence and the main principles that these architects were following?

This thesis shows that a clear distinction should be made between two topics from architectural history – (1) historicism and (2) the pre-Second World War traditionalist architecture of the twentieth century. This thesis argues that an historicist outlook marked wider creative achievements of an epoch, and that architecture of the period approximately ranging from the 1750s to the 1950s did not evade its influence. In comparison, the topic of traditionalist historicist architecture of the twentieth century is a narrower one, exclusively focused on pre-Second World War architectural production inspired by history, and developed on historicist principles. This thesis considers traditionalist architecture as but one of the many historicist modes.
For my parents, Jasna and Branko Mađanović.
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Contents

List of Images ..................................................................................................................... 8

Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 12

Chapter 1. Historiographical Overview .............................................................................. 20

1.1 Philosophy, History, and the Multiple Meanings of Historicism ................................. 20

1.2 Architectural Historicism and the Traditionalist Historicist Architecture of the Twentieth Century .............................................................................................................................................................. 22

1.2.1 The Debate: Moderns versus the Ancients before the Second World War ............... 22

1.2.2 Knowing the Difference: Traditionalism, Revivalism, Academism, Eclecticism… Historicism? .......................................................................................................................................................................................... 28

1.3 Twentieth-Century Traditionalist Architecture of Historicism in New Zealand: The Case of Queen Street, Auckland ................................................................................................................................. 34

1.3.1 Period Writings ......................................................................................................... 35

1.3.2 General Historiography .......................................................................................... 35

1.3.3 Reference Works and Architectural Historiography ................................................. 37

Conclusion: Architectural Historicism and the Traditionalist Historicist Architecture of the Twentieth Century ........................................................................................................................................... 40

Chapter 2. Historicism in Philosophy of History ................................................................ 42

2.1 Historicism: Morphology and History of the Term ................................................................ 42

2.2 Pluralism of Meanings ................................................................................................. 49

2.3 Historicism as a Worldview .......................................................................................... 57

Conclusion: Holism, Individuality and Development in the Context of Architecture .......... 59

Chapter 3. Architectural Historicism .................................................................................. 61

3.1 The Meaning of Historicism in the History of Architecture ............................................. 62

3.2 The Eighteenth Century: Proto Historicism ................................................................... 66

3.3 The Nineteenth Century: Relativist Historicism ............................................................. 71

3.3.1 Articulating the Question: ‘In What Style Should We Build?’ ................................ 75

3.3.2 Consequences of the Question: Eclecticism and the Pluralism of Formal Experimentation ......................................................................................................................................................... 77
3.3.3 The Unique Conditions of the Present: Architectural Historicism and the Importance of Technology ................................................................. 86

3.3.4 The Unique Conditions of Society: Architectural Historicism in Service of Western Civilisation ................................................................. 89

3.4 The Twentieth Century: Determinist Eclipse of Relativist Historicism ......................... 100

Conclusion: The Three Principles of Historicist Architecture ........................................ 105

Chapter 4. Traditionalist Historicist Architecture of the Twentieth Century: New Zealand Architecture before the Second World War ......................................................... 109

4.1 The ‘Culture of Historicism’ and Queen Street Architecture in the Nineteenth Century ..... 110

Figure 2. Original Plan of Auckland. 1840. Created by Felton Mathew. ......................... 113

4.2 Setting the Stage: New Zealand Architects and Architecture before the Second World War (1900-1939) ..................................................................................... 118

4.3 Traditionalist Historicist Architecture in Twentieth-Century New Zealand ............... 125

4.3.1 Holism, Individuality and Development Reconciled: Dual Essence of Architecture. Architectural Art or Architectural Science? .................................................... 126

4.3.2 The Concept of Individuality in Historicist Architecture: The Unique Conditions of Time and Place ................................................................. 128

4.3.3 Concept of Development in Historicist Architecture ........................................ 135

Conclusion: The Four Ages of Queen Street ............................................................... 140

Chapter 5. The First Wave: Queen Street 1900-1918 ......................................................... 142

5.1 Progress and Modernity in Turn-of-the-Century Auckland: The Third Age of Queen Street 143

5.2 Plastically Expressing the Unique Conditions of the Age: Innovative Building Technologies in the Service of Progress ......................................................... 150

5.3 Communicating Dominant Societal Values through Architecture: Classical Landmarks of ‘Progressive’ Auckland ................................................................. 157

Conclusion: Holism, Individuality and Development Reconciled .................................... 173

Chapter 6. The Second Wave: Queen Street 1918-1930 ..................................................... 175

6.1 Holism, Individuality, Development, and Crisis: Pluralism of Styles in Queen Street Architecture of the 1920s ................................................................. 176
6.2 ‘Dignified Simplicity’ and the Architectural Tradition of the Western World: the Classical Mode ...........................................................................................................181

6.2.1 Architecture by Society and for Society: The Auckland Civic Square ...............183

6.2.2 The Dilworth Building ..........................................................................................189


6.4 The Modern Ornate and the Search for a New Zealand Architecture: The Gothic Mode .................................................................204

6.5 The Unique Conditions of the Present Time: Palaces of Modern Entertainment and the Art Deco Mode ...........................................................................................................212

Conclusion: ‘Efficiently-Designed, Hygienic and Aesthetic Buildings’ .........................218

Chapter 7. The Third Wave: Queen Street in the 1930s ..............................................220

7.1 The Beginning of the Decade and the End of the Traditionalist Historicist Architecture in Queen Street ........................................................................................................220

7.2 Ambiguous Years of 1935-1940: Modernising Tendencies and Traditionalist Challenges .................................................................224

7.3 Queen Street and the Expression of the Machine Age .............................................233

Conclusion .........................................................................................................................246

Chapter 8: Conclusion ........................................................................................................248

8.1 Chapter Findings ........................................................................................................248

8.2 Thesis Findings ..........................................................................................................251

8.3 Future Direction of Research .....................................................................................254

Bibliography .......................................................................................................................257
List of Images


4. A view of Queen Street, showing west side between Wellesley Street West and Victoria Street West, with the United Services Hotel, left, premises of J. Smith, drapers, Strand Arcade and Albert Hotel. Photograph, 1880s. Author: James D. Richardson. Source: Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 4-346.

5. Looking north along Queen Street, Auckland Central showing (from the left) the Union Bank of Australia, Thomas McEwin City Buffet Dining Rooms and (on the right) the Mutual Assurance Society of Victoria. Photograph, 1890s. Author: James D. Richardson. Source: Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections, 4-217.


15a. Looking north from Victoria Street intersection along the east side of Queen Street, showing the premises (from the right) John Court Limited, Partridge and Co, Security Buildings, Durham Buildings, Premier Buildings and other buildings to Shortland Street. Photograph, 1912. Author: James D. Richardson. Source: Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 4-4414. 1912.


18b. ‘The Accepted Design for Auckland’s Civic Centre.’ Newspapers illustration, 6 November 1924. Source: ‘Design of Civic Centre. Dignified Simplicity the Fundamental Idea,’ New Zealand Herald 61, no. 18859 (6 November 1924), 11. Top: Perspective drawing of the proposed Civic Centre looking toward Wellesley Street, buildings in which form the background, with Queen Street on the extreme right. The Municipal building is on the left of the view, with the Art Gallery beyond. Below: A view of
the Civic Centre from the foot of Wellesley Street East. The Art Gallery is the building on the right; the Municipal Building is distinguished by the colonnade. Beyond it are prospective buildings in Cook-Street.

18c. ‘Proposed Civic Centre Scheme, connecting link between the buildings.’ Drawing, 1923. Source: Gummer & Ford Collection, GF56, Architecture Archive, Libraries and Learning Services, University of Auckland.


19c. Dilworth Trust Building, detail of the façade from Customs Street. Photograph by Milica Madanović.


23b. AEPB Building, façade detail. Photograph by Milica Madanović.


28b. Smith & Caughey’s, Queen Street, façade detail. Photograph by Milica Mađanović.


30b. ‘New Premises Queen St Arthur Eady Estate.’ Floor plans, sections and elevation, December 1938. Source: Auckland Council Archives, 331 AKC 339 City Engineers Works Plans Aperture Cards 1782-1993, Record No. 178589.


Introduction

Seasons change and empires fall. No matter how viciously the winter bites, it inevitably surrenders to the first month of spring. However, the spring of 1917 was no ordinary spring. In March 1917, Nikolai II Alexandrovich Romanov, the Emperor of Russia, signed a document – as he did countless times before. However, this was no ordinary document. Between eleven and twelve o’clock on the night of 15 March 1917, the Russian Tsar signed his official abdication. As the ink on the paper dried, one of the largest empires in the history of human civilisation ceased to exist. The act had a ripple effect, growing into a forceful wave. Along with the hundreds of thousands of others, Nikolay Petrovich Krasnov, the last Imperial Court Architect of the Romanovs, left his home country, fleeing from the Communist Revolution on the tide of the ‘White’ emigration. Best known for his lavish Livadia Palace (1910), the former architect of the Russian high aristocracy endured the hardships of exile for several years. Eventually, Krasnov found shelter in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. There he became the architect of the King Aleksandar I Karadorđević and was given a high position in the Ministry of Construction.1

I first became familiar with Krasnov’s work while exploring the architecture of the Royal Compound in Belgrade (1924-1927) for my BA thesis. Broadening the scope of research in my MA thesis, I was struck by the elegance of Krasnov’s edifices erected between the world wars in Belgrade, the capital of the former Yugoslav Kingdom. Learned elaborations in the tradition of Western architectural history, these structures house the most important public institutions to the present day, such as the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Archives of Serbia. Personal research and the works by my former supervisor, Aleksandar Kadijević, an established Serbian architectural historian and professor at the University of Belgrade, introduced me to a whole new chapter of twentieth-century architecture – pre-Second World War historicist architecture. In addition to my academic interests in the topic, travels across various European countries brought me face to face with various twentieth century historicist buildings – Unilever House in London (1930-32), the National Marine Laboratory in Paris (1932), and the Milan War Memorial (1926), to list a few.

All of these structures were products of the twentieth century. To this day, they remain distinguished features of their respective cityscapes. Numerous traditionalist structures are still the seats of the public institutions, prosperous businesses, and high-end residences. These buildings were designed by the most esteemed architects of the period, constructed with the use of the latest technologies, and were widely appreciated by the public. The majority of these buildings remain national and civic symbols of high associative power. And yet, theirs and the stories of their designers, as well as the ideas behind historicist architecture, remain a mystery to a typical student of twentieth-century architectural history. Designed with the employment of the principles, forms and elements from architectural history, traditionalist buildings sharply contrast with Modernist architecture — the ultimate focus of all the major histories of twentieth-century architecture I myself had the opportunity to read as an undergraduate and Masters student.

Discovering the expanse of twentieth-century historicist architecture felt like stumbling upon a well-kept academic secret, hiding from the world of scholarship in plain sight. I first realised the existence of the gap in knowledge while attempting to find international references about twentieth-century traditionalist architecture to contextualize Krasnov’s work. At that time, I failed to find a single text dedicated to pre-Second World War historicist architecture. Very soon it became clear that the topic has been all but erased from canonical architectural histories. After the Second World War, Modernism triumphed. In the following decades, generations of architectural historians inherited the rhetoric of the early Modernists, directly contravening the imperative for unbiased and systematic historical research. The seasons of architectural history changed, and the memory of twentieth-century traditionalist architecture gradually fell into the oblivion.

The adjectives ‘historicist’ and ‘traditionalist’ were used alternately in the previous paragraphs — presumably, without causing any confusion or even being noticed by the reader. This is because, widely accepted by architectural historians, the term historicism is, in the broadest sense, equated with the eclectic use of elements from historical styles of architecture. The initial aim and research question of this thesis were based on the same premise. However, thorough research of the meaning of historicism helped to identify and define the difference between the two concepts. Though, indeed, closely related (twentieth-century), historicism and traditionalist architecture (of the twentieth century), are, in fact, not the same. Originally developed in the fields of philosophy and history, historicism is a wider concept. This thesis argues that a historicist outlook marked the wider creative achievements of an epoch, and that architecture of the period ranging approximately from the 1750s to the 1950s did not evade its influence. In comparison, the topic of the traditionalist historicist architecture of the twentieth century is a narrower one. It is characterised by a clear scope, exclusively focused on the pre-Second World War architectural production inspired by history and developed on the historicist principles. This thesis considers traditionalist architecture as but one of many historicist modes and argues that the two concepts have been confusingly equated in the decades after the Second World War. In sum, following
the detailed exploration of the concept of historicism in the context of the history of architecture, two main aims were crystallised. First, to explore historicism, a somewhat vague term often used by scholars. Second, to contribute to the comprehensiveness of the historical accounts about twentieth-century architecture by focusing on the pre-Second World War traditionalist historicist architecture through the example of a specific case study: Queen Street in Auckland, New Zealand.

The first step – the review of literature – towards a more thorough comprehension of the two problems confirmed that architectural historicism is an expansive topic, one that needs to be explored in greater detail. Three insufficiently robust accounts largely inform the general understanding of historicism in architectural historiography. These positions are rooted in the Modernist interpretations and have been consolidated by generations of architectural historians in the decades since the Second World War. First, in the widest sense, historicism is commonly associated with the architecture of the nineteenth century. Next, architectural scholars, such as Alan Colquhoun and Branko Mitrović, relate historicism to determinism of philosophers such as Hegel and Karl Popper (the former proposed and the latter reacted against the notion of historic patterns). Finally, the term historicism is most often used to denote architecture created with the use of historical forms and elements. The thesis argues that, widely used by scholars, architectural historicism needs to be adequately defined and appropriately incorporated into the terminological corpus of architectural history.

Also owing to the Modernist rhetoric – and despite constituting the mainstream architectural production until the Second World War – traditionalist historicist architecture was almost completely excluded from architectural histories about the twentieth century, both internationally and in New Zealand. Scholarly references on the topic are so scarce that only one monograph dedicated specifically to the traditionalist architecture of the period has been found to date – *Architettura Tradizionalista* by the Italian scholars Giorgio Pigafetta, Ilaria Abbondandolo, and Marco Trisciuoglio. New Zealand’s twentieth-century traditionalist architecture has not been discussed individually in architectural historiography so far. Similarly, though it is possible to find scattered information about the topic, the architectural transformations of Queen Street in Auckland have not been previously studied *per se*. Queen Street, the main commercial throughway of New Zealand’s biggest city, attracted some of the largest public and private investments in the country. Designed by renowned architects and celebrated by both professionals and the lay public, the architectural transformation of Queen Street is considered as a representative sample of commercial and public building, showcasing dominant architectural tendencies in New Zealand.

The research of Queen Street architectural transformations was primarily archival. It started on site, documenting the existing state. The individual structures were first classified by street number. Extant historic buildings served as a point of reference for the next step of research – the assemblage of

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a historical Queen Street spreadsheet. Exploring the historical photographs of Queen Street, mostly from the extensive Auckland City Libraries Sir George Grey Special Collections, and, to an extent, the Alexander Turnbull Library historical photographs collections, each individual structure erected in the period 1900-1939 was identified and added to the spreadsheet. Photographs from the nineteenth century were approached less systematically, to acquire a general sense of the period Queen Street architectural scenery. The Papers Past engine – the online National Library of New Zealand database with millions of pages of digitised content from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, New Zealand and Pacific sources – was then used to collect texts about Queen Street in general, and about the individual structures, from the period press and periodicals. Papers Past has only been available to scholars since the early years of the current century, meaning most New Zealand histories have been written without its full benefit, and the detail it provides has not yet been fully capitalised on. Finally, Auckland City Council Archives’ microfilm collection was used for viewing project material for the key Queen Street buildings. Though the amount of archival material about the individual structures varies, the available technical documentation held by the Auckland Council Archives and, to an extent, the University of Auckland’s Architecture Archive was valuable for research the key Queen Street buildings.

This thesis relies heavily on two groups of period texts – New Zealand architectural periodicals and the daily press. Published in the two major New Zealand architectural periodicals, Progress and the Journal of the Proceedings of the NZIA, period articles traced the dominant ideas about architecture, conveying the issues deemed most significant in professional circles. The thesis attempts to identify key architectural topics of the period without the interpretative medium of secondary sources for two main reasons. First, to avoid the lens of the Modernists and the interpretations in the tradition of Modernism. Second, the literature review showed that historiography mostly focuses on the questions of style and ornament in traditionalist architecture. In contrast to the widespread belief that traditionalist architecture invested primarily in compositional values of artistically treated designs, articles about new construction materials (reinforced concrete and steel framing), earthquake and fire-proof building, principles of ventilation, ‘hygienic’ planning, ventilation, flat roofs, and lighting dominated texts about architecture published in New Zealand before the Second World War.

Daily newspapers, such as the Auckland Star and the New Zealand Herald, published numerous articles about architecture throughout the period, keeping the wider public well-informed. The amount of writing eloquently communicates the breadth of the period’s interest in architecture. The newspapers reported extensively about various topics – from the latest construction technologies to local projects, featuring articles by local authors as well as reprints of British, American, and Australian articles. Period texts also helped to narrow down the selection of the individual Queen Street buildings. Interestingly, with few exceptions such as the Security Buildings, the structures that have attracted recent scholarly attention were the same ones that had been the focus of the period’s professional texts and popular media.
Reliance on the period press secured insight into the meanings of key Queen Street buildings for the profession and the media-reading public. The main limitation of this approach is its inability to capture the voices and opinions excluded from the mainstream socio-cultural practices of the period. However, this thesis primarily aims to expand and challenge the common historiographical framing of historicist and traditionalist architecture as retrograde design modes, mostly concerned with aesthetics and historical styles. It does not endeavour to explore the socio-political and cultural implications of the said architecture. Thus, the period texts were treated as a major source for exploring the consequences of a new understanding of historical time for architectural theory and design practice. The thesis shows how, originating from the discourse of the philosophy of history, statements about the need for architecture to express the age operated as an impetus to develop functional designs responsive to modern needs. Moreover, the thesis will illustrate that the professional and popular press alike utilized the rhetorical resources of language to consolidate the status of architecture as an indication of a society’s economic, political and cultural status.

It is important to note that, though it inevitably mentions socio-cultural constructs or membership, this thesis does not thoroughly explore them. This, of course, is not to say that the quest for a unique architectural expression in the given space and time was not, among other things, driven by then-existing national expansion and racial subjugation. However, at this stage, the multifaceted concept of architectural historicism is explored through the prism of the philosophy of history – not political philosophy or the social sciences. The aim is to show that the connection between the creative efforts and the fixation on the present existed in many societies for a period of almost two centuries, irrespective of their national or racial political landscape. The thesis, therefore, argues that it is appropriate to speak of historicism in architectural histories of environments as diverse as the British and Austro-Hungarian empires, nation-building Italy and Germany of the nineteenth century, post-revolutionist Communist Russia, or post-colonial New Zealand.

The thesis comprises seven chapters. Chapter 1 provides a historiographical overview and literature review. It surveys the key texts that served as the basis for further pursuit of the two main themes of this thesis i.e. the explorations of architectural historicism and the more directed focus on pre-Second World War traditionalist historicist architecture. The diverse body of literature from several disciplines was classified in three sections. The chapter opens with a concise review of the most relevant titles from the disciplines of philosophy and history. The second section focuses on the two themes from the history of architecture: (1) historicism; and (2) traditionalist twentieth century architecture within architectural historiography. Finally, the third part of the literature review focuses on the twentieth-century traditionalist architecture in New Zealand, discussing the information on architectural transformations of Queen Street in Auckland. The literature review helped identify three early twentieth-century texts about architectural ornament, which were the focus of a conference paper,
presented at *The 2nd SAHANZ PhD Conference*, hosted by the University of Adelaide in 2017.\(^3\) The paper explores writings by Adolf Loos (1908), Claude Bragdon (1915), and Talbot Hamlin (1916), published in a span of a mere six years in the first two decades of the twentieth century.\(^4\) Written from different perspectives, the three criticisms illustrate pluralism of the early twentieth century positions, as well as the attention placed on ornament in the period’s architectural theories. The paper partially informs a concise discussion of architectural ornament presented in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2 is theoretical. It is rooted in the premise that appropriate terminology needs to be developed to effectively examine any phenomenon. The chapter explores the meaning of historicism in the context of the disciplines of philosophy and history. It aims to clarify the meaning of the term and support the argument that it is indeed appropriate for architecture considered within this thesis. The chapter offers a concise morphological consideration of the term in the English language, explores the history of the term, and presents classifications of the various historicist positions. Building upon the principles condensed from the historicist positions in the philosophy of history, Chapter 3 offers a definition of the concept in the context of architecture. The chapter makes a clear distinction between historicism in architecture and the traditionalist historicist architecture of the twentieth century, explaining the causes behind the confusion of the two. The chapter opens with a discussion of the term *historicism* in architectural historiography, followed by a more detailed exploration of the concept in the architecture of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.

Chapter 4 is contextual. Exploring the arguments and core principles of the traditionalist pre-Second World War architecture rooted in the historicist intellectual tradition, Chapter 4 moves the discussion to the context of New Zealand. The chapter starts with a brief consideration of Queen Street architectural shaping in the nineteenth century. From there, to set the stage for the study of the twentieth-century Queen Street transformations, the chapter introduces prominent New Zealand architects, sources of influence and dominant architectural ideas. It continues with the discussion of the core historicist principles in pre-Second World War architectural history of New Zealand. Discussing period texts by local architects, the chapter deepens the knowledge of traditionalist design philosophy and methodology and, ultimately, aims to contribute to the comprehensiveness of histories about twentieth-century architecture. Chapter 4 benefits from the understanding of the Beaux-Arts tradition I have acquired while researching its influences on institutionalised architectural education in the United States.

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and New Zealand, for the purposes of a symposium paper, which was later developed and published as a journal article.\(^5\)

Focusing on the key Queen Street structures, Chapters 5, 6, and 7 document and analyse Queen Street’s twentieth-century traditionalist historicist architecture. The three chapters explore three waves of the twentieth century architectural transformation of Queen Street, taking place in the first four decades of the twentieth century. Chapter 5 focuses on the period 1900-1918. Architecture of the first wave was characterised by explicit concern with innovative building technologies, most notably reinforced concrete. Architectural language prevalently developed under classical formal influences and the Edwardian Baroque. The structure of Chapter 5 and the premise about the period’s fascination with construction technologies were derived from the conference paper I presented at the 35th SAHANZ conference, exploring the use of reinforced concrete in three important civic structures erected along the Queen Street axis 1909-1912 – the Town Hall, the Chief Post Office, and the Ferry Building.\(^6\)

The aftermath of the First World War impeded construction for a few years. Though building in Queen Street never came to a complete halt, the projects were irregular and, mostly, minor. Characterised by the exuberant pluralism of architectural languages, the second wave of Queen Street construction is explored in Chapter 6, focused on the architecture of the 1920s. Chapter 7 then discusses the 1930s, a period dominated by early Modernist and Art Deco projects, marking the end of the traditionalist historicist architectural production in Queen Street. Chapter 8 presents and reflects upon the thesis conclusions, closing with a discussion of possible future directions of research. Most of the individual topics I intend to pursue in the coming years stem directly from this thesis. However, my interests in exploring the contributions of the twentieth century traditionalist theories to the emergence of critical regionalism,\(^7\) owe much to the conference paper I co-authored with Renata Jadrešin-Milić, which was presented at the EAHN-SAHA Conference in 2019.\(^8\)

The contribution to knowledge made by this thesis can be classified into three categories. First, the thesis offers a broadened interpretation of the concept of historicism. Identifying a unifying thread that connects two centuries of Western architectural tradition, the thesis shows that the period c. 1750-1950 might be considered as the epoch of the architecture of historicism. Next, analysing the principles

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of the twentieth-century traditionalist architecture of historicism, and the period reception of the selected key structures, this thesis contributes to the comprehensiveness of architectural historiography of the twentieth-century. The thesis is a response to the widely established perception of traditionalist architecture as backward, mostly focused on the aesthetic qualities of architectural art and historical styles. The aspects of planning functionality, building technologies, and wider public reaction are disregarded or dismissed entirely in the architectural histories written in the aftermath of the Second World War.

And yet, the traditionalist architects were dedicated in responding to the unique conditions of the specific context in which they worked, programmatic requirements, and innovative building technologies. The thesis shows that twentieth century traditionalist architects criticised subjugation of design functionality to aesthetics. Furthermore, certain design principles advanced by the traditionalists and shunned by the Modernists, such as the importance of the unique conditions of the context, remain relevant in architectural practice to date. Finally, the thesis contributes to the comprehensiveness of New Zealand architectural historiography. The thesis explores in detail the dominant architectural ideas of the pre-Second World War period, as formulated in the texts by the country’s established architects, and plastically expressed in the most significant of Auckland’s Queen Street buildings.
Chapter 1. Historiographical Overview

It was noted in the Introduction that this thesis was motivated by the ambition to distinguish more thoroughly and better understand two problems from the history of architecture – architectural historicism and pre-Second World War traditionalist historicist architecture. This chapter reviews the key texts that serve as the basis for the further pursuit of these two themes, informing the theoretical framework developed in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. To create a clear overview of the diverse body of literature from several disciplines, texts are classified in three sections. The chapter opens with a concise overview of the most relevant titles from the disciplines of philosophy and history. The second section focuses on the two topics from history of architecture. It discusses the works on: (1) historicism; and (2) traditionalist twentieth-century architecture within architectural historiography. Finally, the third part of the literature review focuses on the traditionalist architecture of the twentieth-century in New Zealand. New Zealand architectural historiography was primarily examined in search of interpretations and information relevant for the thesis’ specific case study – architectural transformations of Queen Street in Auckland.

1.1 Philosophy, History, and the Multiple Meanings of Historicism

Bearing in mind the thesis’ primary focus on architectural history, this section concentrates on a select sample of the numerous theories and interpretations of historicism developed by historians and philosophers. Historicism was never a systematically formulated philosophy, resulting in an extensive historiographic corpus discussing the history and the meaning of the term. One of the earliest attempts at the classification of various historicist positions, published in 1954, was a paper by Dwight Lee and Robert Beck, which serves as a suitable introduction to the topic. Summarising and analysing the most influential approaches to historicism, as well as, finally, suggesting two concise definitions – discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2 – the paper contributes to the clarification of the term’s meaning. Similarly, the classifications and discussions of the concept proposed by Andrew Reynolds and Robert D’Amico helped navigate across the restless sea of meanings and interpretations of historicism. Similarly, Georg Iggers’ 1983 monograph The German Conception of History and his paper on historicism from the following decade are both extremely informative. The author depicts the genesis and various interpretations of the development of the historical profession and the phenomenon of historicism from the eighteenth century to contemporary discussions, providing valuable analysis and

commentary on a bibliography. Frank Ankersmit’s effort to create a synthesis of different positions and to demonstrate the value of historicism for contemporary theoretical debate represents another valuable introductory reference. Of particular value for the readers are the author’s concise analysis of the transition from Enlightenment to historical writing in the historicist tradition, his identification of the most influential theorists and broader considerations of the nature of historicism. Following the writings of Wilhelm Dilthey, Ernst Troeltsch and Friedrich Meinecke, Calvin Rand contends two closely related meanings of historicism in an attempt to contribute to a more intelligible and precise use of the word. He discerns that, based on the writings by Dilthey, Troeltsch, and Meinecke, historicism can be defined twofold: as a methodology in service of historians for apprehending past events, and as Weltanschauung, a comprehensive view of man and his world. Similarly, attempting to define the elusive concept of historicism, Otto Oexle differentiated Historicism I from Historicism II, i.e. historicism as a methodology of historical study and as a worldview. Finally, according to Frederick Beiser, the author of the latest monographic study about The German Historicist Tradition (2011) published in the English language, the term historicism can be perceived in two ways: ‘one is methodological, where ‘historicism’ means an investigation into the possibility of history as a science; the other is metaphysical, where ‘historicism’ means the attempt to historicize everything in the human world, i.e., to see it as product of a specific time and place and therefore subject to historical change.’

Works of scholars who have challenged the exclusive focus on historicism as a phenomenon relevant solely to history and philosophy are of particular relevance for this thesis. Attempting to trace the debates over historicism and relativism within the diverse domain of humanities, these authors argue that historicism represents a distinctive type of historical consciousness, which influenced various aspects of Western civilisation and imprinted itself on the everyday life of its citizens. Discussing the

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12 Germans view that historicism is the result of a “historicization of the ahistoricist conception of social and political reality,” which stemmed from eighteenth-century natural law philosophy, and a concept originally developed by Anglo-Saxon theorists that historicism resulted from a de-rhetorization of Enlightenment historical writing: Frank Ankersmit, “Historicism: An Attempt at Synthesis,” History and Theory 34, no. 3 (Oct., 1995): 143.
relationship between the nature of works of art, society and history while considering the questions of its authenticity, value and temporality, Karel Kosik’s paper “Historism and Historicism” calls for more attention. Nonetheless, it must be noted that, in spite of the title and concise commentary on the differences between the concepts of historicism and historism, the author does not discuss these questions thoroughly on this occasion (nor does he provide a theoretical and bibliographical background for his conclusions, thus reducing the persuasiveness of his argument). Similarly, Towes’ monograph *Becoming Historical* offers valuable insights into the wider implications of the historicist outlook. These texts inform Chapter 2, focused on historicism in the philosophy of history, and thus provide a theoretical grounding for the thesis as a whole.

1.2 Architectural Historicism and the Traditionalist Historicist Architecture of the Twentieth Century

To understand and distinguish between the concepts of architectural historicism and traditionalist historicist architecture of the twentieth century, texts by two groups of authors proved to be useful – the architects and architectural historians actively writing before the Second World War and the scholars researching this period during the second half of the twentieth and the early twentieth-first centuries. Pre-Second World War texts offered insight into the ideas and the main arguments voiced by the proponents of the two dominant modes of the final chapter of the historicist epoch – the Modernist and the traditionalist. Analysis of the more recent scholarship helps identify the causes behind and the nature of the general neglect of, negative connotations, and common confusion between the two concepts in architectural historiography.

1.2.1 The Debate: Moderns versus the Ancients before the Second World War

*(1) The Modernists*

Continuing the nineteenth-century struggles, rapid socio-economic and cultural changes of the first decades of the twentieth century were reflected in diverse architectural production. While the majority of architects were holding on to the security and legitimacy offered by historical architectural forms, a vigorous new school of thought emerged, breaking with tradition and demanding change. In


Karel Kosik, “Historism and Historicism,” 65-75.
time, the imperative to go forward would prevail, and some interpreters from the Modernist wing would dismiss the need for lessons of history completely. These early historians of Modern architecture tended to isolate their subject from other simultaneous architectural phenomena in order to stress its uniqueness and demonstrate that theirs was the only right path to follow. Eager to accentuate the innovative character of Modern architecture, they also tended to play down the influence of preceding periods.

Discussion of the ideas and works by the Modernists in the context of the historicist tradition represents a topic suitable for a thesis unto itself. However, since this thesis is ultimately focused on the traditionalist architecture of the period, only a few of the Modernist texts are examined concisely. This is done by focusing on three period architects: Adolf Loos, as the representative of the older generation of radical European innovators; Le Corbusier, one of the most influential figures of Modernism; and Frank Lloyd Wright, a protagonist from the New World.

Adolf Loos – the Austrian architect whose famous ideas significantly contributed to the shaping of Modernist principles – heavily criticised traditionalist architecture of the period, labelling architects of the second half of the nineteenth century as ‘false prophets, men without culture,’ while scrutinising the contemporary need for ornamentation. Loos openly attacked the splendour of the Ringstrasse’s eclectic facades, demanding a change. Nonetheless, as was the case with Le Corbusier, Loos did not shun the lessons of history altogether, proclaiming the ‘all-transcending greatness of classical antiquity.’ Furthermore, he stressed the significance of another element, mostly rejected by later Modernists – tradition. In his own words: ‘Tradition is no more the enemy of development than the mother is an enemy of the child. Tradition is a reservoir of strength from countless generations, and the firm foundation for a healthy future.’

One of the most influential and prolific Modernist architects of the period, Charles-Édouard Jeanneret – Le Corbusier – was a vocal opponent of the French traditionalist architecture. One need not look further than his famous title Vers une architecture to realize the contempt Le Corbusier felt for the ‘conservative’ architecture of the period. However, while condemning the traditionalist architecture, Le Corbusier championed the lessons of the past, mainly those of Classical Greece, maintaining that architecture transcends the utilitarian and praising the ‘standard’ achieved at the design of Parthenon. Stressing the need for a return to the principles of ancient Greece – the aesthetic subtlety neglected in

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20. Le Corbusier, Towards an Architecture (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, c. 2007).
25. Loos, On Architecture, 84.
27. Le Corbusier, Towards an Architecture.
over-concentration on detail – he claimed that architects should understand the spirit of Greek work rather than imitate its forms, as the classicist revivalists did.

The ideas and visionary oeuvre of another architect spread from across the Atlantic, heavily influencing the development of Modern architecture. One of the main opponents of traditionalist architecture in the United States, Frank Lloyd Wright, argued that Gothic, ‘the last original impulse’ in the history of architecture, was succeeded by a gradual dimming of creative impulses caused by the practice of imitation, ‘until architecture is but a little, poor knowledge of archaeology, and the average of art is reduced to the gasping poverty of imitative realism.’ Talking about period eclecticism, Wright concluded that ‘architecture is a parasite, content with an imitation of an imitation.’

Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Nikolaus Pevsner and Sigfried Giedion were amongst the most vocal early architectural historians of the Modern Movement. Three of their iconic texts are considered here – first published, respectively, in 1932, 1936 and 1941. In The International Style, Hitchcock and Philip Johnson stressed that Modernist architecture synthesised classical qualities of proportion with Gothic ideas concerning the structure, and did not pay much attention to the period traditionalist practice. Labelling the use of various historical styles as a mere ‘decorative garment to architecture,’ they criticised the nineteenth-century eclecticism and concluded that ‘today the strict issue of reviving the styles of the distant past is no longer one of serious consequence for the confused and contradictory experiments of the beginning of the 20th [century], have been succeeded by a directed evolution.

Similarly, completely immersed in explaining the moral and social basis of the new architecture, Pevsner did not write a single comment about the traditionally inclined designers in his Pioneers of Modern Architecture. In his seminal book Space, Time and Architecture, Sigfried Giedion considered modernising initiatives of nineteenth-century architecture, analysing different questions, such as the polarisation between the École des Beaux-Arts and École Polytechnique, work of Henri Labrouste, new building types, etc. He condemned the application of various historical styles within the design process, claiming that ‘eclecticism smothered all creative energy.’ However, in his exploration of the twentieth century, Giedion completely disregarded traditionalist architecture.

Actions of revolutionary Modernist architects echoed across the globe, and soon the like-minded thinkers started writing about their innovative ideas, attempting to explain and make them more

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28 Wright and Pfeiffer, The Essential Frank Lloyd Wright, 284.
29 Wright and Pfeiffer, The Essential Frank Lloyd Wright, 25.
30 Wright and Pfeiffer, The Essential Frank Lloyd Wright, 289.
35 Giedion, Space, Time and Architecture, 292.
appealing to the unaccustomed eye of the broader public. In an effort to unlock the conundrum that the newly proposed solutions were for most, F. R. S. Yorke and Colin Penn argued that modern architecture is restful rather than jazzy; that it does not result from a clean break with tradition, but from that continuous development which has produced the great styles of the past; that its forms are strange only because they have behind them the logic of new planning and new structural methods; that it is, in sum, eminently reasonable… to remove the suspicion with which a large part of the lay public still regards it.\textsuperscript{36}

Though the authors valued historical architecture, they described eclectic practices of the nineteenth century as the product of ‘the abysmal depths to which taste had fallen.’\textsuperscript{37} Sharply criticising the period’s traditionalist architecture, they accused its creators of a lack of mental flexibility, concluding that ‘there can be no life in a building that attempts nothing more than to reproduce, with the aid of steel, effects that the Romans achieved with stone… To build in accordance with tradition is not to imitate in one period the obsolete work of a former time. It is to do as the architects of those periods did: to build for contemporary needs, getting the best out of the materials at hand.’\textsuperscript{38} Similarly, in his \textit{Introduction to Modern Architecture}, first published in 1940, J. M. Richards explained that modern architecture refers to ‘the work of those people… who understand that architecture is a social art related to the life of people it serves, not an academic exercise in ornament.’\textsuperscript{39} He did not allocate much space to the criticism of period traditionalist architecture, for ‘presumably all thinking people now agree that it is absurd to put up houses that look like miniature castles, petrol stations that look like medieval barns… No arguments are needed against dressing up our buildings in fancy costumes borrowed from the past.’\textsuperscript{40}

Despite the arguments for change in architecture, especially after the chaos and destruction caused by the First World War, the demands for order and rationalist artistic expression, based on the characteristics of the classical language, intensified among the innovators. Adopting geometric forms perceived as a formulation of an ideal and rational conception of realism, they promoted idealistic concepts and aspired to create a systematic architectural language of universal rules and abstraction. Not only were they close to the eighteenth-century neoclassical scholars in claiming that only in architecture, the most abstract of visual arts, could the concept of rational, idealistic and abstract forms be fully expressed, but some of them openly praised the importance of learning from various historical periods, such as Classical Antiquity, the Middle Ages or the Renaissance. It can be concluded that they were unified not in the rejection of the architectural past \textit{per se}, but in the criticism of the eclectic ‘copying’ of the historical styles.

\textsuperscript{36} F. R. S. Yorke and Colin Penn, \textit{A Key to Modern Architecture} (London; Glasgow: Blackie and Son Ltd., 1939), 2.
\textsuperscript{37} Yorke and Penn, \textit{A Key to Modern Architecture}, 31.
\textsuperscript{38} Yorke and Penn, \textit{A Key to Modern Architecture}, 108.
\textsuperscript{39} James Maude Richards, \textit{An Introduction to Modern Architecture} (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1940), 9.
\textsuperscript{40} Richards, \textit{An Introduction to Modern Architecture}, 14.
(2) The Traditionalists

Most scholars writing about twentieth-century architecture ensured the popularity of a relatively small – at least until the Second World War – group of radical individuals. However, any investigation of a past phenomenon will result in one-sidedness if it fails to consult various approaches. Therefore, when attempting to create a comprehensive twentieth-century history of architecture, it is necessary to consider the voices, prevalent at the time, of the traditionally oriented architects. Well educated, often occupying high establishment positions, these designers actively contributed to the shaping of the built environment worldwide. Their work – both practical and theoretical – simultaneously reflected and influenced the complex socio-political and diverse cultural climate of the first half of the twentieth century. General neglect of the topic in architectural historiography has resulted in the relative anonymity of most of the twentieth-century traditionalist architects. Bearing in mind the main sources of influence on New Zealand architecture, this section focuses on the titles by the British and American traditionalists.

The very model of an Edwardian builder and a prolific star architect for the establishment, Sir Reginald Blomfield might be considered as one of the protagonists of this study. Two of his numerous texts are of particular relevance for the research of twentieth-century traditionalist architecture – The Mistress Art (1908) and Modernismus (1934). The former is a practical handbook, and the latter a commentary on the period’s architecture. Both titles illustrate the main points and continuity of the traditionalist outlook within twentieth-century architectural practice. Similarly, Geoffrey Scott’s Architecture of Humanism (1914) reflects the early twentieth-century pluralism of ideas and practices. A connoisseur of the Renaissance, Scott endeavoured to formulate the chief principles of classical design in architecture, though without the ambitions to devise a practical recipe for overcoming contemporary issues. Architecture of Humanism revolves around exposing four major ‘fallacies’ – Romantic, Mechanical, Ethical and Biological – which Scott found to have maligned the architecture of his time.

The unreliability of autobiographies is well-known to any historian. Not only may the author purposely tamper with the truth, but, even when the intent is to be sincere, memory itself can act as an untrustworthy ally. However, if handled with caution, autobiographies may turn out to be valuable tool for the better understanding of past events. Sir Herbert Baker, another establishment architect par excellence of prolific work, made important contributions to the architecture of the British Empire. His autobiography depicts prevalent period architectural attitudes and helps decipher the mind of a

traditionalist architect who firmly believed in the importance of symbols and association for the communicative potentials of architecture.44

The writings of a prominent individual of diverse professional activity – including design, teaching, and publishing – the reputable Roscoe Professor of Architecture and Director of the Liverpool School of Architecture, Sir Charles Reilly, are another valuable source.45 Criticising contemporary systems of patronage and the relative anonymity of architects in England, Reilly helped further the promotion and broader recognition of selected colleagues. First published in 1931, his book *Representative British Architects of the Present Day* comprises concise biographies and the most significant works of twelve period architects that Reilly – and probably most of the interwar British architectural professionals – considered to be amongst the most prominent.46 Some of them, such as Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker, are well known to date. Others, however, including Arthur J. Davis and Walter Tapper, though established at the time, have yet to receive more scholarly attention.

Likewise, published during the late 1920s in the United States, two surveys of contemporary American architecture are of significance for this research. A result of elaboration and revision of three lectures on modern American architecture, given by the author for the Henry La Barre Jayne Foundation in Philadelphia, George Edgell’s *The American Architecture of To-Day* is a valuable viewpoint.47 The author explicitly stressed that his book was addressed to a broader audience. At that point the Dean of the Faculty of Architecture at Harvard University, Edgell could be perceived as an influential representative of mainstream tendencies, one who would be in a position to influence contemporary architectural practice. Prevalently discussing traditionalist buildings, he stressed that they should all be considered modern as long as they were built ‘today’ in a manner amenable to the ‘needs and functions of today.’48 A general pictorial history of U.S. architecture, Talbot Hamlin’s *The American Spirit of Architecture* is a similar contemporaneous example of traditionalist attitudes.49 *The Enjoyment of Architecture*, Hamlin’s book of earlier date, represents another source relevant for the research of traditionalist architectural historicism of the twentieth century.50 It discusses various aspects of architecture perceived primarily as an art crucial for the overall betterment of the society.

Telling his *Story of Architecture* in America in 1927, Thomas Tallmadge personifies the general architectural turmoil before the Second World War.51 A practicing architect of wide interests who designed a number of buildings in the Prairie style, Tallmadge was struck by the rapid changes and dichotomies of the modern world, trying to mediate between old and new, and the conflicted poles of

traditionalism and Modernism. Though he values Sullivan’s and Wright’s contributions highly, Tallmadge writes about them in a chapter titled “Louis Sullivan and the Lost Cause”, concluding that they failed to ‘rise beyond a merely local movement or to exist beyond the generation.’ He praises Saarinen’s design for the Chicago tribune, but, at the same time, stresses the significance of numerous ‘eclectic’ buildings. Finally, he stresses that ‘the World War… ended an epoch… Before us are spread the mysterious and fearfully enchanting vistas of a new era, a new era which in its fruition will stand forth resplendent in the shining garment of a new architecture,’ while maintaining that architecture, the ever present agent of human everyday experience, is, in fact, a language, and in order to create it, architects should use intelligible forms.

Handbooks aimed at those who are about to design and build are valuable reflectors of ideas about architectural practice. Revealing attitudes common at the time, Charles Matlack Price wrote his The Practical Book of Architecture of 1916 with two ‘distinctly practical objects.’ The first part of the book is addressed to a general reader, while the second one is dedicated to those in active practice. As the author himself stressed, architecture should not be regarded as a ‘technical’ subject, and the volume is primarily intended to secure the position of architecture as an art. A true historicist of the early twentieth century, Matlack Price stresses that ‘a masterpiece of architecture is a result of evolution’ and condemns concurrent efforts to establish a new architecture disregarding the past, solely on the basis of a desire for novelty.

The traditionalists’ texts resonate with the principles of historicism, which will be explored in greater detail in Chapters 3 and 4. They stressed the imperative to build for the needs of their period and to create architecture of rich communicative potential that would serve as a tool for the betterment of society. Above all, they assert that, inextricable from a society actively drawing from specific traditions, architectural forms must develop from the past – they cannot be invented.

1.2.2 Knowing the Difference: Traditionalism, Revivalism, Academism, Eclecticism… Historicism?

The Second World War marked an end of an era. War destruction and economic crisis dictated the need for cost-effective architecture and a definite parting with the intricacy of historical forms. In the years following the war, writers on architecture helped with the systematic establishment of Modernist ideas, sharply criticising pre-war traditionalist practices. They used the terms ‘historicist’ and ‘traditionalist’ intermittently, obscuring the meanings and blurring the line between the two

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concepts. Abundant in disparaging remarks, these texts perpetuated the definition of historicism as the slavish re-use of forms from the architectural past.

Nikolaus Pevsner employed the term historicism in a condemnatory sense, to refer to architects influenced by past styles. Pevsner used the term pejoratively, to denote the architecture of the nineteenth century – but not of the eighteenth – in the penultimate chapter of *An Outline of European Architecture* titled “The Romantic Movement, Historicism, and the Beginning of the Modern Movement, 1760-1914”. In 1961, Pevsner even warned against the resurgence of ‘historicism’ in Modernist architecture. Presenting at the symposium *Historismus und bildende Kunst*, held in Munich in 1963, Pevsner repeated his definition of historicism as an attitude that imposes the contemplation and use of history as more essential than the discovery and development of the new systems, the ‘new forms of our own time.’ On this occasion, Pevsner wrote about five types of historicism: conformist, associative-evocative, aesthetic, archaeological, and romantic. The five entail different approaches to and uses of architectural history as a dominant design paradigm.

In his exemplar study of the architecture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Henry-Russell Hitchcock was the first to dedicate a complete chapter to ‘architecture called traditional in the twentieth century.’ Hitchcock claimed that ‘traditional architecture includes the majority of buildings designed before 1930 in most countries of the Western World and a considerable, if rapidly decreasing, proportion of those erected in succeeding decades.’ He described historicism as a ‘clumsy’, yet relatively accurate term matched by no other viable adjective. According to Hitchcock, historicism, ‘quite simply… means the re-use of forms borrowed from the architectural styles of the past, usually in more or less new combinations.”

**Writing About Twentieth-Century Traditionalist Historicist Architecture**

Though mostly focused on Modernism when discussing twentieth-century architecture, researchers started to include commentary on pre-Second World War traditionalist architecture since the 1960s. In the first part of the monograph *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, Reyner Banham introduced a revolutionary reading of Modernist architecture. He considered specific predisposing causes that helped the development of Modern architecture, but which had originated from

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the opposing academic tradition. Accentuating the importance of three loosely grouped sets of ideas – all of them formulated during the nineteenth century – Banham particularly discussed the influence of two Beaux-Arts titles – Julien Gaudet’s *Éléments* and Choisy’s rationalist *Histoire*. However, though he highlighted the connections between the Modernist and traditionalist ideas on several occasions, Banham did not explore traditionalist architecture of the twentieth-century in greater detail.

Since the late 1970s, the growing influence of postmodernism encouraged less critical, yet still rare, interpretations of twentieth-century traditionalist architecture. Discussing the nineteenth-century architecture of the US and occasionally mentioning traditionalist buildings, Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co otherwise largely omitted consideration of the traditionalist mainstream production in their interpretation of twentieth-century architecture. Kenneth Frampton is one of the historians who followed in Hitchcock’s footsteps, dedicating an entire chapter to the traditionalist architecture in his well-known study of Modern architecture, first published in 1980. Accepting Hitchcock’s term ‘New Tradition’ he primarily discussed ‘a consciously “modernised” historicist style’ in the context of ideology and its utilisation by the establishment. Though this chapter was a crucial step towards the scholarly acknowledgment and broader considerations of the widely-neglected phenomenon, it still represented a narrow and relatively one-sided approach to the subject matter. William Curtis’ *Modern Architecture since 1900* (1982) is a more informative book, offering a less rigid reading of the subject matter. Attempting to comprehensively depict the turbulence of the first half of the twentieth century, Curtis acknowledged that ‘the early historians and propagandists of modern architecture tended to portray it as the single true style of the times and to relegate deviants to a historical dustbin.’ He stressed that, though justified as a means of a minority trying to establish itself, this approach resulted in an extremely unbalanced historical picture and lopsided evaluations of architectural quality. However, Curtis’ efforts to analyse this pluralist background were, ultimately, in the service of a better understanding of Modern architecture – he did not try to further clarify the position of the traditionalist architecture of the period. Alan Colquhoun’s *Modern Architecture* follows a similar example. As he informed the reader in the introduction, his study was primarily concerned with ‘modern architecture’ as ‘an architecture conscious of its own modernity and striving for change.’ Consequently, Colquhoun did not dwell on the traditionalist architecture of the time. However, he did use the term ‘eclecticism’ occasionally, and in a negative context – for instance, when referring to ‘an academic tradition that had

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degenerated into eclecticism, imprisoned in a history that had come to an end and whose forms could only be endlessly recycled.”

However rare these publications might be – when compared to the bulk of architectural historiography – a number of scholars have contributed to the study of traditionalist architecture, choosing various terms to address the phenomenon in question. For instance, in his extensive monograph on European architecture of the twentieth century, Arnold Whittick employed the terms ‘revivalism,’ ‘eclecticism’ or ‘tradition.’ Largely focused on the main architectural currents within of the first half of the twentieth century and taking into consideration both ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ production, the book represents an informative reference for this research. Likewise, the monograph by Aleksandar Kadijević is a valuable tool for researching the traditionalist architecture of the twentieth century. Deciding on the term ‘academism’ as the most appropriate one for traditionally inclined architecture of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, Kadijević provides a comprehensive basis for further study of the topic. However, though the nineteenth century is thoroughly covered, the discussion of the twentieth century leaves space for further interpretations.

Having in mind the specific focus of this thesis on New Zealand architecture, titles on the various uses of the past within British architectural practice of the twentieth century are especially relevant. In their surveys of nineteenth and early twentieth century British architecture, Robert Macleod and Joseph Mordaunt Crook depicted the complex dynamics of the diverse architectural scene in the United Kingdom of the period. Both authors explore the wide range of architectural ideas and the way in which generations of architects and architectural theorists have searched for the answer to the enigma of style. Both monographs examine the traditionalist twentieth-century practices of Edwardian architecture. They discuss protagonists and the most significant architectural pieces, offering valuable insights without the overt biases of the protagonists of Modernism.

Presuming that the theoretical and practical oeuvre of the ‘traditionalists’ – the twentieth-century followers of their predecessors’ legacy – represents valuable heritage, Giorgio Pigafetta and Ilaria Abbondandolo endeavoured to illuminate this episode of architectural history, ignored by most of the scholars until then. Their monograph is divided into two parts: the first one, an analysis of traditionalist theories and their relations to the contemporary corpus of Modernist ideas; the second one focused on individual objects in three national contexts: English, French and Italian. Published three

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72 Colquhoun, Modern Architecture, 10.
74 Александар Кадијевић, Естетика архитектуре академизма (XIX-XX век) (Београд: Грађевинска књига, 2005) (Aleksandar Kadijević, Aesthetics of Architectural Academism (19th and 20th Centuries) (Belgrade: GK, 2005)).
years later, the second edition brought more thorough considerations of the topic, a wider approach and additional information.\textsuperscript{77} Being the only known references dedicated exclusively to this topic, both books were an informative starting point for researching the twentieth-century traditionalist architecture of historicism, if more concise and limited in scope than is ideal.

\textit{Writing about Architectural Historicism}

When compared to the titles on the traditionalist historicist architecture of the twentieth century, the number of texts not disparaging of architectural historicism is even less, and, generally, the product of the postmodern era. The term historicism was first introduced in writing about architectural history by the German art historian Herman Beenken in 1938.\textsuperscript{78} Benkeen did not ascribe any connotation to the term, employing it neutrally, as a means of categorising German nineteenth-century architecture. Still under the influence of the interpretations by the early Modernist proponents, architectural historiography largely defines architectural historicism as the eclectic use of the elements and forms from the architectural past. For example, \textit{The Thames and Hudson Encyclopaedia of 20th-century Architecture} notes that historicism is a term that imparts a structural unity to the historical approach specific to the formally and iconographically diverse architectural solutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. According to this input, historicism relates to a wide variety of architectural theories and doctrines of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth centuries, all of which conceived ‘a pragmatic relationship to history.’\textsuperscript{79}

A few scholars explored in more detail the historicist principle of individuality, which presupposes the uniqueness of different epochs, informing the nineteenth-century quest for the ‘style of our times.’ In his contribution to the \textit{Encyclopaedia of 20\textsuperscript{th} century architecture}, Jeffrey Tilman notes that, most broadly viewed, historicism denotes a system of thought in which the past is understood as a series of periods or epochs, each distinct from each other and the present. Tilman asserts that the same ‘pseudo-scientific mania for classification’, which marked the work of professional historians since the mid-eighteenth century, was extended to the history of architecture.\textsuperscript{80}

In the aftermath of postmodernism, another tendency became clearly observable in architectural historiography. Reacting to the Modernist obsession with the spirit of the age, the more recent scholarship tends to regard architectural historicism in the context of historicist determinism. Alan Colquhoun presented three interpretations in his well-known 1989 essay on historicism.\textsuperscript{81} According to

\textsuperscript{77} Giorgio Pigafetta, Ilaria Abbondandolo, Marco Trisciuoglio, \textit{Architettura tradizionalista: architetti, opere, teorie}, 2nd ed. (Milano: Jaca Book, 2002)


Colquhoun, historicism relates to: (1) the theory that all sociocultural phenomena are historically determined and that all truths are relative; (2) a concern for the institutions and traditions of the past; and (3) the use of historical forms. Colquhoun asserted that the historicist relativization of history informed the eclecticism in the concurrent artistic and architectural practice. He maintained that eclecticism was a product of a specific interest in history that developed in the early eighteenth century. Exploring the work and theories by Gottfried Semper, Mari Hvattum authored a seminal consideration of historicism in the context of nineteenth century architecture, published in 2004. Hvattum notes that the determinism of the nineteenth-century historicism was reflected in the role of the artist who was tasked with tangibly expressing the unity with the past in the present, thus providing the direction for the future.

In the informative chapter on historicism in his Philosophy for Architects, Branko Mitrović shows the correlations between the determinist philosophy of thinkers such as Hegel and Marx, and architectural Modernism. Similarly, Trevor Granham explores historicism in the context of Hegel, Marx, and Popper in his brilliant chapter on the uses of history in nineteenth-century architecture. Renata Jadrešin-Milić elaborates on the two meanings of historicism, discussing the two most common definitions of historicism in architectural historiography – first, in relation to historical determinism, and, secondly, referring to architecture inspired by historical works.

Finally, two titles that seemed the most suitable starting points for this research of architectural historicism should be noted, though, focused on the contemporary practice, they turned out to be of less value for this thesis. Dedicated to the resolving of contemporary issues and practical in its essence, Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism is a significant piece of architectural theory, which contributes to the understanding of the broader, humanist context of architecture, and relations between architecture, politics and history. However, though providing valuable commentary on historicism, the book mainly focuses on the reflections of what the authors – professors in architectural schools – had been teaching; it represents a collection of their observations and propositions brought together in order to help shape a more cohesive future for architectural practice. Another promising title, O’Hear’s Historicism and Architectural Knowledge, was an attempt to offer advice on present issues. O’Hear argues against the use of historicism in Modernist and Post-Modernist works, recommending that:

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83 Hvattum, Gottfried Semper, 168.
Architects should forget about historicist analyses of ages, millennia and their spirits, forget about dragooning everyone to conform to the spirit of the age and, with due modesty, as free individuals attempt to retrieve and re-apply the practical knowledge embodied in traditional architectural styles and so help to create an environment truly responsive to the needs people have actually come to have.\(^89\)

1.3 Twentieth-Century Traditionalist Architecture of Historicism in New Zealand: The Case of Queen Street, Auckland

This thesis asserts that traditionalist historicist architecture constitutes a significant proportion of the pre-Second World War architecture of the Western world. Its influence was felt strongly in locations distant from the environments hosting radical demands for innovation – and even more so in the context of the former colonies, where people of European origin relied on their traditions, and the history of Western civilisation in general, as a means of cultural orientation. In this regard, the remote Pacific country of strong connections with the UK, open to wider European, American and Australian cultural influx, New Zealand is an ideal milieu for the study of the twentieth-century traditionalist architecture of historicism. As noted in the thesis introduction, Queen Street in Auckland – the main commercial thoroughfare of the country’s biggest city – was selected as the case study. This section reviews three groups of texts relevant for the better understanding of the issue.

The first group comprises the period journals and daily press. Attempting not to judge the traditionalist architecture from the perspective of architectural historiography exhibiting far-reaching consequences of the Modernist anti-traditionalist campaign, this thesis primarily relies on the critiques, assessments, and opinions by the period commentators. The first section introduces some of the key period architects whose writing served as the foundation for the claims made by this thesis. The literature review continues with a section dedicated to a concise consideration of the most relevant titles on New Zealand history and the history of Auckland.

New Zealand architectural historiography is the focus of the last section. It was consulted with two main ambitions: (1) to detect the employment and interpretations of the term historicism and (2) to collect information about the twentieth-century architectural transformation of Queen Street in the decades before the Second World War. The search revealed few references to the term historicism. The meaning of the term has not been discussed locally, and it is largely used to denote architecture created with the use of historical styles. Twentieth-century traditionalist architecture of historicism has not previously been the focus of any sustained research in New Zealand.

Sources relevant for this research of twentieth-century traditionalist historicist architecture through the example of Queen Street are classified in three groups, starting with reference works and

\(^89\) O’Hear, “Historicism and Architectural Knowledge,” 144.
general literature on architectural history of New Zealand architecture. The second group comprises titles of a somewhat narrower scope – the architectural history of Auckland. Research of various individual topics, offering information on Queen Street in the process, will be discussed within the last group. The chapter concludes with a review of selected titles that do not discuss Queen Street immediately but are valuable for broader understanding of the topic and cannot be omitted from any thorough consideration of New Zealand’s architectural history.

1.3.1 Period Writings

The importance of print media for architecture is a well-established theme in architectural history. In the case of New Zealand, texts about architecture bore even more influence, as the physical remoteness of the country impeded frequent travels. Approaching traditionalist architecture from the period perspective, this thesis relies heavily on the texts from the two major New Zealand architectural periodicals – Progress and the Journal of the Proceedings of NZIA. Additionally, the daily press amply reported on architectural issues, keeping the public up to date with local and international achievements. The main conclusions about the twentieth-century traditionalist architecture in New Zealand are drawn from the various texts by the country’s most prominent architects, such as Samuel Hurst Seager, John Mair, William Gummer, Leslie Coombs, C. Reginald Ford, etc.90 These titles are discussed in greater detail in Chapters 4-7.

1.3.2 General Historiography

Given the primary focus of this research, there is no attempt at an extensive examination of the bibliographical corpus on New Zealand history. A few selected titles are in service of understanding the broad historical context of New Zealand and Auckland. On that note, the third part of The Oxford History of New Zealand is an informative and comprehensive interpretation of the period between the late 1890s to the early 1940s.91 Chapters by Erik Olssen, P. J. Gibbons, and David McIntyre are especially helpful for understanding the wide socio-cultural conditions influencing Queen Street architecture in the first four decades of the twentieth century.92 Similarly, contributions by Keith

Sinclair, James Belich, and Ron Palenski present valuable information on the historical conditions between 1840 and 1940. John Andrew’s history No Other Home Than This offers insights on the complex relations between Pākehā New Zealanders and European traditions. The First World War marked a breaking point in the history of New Zealand, as elsewhere. Shaking the thought structure of Western civilisation to the core, challenging the previously undisputed societal values, its consequences were expressed in the period’s architecture. Olssen’s chapters in The People and the Land, and Matthew Wright’s The New Zealand Experience at Gallipoli present valuable information on, and interpretations of, the war and its aftermath in New Zealand.

Narrowing down the enquiry to titles focused on the history of Auckland, a concise prelude to the period this research is focusing on – covering the events of the third quarter of the nineteenth century, Ruth Ross’ New Zealand’s First Capital discusses the early history and development of Auckland. From the pen of an Aucklander who dedicated his effort to ‘the noble band of men and women who, with high courage and great foresight, worked to bring a city from a wilderness of fern,’ The Auckland Story by John Grainger is another interesting early read, which makes the city’s history come to life in the reader’s mind. Less of a personal account, Reed’s contribution to the history of Auckland titled Auckland: The City of Seas offers information of greater relevance for this research.

In the first part of the book, the author depicts significant socio-political events by decades, and, more importantly, dedicates an entire chapter to the development of the ‘Heart of the City’ with extensive commentary on Queen Street. Twenty five years after Ruth Ross, Una Platts revisited a similar period of Auckland’s history – two and a half decades while the city held the status of the capital. Looking into the nineteenth-century events, the monograph provides valuable information for the understanding of the development of Queen Street. Exploring Visions of New Zealand, Gordon Brown dedicated two pages to Auckland’s Queen Street, quoting commentary from contemporaries from the 1880s to 1969. Exploring one hundred years of the Auckland City Council, G. W. A. Bush’s Decently and in Order
includes valuable information on Queen Street interventions. From Tamaki-Makau-Rau to Auckland, written by R. C. J. Stone, is the latest publication, consisting of meticulous research offering valuable information and thorough interpretation of the preceding events and the founding of Auckland.

1.3.3 Reference Works and Architectural Historiography

Offering a broad scope of condensed information and written by recognised experts in various fields, reference works often represent the starting point of research. On that account, covering a wide range of terms, the online database Te Ara – The Encyclopedia of New Zealand offers valuable biographical data on distinguished individuals and architects. Written by Geoff Mew and Adrian Humphris, Raupo to Deco is a useful repository of information on prominent Wellington architects, some of whom wrote as well as practiced.

New Zealand Art: Architecture 1820-1970 by John Stacpoole and Peter Beaven is a short yet instructive introduction the topic. Considering local architectural production in relation to broader political and socio-economic context, the authors survey the genesis of New Zealand architecture – from timber buildings of early settlers to post-Second World War Modernism. Within twelve pages of written text, accompanied by a considerable number of photographs with commentary, Queen Street is mentioned on several occasions. Another monograph by Stacpoole, the most extensive enquiry into colonial architecture in New Zealand, was significant for this research. Not only does it discuss various aspects of nineteenth-century architecture thoroughly, but an entire chapter is dedicated to Auckland of the 1870s and 1880s. Three years after Stacpoole and Beaven’s collaborative book, the publishing company Cassell approached the New Zealand Historic Places Trust with the idea of creating an illustrated account of New Zealand’s historic buildings. The proposal resulted in a collection of essays written by renowned researchers of New Zealand’s architectural history, published in two volumes. Discussing Auckland’s architecture and providing information and commentary on Queen Street’s buildings on several occasions, the first of the two volumes – dedicated to the North Island – is a well-researched, scholarly account.

Pieces of information on buildings in Auckland’s Queen Street are also available in general surveys of New Zealand’s architectural history. Terence Hodgson’s Looking at the Architecture of New Zealand Art: Architecture 1820-1970 (Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1972).


Zealand is written engagingly and includes insightful commentary, however, it offers scarce information about individual Queen Street structures. Peter Shaw’s A History of New Zealand Architecture provides somewhat deeper analysis of the most famous of Queen Street buildings, discussing them in the context of broader tendencies in period architectural history. Lastly, aimed at the general public, popular overviews of individual New Zealand historic buildings always include the most significant of Queen Street edifices. These accounts do not quote their sources, and are, thus, of less significance for scholarly research. However, they identify the individual Queen Street structures that have remained famous to date, indicating the lasting success of certain traditionalist designs.

Continuing the search for information on Queen Street, the focus shifts to enquiries of Auckland’s architectural history. First published in 1973, the shared ambition of John Fields and John Stacpoole resulted in a highly instructive pictorial survey of individual buildings erected in Auckland during the course of nineteenth-century Victorian Auckland. Quality photographs followed by concise comments on several Queen Street objects are scattered throughout the book. Terence Hodgson’s Heart of Colonial Auckland of 1992 aimed to provide ‘a lively look at aspects of what is now central Auckland, but which for many years was Auckland, between 1865 and 1910.’ Discussing the half-century after Auckland’s loss of the capital status, Hodgson considers the architecture of the city’s centre in relation to the wider socio-economic and political circumstances. The focus of the monograph resulted in a significant amount of attention being given to Auckland’s commercial heart – Queen Street. Particularly useful is the appendix at the end of the book, presenting a list of major buildings, with names of architects and years of design from 1860 to 1916.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, although the last group of titles relevant for this thesis consists of various research primarily focused on different topics, these titles also offer information relevant for the study of Auckland’s Queen Street. Discussing no longer existing notable historic buildings of New Zealand, Richard Wolfe dedicated an entire chapter to His Majesty’s Theatre and Arcade, once considered a turn-of-the-century symbol of civic pride and progress that was demolished in 1988. Looking into works of a noted architect in service of the New Zealand Government – John Campbell – Peter Richardson built a strong, comprehensive foundation for researching British Imperial

architecture in New Zealand. Considering the wider cultural and historical context, Richardson explained the development and implications of Imperial Baroque in New Zealand architecture. Furthermore, directly connected to the focus of this research, is his interpretation of the ‘Post Office Building Boom’ and, more specifically, the Chief Post Office in Queen Street. Richardson continued the study of public New Zealand architecture within his PhD thesis, where the Queen Street Chief Post Office was mentioned on several occasion.

In a similar manner, in his Master’s thesis, Bruce Petry explored the public architecture of the Auckland practice of Gummer & Ford. Aiming to address the oeuvre of one of the most famous New Zealand’s architectural practices of the interwar period within a broader social, cultural and political framework, Petry discussed their major Queen Street structures in detail. Exploring the connections between American and New Zealand architecture, Ann McEwan’s PhD thesis is a valuable source of information for some of the Queen Street projects, especially in the years between the two world wars. Finally, in his seminal monograph on the history of New Zealand cities, Ben Schrader’s The Big Smoke mentions Queen Street on various occasions.

Gathering experts in New Zealand architectural history, the annual publication of the proceedings from the conference organised by the Centre for Building Performance Research at the Faculty of Architecture and Design, Victoria University of Wellington includes several relevant papers. To list a few, Donald Bassett’s examination of the NZIA Journal of the 1910s and the Beaux-Arts method in the 1920s, Ian Lochhead’s exploration of the relations between politics and architecture, and Peter Wood’s discussion of C. Reginald Ford, are all highly relevant. Bassett’s exploration of the stylistic debates in New Zealand architecture in the first two decades of the twentieth century is a

119 Richardson, An Architecture of Empire, 136-222.
seminal piece for the issues considered in Chapters 4 and 5. Among numerous journal articles on New Zealand architectural history, Ian Lochhead’s discussion of the 1930s is well known and established the idea that Modernism arrived late in New Zealand. Though he focused on Modernism, considering the simultaneously constructed historicist architecture, Lochhead concluded that ‘this very diversity is one of the most appealing features of the period.’ Paul Walker wrote another succinct and instructive consideration of Modern architecture in New Zealand, challenging Lochhead’s conclusion that Modernism arrived late, by exploring the use of standardisation, technical developments and the use of advanced technologies in conservative looking buildings.

Mirroring the international achievements, the 1940s were the period when an innovative, vigorous architectural current started to take its shape within the country. Demanding New Zealand’s own architecture, appropriate to the local conditions and climate, a group of Auckland architecture students formed the Architectural Group, some of whose members would become some of the country’s most celebrated designers, Group Architects. Their protagonists and oeuvre have been comprehensively presented and thoroughly interpreted in a monograph edited by Julia Gatley.

Demands for a new architecture did not come only from the Group – there were others whose voices rose in an effort to incite change and shape the world according to modern needs. Based upon meticulous research of the topic, two monographs convey the story of New Zealand Modern architecture in detail. The joint effort of Justine Clark and Paul Walker resulted in a comprehensive analysis of Modern architecture in New Zealand – its origin and development from the 1940s to the 1960s, while, eight years later, Julia Gatley edited a wide survey of individual buildings, sites and neighbourhoods, designed and executed in period ranging from 1904 to 1984.

Conclusion: Architectural Historicism and the Traditionalist Historicist Architecture of the Twentieth Century

The review of literature has shown that architectural historicism represents a curious topic from architectural history, one that could be explored in greater detail. Widely used by scholars, the concept of historicism needs to be adequately defined and appropriately incorporated into the terminology of architectural history. The traditionalist twentieth-century architecture of historicism is a widely under-

researched topic, both internationally and in New Zealand. Moreover, despite constituting the mainstream architectural production until the Second World War due to the highly polemical rhetoric employed by the proponents of the Modern Movement, traditionalist architecture was almost completely excluded from architectural histories. Scholarly references on the topic are so scarce that only one monograph dedicated specifically to the traditionalist architecture of the period has been found to date – *Architettura tradizionalista* by the Italian scholars Giorgio Pigafetta and Ilaria Abbondandolo.\(^{131}\) The twentieth-century traditionalist architecture has not been discussed in New Zealand architectural historiography so far. Similarly, though it is possible to find scattered information on the topic, the architectural transformations of Queen Street in Auckland have not been previously studied *per se*. In the following chapters, this thesis will respond to the gaps in knowledge determined by the exploration of the literature in three ways. First, it will indicate the significance of historicism in the Western history of architecture, offering a broadened interpretation of the concept. Next, the thesis will contribute to the comprehensiveness of the histories of twentieth-century architecture, thoroughly analysing the base principles of the twentieth-century traditionalist architecture of historicism. Finally, this thesis will contribute to the comprehensiveness of New Zealand architectural history, identifying and studying the most significant twentieth-century structures erected in the main commercial throughway of the country’s biggest city prior to the Second World War.

\(^{131}\) Pigafetta, Abbondandolo, and Trisciuoglio, *Architettura tradizionalista*. 
Chapter 2. Historicism in Philosophy of History

The term historicism has been generally accepted by architectural historians. However, in contrast to its wide presence in the scholarship, the meaning of the term historicism has not been adequately defined within architectural historiography. In the context of architecture, historicism has often been marked by conflicting interpretations, pejorative connotations, and ambiguity of meaning. It is frequently used uncritically or out of habit. At the opposite end of the spectrum, described as imprecise and, therefore, inadequate, the term has occasionally been completely dismissed by scholars. The concept of historicism, and the term itself, originated from the disciplines of philosophy and history. To clarify the meaning of the term and support the argument that it is indeed appropriate for the architecture considered within this thesis, this chapter discusses the history and meaning of the term in the context of the philosophy of history.

Starting from the premise that appropriate terminology needs to be developed to effectively examine any phenomenon, the first part of this chapter aims to contribute to the development of a more precise analytical vocabulary. The first section opens with a concise morphological consideration of the term in the English language. Demonstrating the redundancy of a similar term ‘historism,’ occasionally employed by scholars, the section aims to resolve potential semiotic uncertainties, and simplify the technical vocabulary. From there, the chapter continues with a discussion of the history of the word. When was it used for the first time? What was the chronology of its application in the European written tradition? How did it spread? The inquiry into the history of the term illustrates its complexity and wide presence in various intellectual milieus across Europe. Developed as a linguistic tool by philosophers and historians, the term was later accepted by architects and architectural historians. Employed by different thinkers, historicism acquired numerous – and sometimes conflicting – meanings.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the multiplicity of the meanings the term historicism has acquired in the philosophy of history. The section offers a concise classification of the various definitions attributed to historicism in the philosophy of history. Finally, the third part of the chapter illustrates a position essential for this research. The final section discusses the scholarship that considers historicism as a way of thinking, or, in other words, a worldview. Various scholars have argued that, originating from the philosophy of history in the period of the professionalisation of the discipline of history, the concept of historicism did not remain isolated within a strictly academic context. Influencing the way Western cultures conceived of history – and, consequently, themselves – historicism permeated the wider domain of human creativity. Architecture did not escape its grasp.

2.1 Historicism: Morphology and History of the Term

Two similar terms have occasionally appeared in architectural historiography – ‘historism’ and historicism. Aleksandar Kadijević, a recognised Serbian scholar, pointed out that the employment of both terms is counterproductive, needlessly encumbering the terminological apparatus of architectural
Kadijević favoured the ‘historism’ variant, perhaps because it was closer to the original German word Historismus, and accordant with the Serbian language. Discussing the relationship between the nature of works of art, society and history while considering questions of authenticity, value and temporality, Czech theorist Karel Kosík also distinguished between historicism and historism. Is there any relevant difference between the two in the context of the English language? Discussing the relationship between the nature of work of art, society and history while considering questions of authenticity, value and temporality, Czech theorist Karel Kosík also distinguished between historicism and historism. In his extensive study of historicism in the context of German philosophy of history, Georg Iggers confirmed Lee and Beck’s datum. Iggers maintains that, by the late 1960s, as a reflection of a general lack of interest in the topic, both words had rarely been used in America.

Though it might be observed that ‘historism’ would be a more natural translation into English of the German Historismus, it gradually disappeared from active use. Lee and Beck explain that historicism came to be preferred, ‘either because it seems a more natural English form, coming more easily to the tongue, or because its Italian equivalent, Storicismo, has become well known through its use by Benedetto Croce.’ Regardless of the later distinctions between the terms made by some authors, when they first appeared in the English language, both ‘historism’ and historicism were translations of the same word. Whether it was the German Historismus, or the Italian Storicismo, the term had roots in a specific intellectual tradition. Therefore, the employment of both words seems excessive, unnecessarily encumbering terminological apparatus. Having in mind that the term historicism has been prevalently used in the English language since the 1930s, choosing it over ‘historism’ in the future seems cogent.

The term historicism is more recent than the concept it entitles. Coined in the nineteenth century, it did not enter into specialist vocabulary long before the early twentieth century. Georg Iggers’ multi-decennial interest in the topic resulted in a thorough study of the concept of historicism in the German tradition, which was essential for this research, and also contributed to the better understanding

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132 Kadijević, Aesthetics of Architectural Academism, 77.
133 Karel Kosík, “Historism and Historicism,” 65-75.
135 Iggers, The German Conception of History, 288.
138 For example, Karl Popper made a sharp distinction between “historism” and “historicism” in his The Poverty of Historicism: Karl Popper, The Poverty of Historicism (Boston, Beacon Press: 1957). Similarly, discussing the relationship between the nature of work of art, society and history while considering the questions of its authenticity, value and temporality, Karel Kosík examined the differences between the terms “historism” and “historicism”: Karel Kosík, “Historism and Historicism,” 65-75.
of the history of the term. According to him, if the term is employed for a Rankian approach to history, aiming to recreate the past wie es eigentlich gewesen (‘how it really was’) and recapture the unique qualities of a past phenomenon, then it could be claimed that a great deal of narrative history written from a secular standpoint has been historicist since Classical Antiquity. Similarly, the idea that historical research differed from the approach of the natural sciences was well known long before the eighteenth century – Aristotle himself had observed that historical statements deal with ‘singulars’ rather than with ‘universals.’ Furthermore, the basic elements of historical methods have been established since the age of humanism, when scholarship, especially as carried out at the academies, determined the criteria for the critical analysis of sources. However, a tradition of critical inquiry had yet to be developed. The great historians of the Enlightenment tended to construct grandiose syntheses based upon inadequate evidence. Clearly, the practice of the recreation of individual reality through the use of historical documents had existed for centuries.

On the other hand, if historicism is not to be understood as an approach to history, but as an outlook that perceives all social reality as an historical stream where no two instances are comparable and which assumes that value standards and logical categories, too, are completely immersed in the stream of history, then historicism was, indeed, an eighteenth century creation. New interest in history appeared in Great Britain, France, Italy, Switzerland, and Germany during the course of the eighteenth century. A peculiarly modern attitude toward the past emerged, absent in the classic, medieval and Renaissance traditions, ‘regarding the positive value of history understood as human progress in its immanent, worldly, and secular reality.’ What distinguished this new outlook from the major Enlightenment patterns of thought was its rejection of a mechanistic world view – its belief that history, far from being a collection of superstitions, was itself the key to the understanding of man as a social and political being.

Iggers identified Giambattista Vico’s New Science (1725) and Johann Gottfried Herder’s Also a History of Philosophy (1774) as the first two great eighteenth-century formulations of the historicist position. Vico had claimed that, consisting of the conscious acts and volitions of individuals taking place in the stream of time, the study of social reality requires methods fundamentally different from those of the natural sciences. He maintained that men and societies can be understood only when

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140 Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) was a German historian and a founder of modern source-based history.
142 Iggers, The German Conception of History, 33.
144 See: Johan Gottfried von Herder and Michael Forster, Johan Gottfried von Herder Philosophical Writings (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
approached historically – for Vico, history still appeared as a tool for deciphering the general truths about mankind.

The historicist position in its radical form was formulated in Herder’s Also a History of Philosophy of 1774. Here the conception that every age must be viewed in terms of its own immediate values and that there is no progress or decline in history – only value-filled diversity – appeared for the first time. Herder offered two concepts that would remain fundamental to the entire affirmative tradition of German historicism. Contrasting natural law philosophy, Herder assumes that all values and cognitions were historical and individual. He maintains that history was a constant movement within which certain centres of relative stability can be discerned – the nations. The nations were not rational in character, but dynamic and vital; they were not mere collections of individuals but living organisms. This concept of individuality assumes that there are no individually valid values, that ethics cannot be based upon precepts of reason or upon the assumption of a common human nature. Rather, all values come out of the spirit of nations. Herder’s concept of the nation as the source of all truth implied that there were no objective criteria of truth. This was an extreme position, one that he would later modify, but it remained inherent in historicism. Strictly speaking, there could be no objective approach to history. Not only could man not transcend the process of history, but insofar as history was an organic stream, it had to be approached by methods other than those of which Herder called the ‘mechanistic’ spirit of modern philosophy. Reason could not comprehend life; it could only create lifeless concepts. No matter how accurate, verbal description could not recreate living reality. Therefore, history could be only understood through empathy.

The second central concept of Herder’s philosophy presented in Also a Philosophy of History was the principle of development. According to Frederick Beiser, Herder perceived all history as an organism, with all epochs and cultures linked together in a continuum. Within this stream of history, the earlier stages serve as the basis for the growth of later ones, and ‘each later stage assimilates and learns from the life of the earlier ones, so that there is growth and development in world history. All the major cultures of Western civilisation are linked together as if they were so many stages in the development of a single person.’ Beiser explained that the idea of progress and the belief that history was a benevolent process were entwined with Herder’s principle of development. The historicism of Herder rests upon the firm belief that there is a divine purpose in history; all of Nature and all of history reflect God. However, the meaning of history is not found in the direction of events toward a rational end, but in the multiplicity of ways in which the human mind expresses itself in the diversity of nations. Truth, value, and beauty are not one, but many. They are found only in history and manifest themselves

147 Beiser, The German Historicist Tradition, 136.
148 Beiser, The German Historicist Tradition, 137.
only in the national spirit. In *Also a Philosophy of History*, Herder had laid the foundations for a historicism which spread far beyond the German boundaries, contributing to the reawakening of historical interest. His ideas merged with the broad stream of Romantic philosophies to challenge Enlightenment doctrines across Europe. However, at this stage, historicist doctrine was by no means fully developed.

According to Iggers, historicism was far from being the dominant intellectual current in late eighteenth-century Germany. Two other conceptions, still in many ways committed to the Enlightenment ideas, were important in the transition from the doctrine of natural law to historicism. The first one, *Humanitātsideal*, was given expression by a small group of eminent thinkers: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Herder, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, Friedrich Schiller and Wilhelm von Humboldt. Iggers notes that they accepted the Enlightenment’s premise that there is a common humanity, a certain nobility, and dignity present in the form of a seed in all humans. However, while the Enlightenment stressed the common characteristics of humans and their rationality, the *Humanitātsideal* highlighted the diversity of humans and the interrelation of all aspects of their personality – rationality and irrationality – into a harmonious whole. Every individual is different, and it is one’s primary task to develop one’s own unique personality to the fullest. According to Iggers, the concept of individuality contained within the *Humanitātsideal* differed from Enlightenment theories of the individual in still another important way. For example, Humboldt maintained that the individual is not found in the empirically perceivable traits of a human, but in a higher idea one represents. In this concept of the individual as the expression of an idea lies the link between the theory that every individual possesses ‘individuality’, and that each collective group, too, also has ‘individuality.’

Iggers continues to explain that the Enlightenment concept of natural law underwent further revision in German philosophical discussions after Kant. According to him, the proponents of German Idealism, such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, accepted the theory of the basic uniqueness of individuals and nations in history, concurrently accepting the Enlightenment faith in a rational universe. The important aspect of the German Idealist understanding of history as a rational process that informed historicist thought was the idea that collective groups, too, possessed the character of individuality. This is observable in Humboldt’s belief that although every individuality and its idea are radically unique, they form a part of a divine design – on that cannot be perceived by the human mind. Similarly, Ranke sees in the state a simultaneously real and spiritual entity. Similarly to Hegel, he asserted that the state acts in accordance with a higher order that governs the world when pursuing its own power-political interests.

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149 Iggers, *The German Conception of History*, 32.
150 About Humboldt’s contribution to theoretical foundations to German historicism see: Iggers, *The German Conception of History*, 44–62.
Moreover, a series of political events between 1792 and 1815 played an important role in the process of transition from an Enlightenment to a historicist outlook in Germany. Iggers notes that though the educated German public – with few exceptions – had indeed hailed the French Revolution, tremendous disappointment followed, after it had reached its autocratic phase, and was further intensified with the Napoleonic domination over Germany. In the aftermath of the Revolution, national sentiment flourished and Enlightenment values were identified with an execrated French culture.

The first explicit use of the term historicism known to Iggers was in fragmentary notes on philology, which Friedrich Schlegel ‘jotted down in 1797.’ Schlegel made an observation that ‘Winkelmann’s “Historismus” had introduced a “new epoch” in philosophy in recognising the “immeasurable distinctness” and the “totally unique nature of Antiquity”.’ Foreshadowing to a certain extent something of the later meaning of the term historicism, Schlegel criticised the ‘popular philosophers’ of the eighteenth century who, unlike Winkelmann, had distorted the character of antiquity by superimposing philosophical notions on it, for their theoretical, but unhistorical, opinions. Without discussing its meaning, early German Romanticist Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg, known under the pseudonym Novalis, employed the term Historism in a listing of various methods (Fichte’s, Kant’s, mathematical, artistic, etc.). During the first half of the nineteenth century, the term Historismus was occasionally used by German thinkers, such as Ludwig Feuerbach, Christoph J. Braniss, I. H. Fichte (the son of J. G. Fichte), and Carl Prantl, signifying ‘a historical orientation which recognised individuality in its “concrete temporal-spatiality” (Prantl), as pursued for example by the Historical School of Law (Savigny and Eichhorn), distinct from a fact-oriented empiricism as well as from the system-building philosophy of history in the Hegelian manner (Haym) which ignores factuality.’

The second half of the nineteenth century saw wider use of the term historicism, and it acquired different, often contradictory, connotations. In his book on Giambattista Vico, published in 1879, Friedrich Meinecke, a recognised authority from the historicist tradition, claimed that the term Historismus was first used by Karl Werner. Meinecke argued that, discussing Vico’s claim that the human mind knows no reality other than history because humans create history, Werner captured the essence of historicist worldview. Soon after, Carl Menger, and a number of economic theorists, 

154 Iggers, The German Conception of History, 40.
155 Iggers, “Historicism: The History and Meaning of the Term,” 130
156 Iggers, “Historicism: The History and Meaning of the Term,” 130.
158 Iggers, “Historicism: The History and Meaning of the Term,” 130.
employed the term in a more definite, yet disparaging manner, criticising the historical school of economics. Maintaining that progress in economics will come through development of its own methods and concepts – not through the outside assistance of the historian, the mathematician or the physiologist – Menger argued against the introduction of ‘the false dogma of historicism’ into the specific discipline of political economy.\footnote{Carl Menger, “Die Irrtiumer des Historismus in der deutschen National-Oekonomie,” in \textit{The Collected Works of Carl Menger} (London: London School of Economics, 1933), 4-5.}

The term was widely popularised during the interwar period, when intellectuals across Europe came to debate the virtues and vices of historicism. Numerous thinkers, such as Karl Heussi and Ernst Troeltsch, now spoke of the ‘Crisis of Historicism’.\footnote{Ernst Troeltsch, “Die Krisis des Historismus,” \textit{Die Neue Rundschau} 33 (June, 1922): 584-86; Troeltsch, “Der Historismus und seine Probleme (1922),” in \textit{Gesammelte Schriften} (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1961), 4:211; Karl Heussi, \textit{Die Krisis des Historismus} (Tübingen: Mohr, 1932).} Believing that the study of history progressively demonstrated the relativity and hence invalidity of the values and beliefs of Western culture, Troeltsch was the one who gave a comprehensive definition of historicism as ‘the historicising of our entire knowing and experiencing of the spiritual world.’\footnote{Ernst Troeltsch, “Der Historismus und seine Probleme. Erstes Buch: Das logische Problem der Geschichtspphilosophie,” in \textit{Gesammelte Schriften} (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922), 3:102. Calvin G. Rand, “Two Meanings of Historicism in the Writings of Dilthey, Troeltsch, and Meinecke,” 504.} Criticising Troeltsch’s attempt to resolve historical relativism through history, Otto Hintze distinguished between historicism as a Weltanschauung (worldview) in Troeltsch’s sense and historicism as a logical category of thought.\footnote{Otto Hintze, “Troeltsch und die Probleme des Historismus,” in \textit{Soziologie und Geschichte: Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur Soziologie, Politik und Theorie der Geschichte}, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), II, sect. 2: 366.} For Karl Mannheim, it had become the very condition of modern existence.\footnote{Karl Mannheim, “Historismus,” in \textit{Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk}, ed. Kurt H. Wolf (Neuwied, 1970), 509-565.} Aspiring to overcome the crisis of historicism by stressing the positive aspects of a radically historical approach, Friedrich Meinecke gave the term a very different, optimistic connotation.\footnote{Friedrich Meinecke, \textit{Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook} (London; New York: Routledge; Herder and Herder, 1972).} Meinecke maintained that historicism is a product of specifically German thought, which, focusing on the attributes of uniqueness and individuality in history, replaced earlier notions of natural law with a genetic approach.

Though prevalently discussed in the context of the German tradition, more recent studies argue that historicism permeated the intellectual climate of the entire Western world since the second half of the eighteenth century. The Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce is often acknowledged as the most prominent proponent of historicism outside the German-speaking world.\footnote{Benedetto Croce, \textit{History as the Story of Liberty} (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1941).} Giovanni Gentile and Antonio Gramsci, Croce’s less famous compatriot contemporaries, interpreted historicism in totalitarian terms as a philosophy of political engagement.\footnote{Iggers, “Historicism: The History and Meaning of the Term,” 136.} Similarly to Croce’s notion of \textit{storicismo assoluto}, Jose Ortega y Gasset in Spain and Robin G. Collingwood in England held that uniqueness and
individuality of the historical world make naturalistic outlook inadequate for contemplating human reality. In *The Poverty of Historicism*, first written as a paper read in 1936 and published in 1957, Karl Popper identified the term with the attempts by Hegel and Marx to formulate laws of historical development that were later used to legitimize totalitarian control.

### 2.2 Pluralism of Meanings

So, what does historicism denote? To quote Frank Ankersmit, the concept ‘remains puzzling’. Historicism was never a systematically formulated philosophy. At most, it could be called a general historical view of humans and their activities, in which several broad categories of philosophical interpretation are stated. Indeed, its meanings in philosophical use have become more complex and diverse over time, causing numerous discussions and resulting in a vast historiographical corpus. The variety of viewpoints in the historicist tradition has prompted a number of scholars to try and classify them. Three classifications of the numerous historicist premises, proposed by different authors, proved to be valuable for understanding the diversity of historicist positions. The three were written in the span from 1954 until 2007, illustrating the lasting popularity of the topic of historicism in the context of the philosophy of history. Aiming at the systematic approach to the wide scope of the problem, and concise discussion of various meanings of historicist positions, all three are considered in the following pages. The classification proposed by Dwight Lee and Robert Beck (1954) was the first significant consideration of the topic in the English language; the one by Andrew Reynolds (1999) is perhaps the most complete of the three; and the one by Robert D’Amico (2007) is the most recent one.

The earliest one of the three classifications was offered by Lee and Beck in the previously discussed paper published in 1954. Stressing that ‘it is undoubtedly still too early to reach a consensus about the concepts for which the word may be used,’ they grouped the numerous historicist positions into five main categories. The five groups comprise definitions of historicism, which assume the ‘explanation or evaluation by means of history,’ and share in the belief that historical knowledge is relevant for human affairs. Here Lee and Beck related the definitions presented in the *Dictionary of History*.  

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169 Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*.
Philosophy,

They further explain that historicism has been used as the designation of an age. This claim is illustrated with Guido de Ruggiero’s words who, ‘writing about post Kantian idealism, asserts that the assumption “of a genetic point of view in the study of the problems of the mind marked the beginning of historicism and the evaluation of reality as a historical process of spiritual formation.”’

Indeed, proponents of the German intellectual tradition have, especially, claimed that historicism was a reaction to the rationalist ideas of the Enlightenment. Friedrich Meinecke had even defined historicism as ‘the greatest spiritual revolution which Occidental thought had undergone.’

The main representatives of the second category, named ‘historicisation of life,’ were Ernst Troeltsch and Friedrich Meinecke. They perceived historicism ‘as a special form of, or an approach to, intellectual history.’

Praising Goethe’s and Ranke’s contributions to the development of the historicist principles, Meinecke traced the beginnings of historicism to the English, French, and German writers who had opposed the rationalism based on Descartes. He interpreted Ranke’s concept of individuality as one that embraces not only humans, but all historical creations, including the state. The polar opposite of the historicist approach to history, related to the concept of individuality, is the notion of development. As Lee and Beck explain, ‘development is the historical process within which individuality manifests itself and is to be explained not by “laws” (and hence not predictable), but by innate tendencies, “spiritual spontaneity,” and special or external factors.’ Consequently, historicism for Meinecke was not a deterministic philosophy of history, but a way of looking at life and the world.

Discussing the third group – ‘historicisation of philosophy’ – the authors introduced Benedetto Croce and Robin Collingwood. Croce called his philosophy of the spirit storicismo assoluto (absolute

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174 “The view that the history of anything is a sufficient explanation of it, that the values of anything can be accounted for through the discovery of its origins, that the nature of anything is entirely comprehended in its development”: Dictionary of Philosophy, ed. Dagobert Runes (New York, 1942), 127.

175 In his “challenge to historicism”, Cohen defined the term as “a faith that history is the main road to wisdom in human affairs”: Morris R. Cohen, The Meaning of Human History (La Salle: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1947), 15.

176 “The attitude which was centred around history, which made history the magistra, if not of active life, at least, to a great extent, of theoretical life, will be understood here under ‘historicism’”: Friedrich Engel-Janosi, The Growth of German Historicism (Baltimore: Johns Hopniks Press, 1944), 13.


historicism). He maintained that historicism is a logical category and, therefore, present in any age. Nevertheless, Croce stressed that it is the nineteenth century that may be properly named after it. For him, since humans can only know what they created – and, thus, true knowledge is historical – one does not go to the past to resolve present problems. Instead, his very thinking was that the present is of necessity historical. However, historical knowledge does not determine one’s actions. Croce thought of historicism as the true heir of humanism, ‘the eager progress of culture and thought, which renewed philosophy and all the moral disciplines, ethics and politics and the theory of art, and scientific methodology.’

In a similar manner, discussing the subject matter of history, Collingwood clearly distinguished between the domains of ‘Nature’ and the ‘mind.’ All history is the history of thought: ‘historical knowledge, then, has for its proper object thought: not things thought about, but the act of thinking itself. This principle has served us to distinguish history from natural sciences on one hand, as the study of a given or objective world distinct from the act of thinking it, and on the other from psychology as the study of the immediate experience, sensation, and feeling, which, though the activity of the mind, is not the activity of thinking.’ Since historical thinking is always a reflection about purposeful activity, and only those past activities that had a conscious goal – i.e. political, economic, moral, artistic, scientific, religious, philosophical – can be fields of historiography. The study of the past, however, is not a basis for prediction, nor does it find a cause in the natural scientist’s sense – it can only discover past thought. As Lee and Beck conclude, ‘Collingwood’s historicism seeks to historicize philosophy and to emancipate history from science.’

Another manner in which historicism has been used is related to ‘historical relationism and relativism.’ As an example, Lee and Beck used Karl Mannheim’s theory of knowledge according to which ‘all historical knowledge is relational knowledge.’ Unlike Mannheim who made a distinction between the concepts of relationism and relativism, Maurice Mandelbaum asserted that relativist doctrine ‘can best be understood as being one particular manifestation of… historicism.’ Mandelbaum asserted that every attempt to gain knowledge is relative to its place in the historical process. Finally, Lee and Beck briefly discuss Karl Popper’s interpretation of historicism as ‘an approach to the social sciences which assumes that historical prediction is their principal aim, and… that this aim is attainable by discovering the ‘rhythms’ or the ‘patterns,’ the ‘laws’ or the ‘trends’ that

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underlie the evolution of history.” Among a number of philosophers he pejoratively characterised as ‘historicist’, Popper heavily criticised the ideas of Plato, Hegel, Marx, and Comte. If Popper’s assertions were compared with the understanding of historicism as proposed by, among others, Ranke, Meinecke or Croce, contradictions immediately become apparent. Stressing that most historicist thinkers repudiated any search for laws in the physical science sense, therefore explicitly denying that history might serve as a basis for prediction, Lee and Beck assessed Popper’s use of the term as ‘unfortunate.”

Summarising the meanings illustrated in the first three groups, Lee and Beck propose two concise definitions of historicism: ‘1. The belief that the truth, meaning, and value of anything, i.e., the basis of any evaluation, is to be found in its history; 2. The antipositivistic and antinaturalistic view that historical knowledge is a basic, or the only, requirement for understanding and evaluating man’s present political, social, and intellectual position of problems.” The authors conclude with a remark that the two definitions are intentionally general, and would, hopefully, provide a basis for the more systematic classification of other positions. Indeed, they did. A simple Google Scholar search shows that the article has been cited repeatedly, and since its publication, historicism has become a widely discussed topic.

In his contribution to the extensive volume A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography, Robert D’Amico offered the most recent classification of the historicist thesis. D’Amico outlined three groups. The first one he proposed, titled ‘historiographic concepts,’ was expressed in the writings by Heinrich Rickert. Rickert made a distinction between the objects of cultural and natural science, contrasting historicism and naturalism as two general viewpoints on the nature of reality. According to D’Amico, ‘Rickert’s most influential idea is then this distinction between preconditions for natural kinds in natural scientific generalisation as against the concept of the unique individual as the basis for cultural science.” Rickert maintained that laws of history or culture are conceptually impossible, in his own words, ‘logically absurd.’ For him, historicism is the framework within which a science of history is possible, but where neither historical laws nor ‘kinds’ are possible. D’Amico then continued to discuss the philosophical positions of Karl Popper and Friedrich Hayek. Both Popper and Hayek used the term for those thinkers who had accepted the existence of law in history allowing for prediction and explanations in historiography. In the last section, titled ‘historiographic interpretations,’ D’Amico examined the idea ‘that is less explicitly associated with the term, in which historiography is characterised as a matter of understanding or interpreting events, and

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treated as distinct from the aim of explanation or prediction within the natural sciences. He characterised the ideas of Collingwood, Croce, and Dilthey as exemplar manifestations of the third meaning.

D’Amico concluded his chapter with the question of whether any common doctrine or position can ever be identified with the term historicism. He advises that commentaries on this topic should be cautious and resist finding a single central meaning for what seems more properly a family of problems. The term once coined can therefore be simply attributed to past thinkers who of course never used it. According to D’Amico, ‘historicism is a set of reasons for marking off the study of history and culture from the natural sciences in terms of theory of knowledge and/or the nature of the object studied.’

He, however, stressed that, even in the version of historiographic interpretation, historicism is not properly characterised as rejecting causal analyses in historiography or explanation by empirical evidence. Furthermore, he maintained that it would be a mistake to simply treat historicism as another name for relativism or as a form of scepticism. Rather, historicism can be ‘properly understood as a family of arguments for thinking knowledge of the past is possible, assuming any knowledge is possible.’

Finally, Andrew Reynolds’ attempt to answer the question ‘What is Historicism?’ resulted in, to date, the most comprehensive classification of the numerous historicists’ positions, comprising five categories: ‘mundane historicism,’ ‘methodological historicism,’ ‘Popperian historicism,’ ‘epistemic historicism,’ and ‘total historicism.’ ‘Mundane historicism’ is primarily a methodological rule, relying upon the premise that ‘to be understood properly things must be considered within their historical contexts.’ No one operates within a vacuum – philosophers and scholars are always trained in a tradition of some kind and are thinking in response to other traditions and thinkers. Because traditions and the problems with which they deal with change throughout time, one must become familiar with them so as to better understand the thinker or thinkers in questions.

Next, Reynolds considers ‘methodological historicism.’ The origin of this position is associated with eighteenth century thought. Reynolds maintains that the classic expression of this premise is found in works by Vico, Dilthey, and Collingwood. The claim here is that while the natural sciences are concerned with very general trends and repeatable phenomena, which can be explained by deduction from general laws, history deals with highly contingent, unrepeatable and particular events. Moreover, since the historian’s objective is the understanding of specifically human events, the natural

204 Reynolds, “What is Historicism?,” 275-287.
205 Reynolds, “What is Historicism?,” 276.
approach is to try to understand the intentions of the agents involved, and to discern the significance of their actions for future events. History is too complex and riddled with contingency for general laws to be of much utility. Moreover, explanation in history requires a sympathetic understanding of the motives of human agents; it is a hermeneutic activity. And while foreknowledge of an agent’s motives might permit prediction of the agent’s behaviour, it is a well-known adage that each particular act results in a multitude of unforeseeable reactions.

Reynolds continues that ‘Popperian historicism’ stems from the premise that ‘there are to be found in history general laws, rhythms, or patterns. And with these the social sciences can make predictions about the future.’ It is immediately obvious that this version of historicism is at odds with the previous one. For what has been called ‘methodological historicism’ consists in the denial that one can make use of general laws for prediction-making in history. Yet despite this, Reynolds suspected that for the sake of having a convenient handle that will bring readily to mind all the important associations, no better title can be found than ‘Popperian historicism.’ The position Popper had in mind was that of Hegel and Marx, who he characterised as being obsessed with the idea of discerning in history general laws of development or ‘evolution.’ In fact, the nineteenth century was rife with this kind of speculation about historical evolution. A common element in such speculations is an ‘organismic’ model of societies. Each nation, race or state is perceived as a distinct unit playing its part in an overall pattern of unfolding or development, just as individual cells differentiate themselves during embryological development for the sake of the resulting organism. For Hegel, all former nations were building up to the Prussian state in which the idea of freedom had achieved its final and fully developed form. Comte, the founder of positivism, was also mentioned in this regard. His law of three stages of social-intellectual development is just such a kind of general historical pattern.

While all the previously discussed historicist theses were mainly methodological, Reynolds offered two more, mostly focused on epistemology and value theory. ‘Epistemic historicism’ is based on the notion that ‘standards of rationality are not fixed and eternal, but change over time.’ According to Reynolds, once it is allowed that reason is not a Platonic essence that can be formalised into a rigorous system of axioms and rules of inference binding on all rational agents for all times, then some thinkers are quick to point out that perhaps all ‘modernist’ passion for logical thought is just that, a fancy for one species of behaviour among many possible alternatives. He explained that, in many ways, this was what the Romantic reaction to modern science and the Enlightenment, by people like Herder, was all about. The prospects of pluralism concerning rational behaviour strikes as essentially more ‘democratic’ and leads to the last version of historicism: ‘total historicism’.

Applicable to the entirety of a culture and its ideals, ‘total historicism’ is expressed by the idea that ‘there are no absolute historical values of any kind, rather all ideals are local and relative to a

206 Reynolds, “What is Historicism?,” 277.
207 Reynolds, “What is Historicism?,” 277.
particular historical culture and period. As historian Michael Stanford explained, historicism makes the claim that ‘all social and cultural phenomena are historically determined, and therefore have to be understood in terms of their own age’. This form of historicism is typically called ‘relativist.’ Whereas epistemic historicism still allowed hope for a convergence to objective knowledge and styles of reasoning, this thesis draws the more radical conclusion that the very concepts of ‘truth’, ‘objectivity’, ‘reason’, ‘scientific knowledge’, etc. are merely social constructions favoured by a particular culture at a particular time in history.

Lee and Beck’s, D’Amico’s, and Reynolds’ texts clearly show that historicism acquired various meanings in the philosophy of history and that the term has been used in different – and sometimes contradictory – manners. However, if the term is to be employed intelligibly in the further course of this research, it requires a single definition. This thesis utilizes the explanation proposed by Frederick Beiser. Along the line of Beiser’s position, and fully acknowledging the intricacy and ambiguity of the concept, this thesis favours the idea, formulated by Meinecke and mentioned earlier in this chapter, that historicism should be perceived as an intellectual revolution that profoundly influenced the thought-structure of Western culture. According to Meinecke, historicism, or a historical way of thinking, replaced the older ahistorical paradigm that dominated the Western way of thinking until the mid-eighteenth century. The ahistorical way of thinking conceived of human nature, morality and reason as universal, whereas historicists saw them as relative and changing. Asserting that values, beliefs, and actions are determined by, and contained in, the historical causes and contexts, historicism rejected the possibility of a universal worldview beyond one’s age.

Beiser bases his definition on Troeltsch’s position quoted earlier in this chapter, that historicism means ‘the fundamental historicisation of all our thinking about man, his culture and his values.’ Beiser explains that:

To historicize our thinking means to recognize that everything in the human world – culture, values, institutions, practices, rationality – is made by history, so that nothing has an eternal form, permanent essence or constant identity which transcends historical change... Therefore... the essence, identity or nature of everything in the human world is made by history, so that it is entirely the product of the particular historical processes that brought it into being. In other words, among things human, there is no distinction between a permanent substance and changing accidents, because even their substance is the product of history. The particular causes that have brought human things into being make them

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208 Reynolds, “What is Historicism?,” 278.
what they are; and these causes are utterly historical, i.e., they depend on a specific context, a definite time and place.\textsuperscript{213}

Beiser asserts that historicism resulted from the efforts to create a science of the human world, equal to the natural sciences. He identifies two premises that the general thesis of historicism is based on:

First, that there is a sufficient reason for everything that exists or happens in the human world. Second, that these reasons are historical, i.e., that they depend on a specific temporal context, particular circumstances at a particular time. Together, these premises mean that everything in the human world is the product of its historical causes, that it is made by its specific temporal context.\textsuperscript{214}

In addition to the central historicist thesis of the omnipresence of historical change, Beiser crystallised two defining principles of historicism – the principle of individuality, and the principle of holism. The former relates to the idea that the defining subject matter of history – and the object of historical research – is the \textit{individual}, who exists at a particular time and place. The later presupposes that the whole is prior to the parts, and irreducible to them. In other words:

The individual human being is not a self-sufficient and independent unit but that its very identity and existence depends on its place within a whole, the wider social, historical and cultural world of which it is only a part. According to this holism, society, state, culture or epoch is not an aggregate or composite, which consists solely in its parts, each of which exists independent of the whole; rather it is an indivisible whole or unity, which determines the very identity of its parts, none of which can exist apart from it.\textsuperscript{215}

The following chapters will show that architects from the period of approximately 1750-1950 perceived of architecture along the lines of Beiser’s interpretation of historicism. For most of them, the causes of architecture were utterly historical and dependant on a specific context, a definite time and place. The concept of holism is evident in the idea, advocated by historicist architects, that architecture is inextricable from society, culture, and the epoch. The principle of individuality is closely related to the concept of holism. Accepting the premise of unity of architecture with a society, culture, or epoch, historicist architects recognized that, within the stream of history, every society, culture or epoch are individual – unique, different from each other, and determined by specific factors. This uniqueness, or individuality, of different historic periods gave rise to the idea of different epochs from architectural history (i.e. Classical Greece, Roman, Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, etc.). Having acknowledged the individuality of different historical epochs, historicist architects started to think about the uniqueness of their own age, and architecture that would express it best. The principle of individuality informed the idea of ‘building for the age,’ resulting in a long search for architectural forms expressive of the

\textsuperscript{213}Beiser, \textit{The German Historicist Tradition}, 2.
\textsuperscript{214}Beiser, \textit{The German Historicist Tradition}, 3.
\textsuperscript{215}Beiser, \textit{The German Historicist Tradition}, 5.
times. Finally, Beiser notes that the central historicist thesis was ‘the omnipresence of historical change’. Calvin Rand, Lee and Beck and others dubbed this idea of historical change, which informed historicist understanding of history, the principle of development. The principle of development, described by Lee and Beck as the polar opposite of the historicist approach to history: ‘the historical process within which individuality manifests itself,’ was essential for the idea about the historical development of architecture. This thesis recognizes holism, individuality, and development as the main qualities of historicist architecture. The following chapters will explore them in greater detail, through the examples of architectural ideas that emerged in the period 1750-1950, and, finally, a series of specific buildings.

2.3 Historicism as a Worldview

The previously illustrated classifications proposed by Lee and Beck, D’Amico and Reynolds clearly demonstrate that the notion of historicism has a great plasticity. They have eloquently argued that there can be no one meaning of historicism, only several. Despite the perplexing variety of definitions, scholars have mainly treated historicism as a strictly intellectual problem, confined to the domain of the abstract and, most often, academic thought. Similarly, the debates assembled around the previously discussed essentially relativistic ‘crisis of historicism’, which peaked between the world wars, were often portrayed as intellectual exchanges among the period historians and philosophers in Germany. This general reading of historicism as a concept exclusive to the fields of history and philosophy, and the ivory tower of academia, has been challenged by more recent scholarship in one important respect. A number of researchers have argued that Historismusdebatte (debate on historicism) occurred in a variety of scholarly disciplines, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Attempts have been made to trace these debates over historicist ‘historical relativism’ across the humanities, in domains as diverse as law, literature, and theology.

Drawing upon the writings of Wilhelm Dilthey, Ernst Troeltsch, and Friedrich Meinecke, Calvin Rand proposed that it is possible to condense the two meanings of historicism underlying the variety of definitions, which would allow an intelligible and more precise use of the term. He argued that ‘historicism as a way of thinking can justifiably be defined as a methodology at the least and as a world-view, Weltanschauung, at the most.’ As a methodology, historicism entails a body of formal concepts and principles to guide the historian in their study of past events. As a Weltanschauung,

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216 Beiser, The German Historicist Tradition, 3.
Historicism designates a comprehensive view of humans and their world, based upon an analogous body of concepts.

Kurt Nowak attributes the overwhelming success of historicism, in and outside academia, to its ability to explain a world witnessing rapid change and accelerating complexity more convincingly than any other worldview available to educated citizens in the mid-nineteenth century. According to Nowak, historicism offered a worldview in which not Enlightenment’s reason or natural law but history served as a primary mode of orientation in the world. Historicism, its different variations, assumed not simply that the present was a product of the past, but more specifically that the present was a stage in a process of evolution in which the spirit (Geist) characteristic of a particular people or nation came to realise itself. Not all historicists, of course, were as confident in tracing this realisation of the spirit as was Hegel, in his grandiose philosophy of history. But even Hegel’s sharpest critics, such as Ranke, shared the idea that history was essentially a process constituted by the organic unfolding of ideas over time. Historicism thus offered a worldview that embedded the experiences of change into a narrative of progressive development. Discussing the influence of historicism, Wolfgang Hardtwig even asserted that it can be interpreted as a religion of history (Geschichtsreligion).

Friedrich Jaeger argued that historicism not only fascinated an intellectual elite but was appropriated by educated middle classes throughout at least the German Empire. Because of its ability to connect past and present, inspiring thoughts about the future, historicism, in Jaeger’s analysis, offered ‘all-comprising perceptions of meaning and continuity in human ways of life through the medium of a historical consciousness, historical justification,’ and, by consequence, ‘a specifically historical justification’ of what counted as valid moral standards. Quoting Karl Mannheim’s famous description of historicism as ‘an intellectual force of extraordinary significance… the real agent of our worldview, a principle which not only organizes like an invisible hand, the whole of the work of the human sciences but also permeates everyday life,’ Jaeger explains that historicism in this sense served as a system of meaning, a mode of interpreting the world, which enabled people in times of rapid change to see a relation between where they came from and where they were heading to. In a context of modernisation and historicisation, historicism’s genealogical thought structure offered the educated middle classes a means for maintaining a continuity with the past while sustaining their hopes for stable and steady societal progress in future.

In his study of historicism in 1840s Berlin, John Toews calls this the ‘historical principle,’ ‘the implications of which resonated far beyond the squabbles between members of the Hegelian School and the Historical School’ epitomised by Ranke.\textsuperscript{225} The historical principle was the belief that individuals and collectives could best conceive of themselves in historical terms. It was an attempt ‘to redefine membership in various communities – religious, ethnic, ethical, and political – as historical identifications, that is, in terms of the subjective identification of individuals with a shared past or public memory.’\textsuperscript{226} This principle not only characterised the ‘narrowly defined academic historicism’ that generations of historians have learned to associate with Ranke,\textsuperscript{227} but also more broadly inculcated itself into the culture of historicism that is the subject of Toew’s book.

For the scholars just cited, the crisis of historicism that increasingly haunted Europe from the early decades of the twentieth century onward was, above all other things, a collapse of the nineteenth-century historical principle. It was rooted in a growing inability to define identity in historical terms. In the aftermath of the world wars, for people who had learned to see themselves in terms of history, who positioned themselves in genealogical narratives, who had defined themselves as heirs to traditions that they had hoped to develop further in the future, the awareness that history could be dramatically different than expected not only destroyed certain versions of their past, but also challenged their ‘historical identity.’ When, in contexts of sudden change and unexpected upheaval, historical development turned out to be less steady and progressive than historicism had assumed, an entire worldview was put on trial. Thus, for all three authors, the crisis of historicism was not a strictly philosophical problem in the realm of neo-Kantian epistemology, but the shattering of a thought structure widely shared among the German middle class.

Conclusion: Holism, Individuality and Development in the Context of Architecture

This thesis is aligned with the positions that the scope of historicism, perceived essentially as a way of thinking, was significantly broader than the German and academic contexts. Rooted in the complex understanding of human historicity, historicism was a specific worldview that engulfed Western culture in the aftermath of the Enlightenment. Since the second half of the eighteenth century, a change in the way the Western world perceived of history – and, consequently, itself – has been clearly observable. Accepting the concepts of holism (the idea of societies, cultures, and epochs as an indivisible wholes or unities, determining the very identity of its parts), individuality (uniqueness of various historical periods and human environments), and development (almost organic evolution of certain themes in the course of history, which was not governed by laws, but by intrinsic set of specific factors) historical self-identity of the Western cultures changed inevitably.

\textsuperscript{225} Toews, \textit{Becoming Historical: Cultural Reformation and Public Memory in Early Nineteenth-Century Berlin.}
\textsuperscript{226} Toews, \textit{Becoming Historical,} XV.
\textsuperscript{227} Toews, \textit{Becoming Historical,} XVI.
As a worldview, historicism permeated everyday life and creativity. As a result, the concept is applicable in the research of architecture of the period. As the new historical self-consciousness developed, the need to plastically express the unique conditions of the present age emerged. By the end of the nineteenth century, the general attitude was that the past historical styles were not expressive of the present time, nor suitable for the needs of the period. The early twentieth century witnessed the horrors released upon the world during the First World War. Its aftermath strengthened the attitude, perpetuated after the Second World War, that the world had changed, and, therefore, so must architecture. Additionally, the firm confidence in the past, which had been serving as the driving force for the majority of architects who believed in learning from history, was deeply shaken.

The once unwavering belief in the past has been superseded with an even stronger confidence in the present – all for the sake of the future, one that would not be hindered by new wars. Holism informed the understanding of architecture as inextricable from the broad conditions of the period. Zeitgeist, the embodiment of the historicist concepts of holism and individuality, defined as the general set of ideas and beliefs typical of a particular period in history, continued to be a driving force behind the Modernist creative achievements, governed by the need to define and respond to the specific needs of the twentieth century. The concept of development was most obviously present in the work of the twentieth-century traditionalists. Insisting on the importance of learning from architectural history, the confidence in development was clearly observable in the general belief that a new style of architecture could not simply be invented. For traditionalist architects, a style of architecture that would be truly expressive of the present times ought to naturally develop from the entirety of human experience and traditions, the same way the period societies did – hence, the caution towards the radical ideas of the Modern Movement. In the works and theoretical exercises of the pioneers of the Modern Movement, the concept of development is observable in their belief that, rejecting the previous century and a half of architectural ‘atrocities,’ it was, in fact, their architecture that continued the natural course of architectural history, interrupted sometime during the eighteenth century. The following chapter explores the historicist paradigm in architectural history ranging roughly from the 1750s until the Modern Movement in the twentieth century.
Chapter 3. Architectural Historicism

Chapter 2 has considered numerous definitions of the term historicism and discussions of its various meanings in its native disciplines of philosophy and history. It has shown that it is possible to condense the two meanings of historicism, underlying the variety of definitions. On one hand, historicism can be defined as a methodology that had originated from the academic tradition, which entails a body of formal concepts and principles to guide the historian in their study of past events. On the other, some scholars maintain that historicism has not remained isolated within the university context and academic debates in the field of the philosophy of history. Rather, as an outlook, a manner of thinking deeply rooted in the way individuals conceive of history and, consequently, their own self-identity and position in its course, historicism spread across Western culture. As a worldview, historicism designates a comprehensive view of humans and their world, permeating the intellectual climate and creative efforts of Western tradition since the second half of the eighteenth century until approximately the mid-twentieth century.

In contrast to the philosophy of history, architectural historiography, generally, provides a relatively uniform and rather simplified definition of the term. This chapter challenges the conventional interpretations of architectural historicism, aiming to show that it was a specific thought mechanism developed in relation to history, yet ultimately focused on the unique conditions of the present, which informed a specific motivation behind architectural design. Altering the way in which Western societies conceived of history, historicist thinking influenced the emergence of the new historical self-consciousness. History was perceived as a succession of various periods, unique and shaped by specific sets of factors. In architectural theory and practice, the consequences of this novel outlook became more apparent from the second half of the eighteenth century. This belief gave rise to a crisis in architectural thinking that intensified during the nineteenth and climaxed in the twentieth century.

The chapter argues that the architecture of historicism, marked by conscious efforts to architecturally express – and influence – the unique conditions of the period and society, could be regarded as a distinct epoch of architectural history, ranging approximately from the second half of the eighteenth until the mid-twentieth century. The goal here is not to reduce the architectural achievements of the two centuries to a single impetus to build for the age. However, fully acknowledging the complexity of various architectural theories and design modes of the period, this thesis asserts that a unifying thread can be clearly observed in all of them – a conscious effort to develop architecture expressive of the unique qualities of the period that produced it. The chapter opens with a discussion of the term historicism in architectural historiography, followed by a more detailed exploration of the concept in the architecture of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.
3.1 The Meaning of Historicism in the History of Architecture

The previous chapter has shown the wide variety of meanings and definitions that historicism has acquired in the fields of philosophy and history. In comparison, architectural historians and theorists approached it rather simplistically, even since the German art historian Herman Beenken introduced the term in writing about architecture in 1938. Since the second half of the twentieth century, the use of the term by architectural historians and theorists followed an upward trend. Three insufficiently robust accounts largely inform the general understanding of historicism within the recent architectural scholarship. First, in the broadest terms, historicism is frequently associated with the architecture of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, architectural historians have postulated two general meanings of historicism. On one hand, architectural scholars widely equate historicism with a specific current of historicist thinkers (Hegel, Spengler, Popper), who asserted that human reasoning, decisions, and behaviours are historically determined. On the other, scholarship has contributed to the establishment of perhaps the most common use of the term historicism – to denote architecture created with the employment of historical forms and elements. This thesis argues that, though valuable and relevant for some understanding of the concept, the current accounts of historicism in architectural historiography are too narrow. First, historicist ideas informed Western conceptions of architecture for a period longer than a single century. Thus, it should not be considered as an exclusively nineteenth-century topic. Moreover, the deterministic interpretations should be broadened to take into consideration the full complexity and the wider implications of architectural historicism. Finally, interpretation of historicism as merely an inspiration by architectural history is vague and imprecise.

The recent scholarly (mis-)understandings of the term historicism are the result of architectural theories of the early proponents of the Modern Movement. Historiography widely associates historicism in architecture with determinism for two main reasons. First, it echoes the tradition of the early Modernist historians, who had been strongly influenced by the ideas of Karl Popper. For example, David Watkin notes Gombrich’s description of the impact of attending in 1936 a seminar at which Popper presented his ideas on historicism, which he was to publish in 1944-45: ‘This deadly analysis

of all forms of social determinism derived its urgency from the menace of totalitarian philosophies which nobody at that time could forget for a moment. On the other hand, recent scholarship explains the Modernist obsession with the spirit of the age in the context of determinist historicism. Similarly, simplifying the definition of architectural historicism as a formal inspiration with the past stems from the Modernist reaction against the early twentieth-century traditionalist architects. The Modernist historians supported this criticism. Equating historicism with the early twentieth-century traditionalist architecture, they set the course for future confusion around the term.

Discussing ‘architecture called traditional in the twentieth century,’ Henry-Russell Hitchcock described historicism as a ‘clumsy’, yet relatively accurate, term matched by no other viable adjective. According to Hitchcock, historicism, ‘quite simply… means the re-use of forms borrowed from the architectural styles of the past, usually in more or less new combinations.’ It is interesting that Hitchcock decided to use the term historicism, having in mind how rarely it had appeared in the American architectural historiography of the period. Hitchcock offered a rather basic explanation of its meaning, and asserted that ‘for 20th-century architecture that continued the historicism of the 19th century the usual name in English is “traditional”.’ Hitchcock’s choice was probably influenced by the traction historicism gained in the concurrent American philosophical discourse, following the appearance of Karl Popper’s Poverty of Historicism first published in 1957.

Nikolaus Pevsner also employed historicism disparagingly, to refer to architects influenced by past styles. Pevsner used the term pejoratively, to denote the architecture of the nineteenth century – but not of the eighteenth – in the penultimate chapter of An Outline of European Architecture titled ‘The Romantic Movement, Historicism, and the Beginning of the Modern Movement, 1760-1914’. In 1961, Pevsner even warned against the resurgence of ‘historicism’ in modernist architecture. Presenting at a symposium Historismus und bildende Kunst, held in Munich in 1963, Pevsner repeated his definition of historicism as an attitude that imposes the contemplation and use of history as more essential than the discovery and development of the new systems, the ‘new forms of our own time.’

The previous chapter illustrated the change in the understanding of the role and efforts to develop specific methods of historical scholarship. More importantly, it has shown the change in the

235 Hitchcock, Architecture, 474.
236 Hitchcock, Architecture, 392.
way history was perceived since the early eighteenth century. Since this time, history was comprehended as a succession of specific epochs. Within the stream of history, every epoch is unique, influenced by specific sets of conditions. This outlook undermined the concept of universal values and led to the relativisation of meanings. Another important quality of the historicist way of thinking was its holism, which Frederick Beiser explained as the idea that the very existence of the individual human being depends on its place within a whole – the wider social, historical and cultural world of which it is only a part. For historicists, and according to holism, concepts such as society, culture or epoch are indivisible unities that determine the very identity of its parts – none of which can exist in isolation from it.\(^{240}\) Kurt Nowak attributed the success of historicism – in and outside of the university context – to its ability to convincingly ground the rapidly changing and increasingly complex world in the minds of nineteenth-century people.\(^{241}\) Historicism offered a worldview in which history, perceived as a succession of unique epochs, served as a primary mode of orientation in the world – not the universal qualities of the Enlightenment’s reason or natural law. Furthermore, historicism, in its different variations, assumed not simply that the present was a product of past, but more specifically that the present was a stage in a process of evolution, offering a worldview that translated the overwhelming experiences of change into a narrative of progressive development. Ultimately, the new understanding of the past altered the understanding of the present.

This thesis aims to explain the architectural production and theory of this turbulent period marked by the significant change of outlook. In addition to its central thesis of holism that informed the idea that architecture is inextricable from the broader historical and socio-cultural context, three main principles underlying architecture of the period c. 1750-1950 are distilled from the historicist theories – the concepts of holism, individuality and development. Unlike most of the positions previously presented in architectural historiography, this thesis proposes that architectural historicism is not a style, nor is it a specific design method. Influenced by the altered comprehension of history, the essence of architectural historicism is not the architectural past, but, in fact, the architectural present. The new historical consciousness made the architects historically self-conscious; it urged them to focus on their own period. What was it that made their own age different, special, or unique within the course of history? What was the most appropriate way to architecturally express it – to plastically convey the unique qualities of their own time and place? Architectural historicism, therefore, is not a specific approach to architectural design; it is not embodied in any specific form.

Architectural historicism could be defined as a conscious aspiration to architecturally express unique qualities of the present epoch, which increasingly dominated Western design culture from the early nineteenth until the mid-twentieth century. The epoch of architectural historicism was marked by a historical self-consciousness, heightened attitude towards the past, and the understanding of

\(^{240}\) Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition*, 4-5.
architecture as a socio-temporal and contextual construct defined by, and inextricable from, the unique qualities of the time and place of its creation. The motivation for designing, the drive behind the effort to create specific architectural forms, was the result of the awakened historical self-awareness of the architects and was bound up with the obsession to find ‘a style of our times’. The true manifestation of architectural historicism is the conscious efforts by generations of architects to answer the question, ‘In what style should we build?’ With historicism a new meaning and a new primary function were ascribed to architecture. Architecture became a socio-temporal and contextual construct. It reflected broader conditions, and – above all – a society of a certain period. Moreover, architecture was not considered merely a society’s reflection but also a tool used in the shaping of the latter. Introducing a temporal element into architecture, an historicist understanding of the historicity of time incorporated into design methodology the imperative to appropriately express the present.

The formulation of the question was preceded by the period of systematic research of and archaeological enthusiasm for the architectural past. Once the comprehensive scholarly framework was established, the initially ardent curiosity for the past dwindled. The architectural past certainly remained an important point of reference for design methodology in the following decades. However, it was the present day that haunted the designers. Self-aware of their own time, the generations of architects found themselves disoriented within the context of its historicity. And so a period of experimentation, of frantic stylistic pluralism, came to pass. The long period of search ultimately bore fruit. After a century of wandering, the question was finally answered, and architecture truly expressive of the Modern era developed. The solution was, indeed, found in relation to history – in the rejection of the recent architectural past, vocally expressed by the proponents of the Modern Movement.

Architectural historicism stretches over the period of approximately two centuries. It was preceded by a proto-historicist period of the eighteenth century. During this time, the previously mentioned ‘scientific mania for classification’ of the professional historians informed the scholarship on architectural history. Historians of architecture diligently collected, analysed, and categorised historical information. The period is marked by enthusiasm for historical discovery and a firm confidence in the quality of design informed by precedent study. The sentiment of the period gradually changed by the end of the century. The compass provided by the belief in universal values was lost, and the shadow of uncertainty fell over architectural design in the early 1800s. The period of historicist architecture is characterised by the conscious efforts to find the architectural expression of today. It was a turbulent epoch of experimentation, which ultimately lead to the highest achievement of historicism – the architecture of the Modern Movement. The timeline of historicism could be presented as follows:

1. **Proto-Historicism of the eighteenth century: Scientific ‘discovery’ of architectural history.**
   Focus on the architectural past. The question emerges;
2. Relativist Historicism of the nineteenth-twentieth centuries: Heightened historical self-consciousness. Focus on the architectural present. Relativism of values: stylistic pluralism. Experimental search for architecture expressive of the current time. The question is asked;

3. Determinist Historicism of the twentieth century: The search for the ‘style of our times’ culminates in the architecture of the Modern Movement. Determinism of the ‘spirit of the age’: uniform architectural expression. The question is answered.

3.2 The Eighteenth Century: Proto Historicism

The eighteenth century proto-historicism set the scene for the emergence of the driving force that would dictate the course of architectural history from the early nineteenth century to the appearance of postmodernism. Proto-historicist architecture shared two main characteristics with nineteenth and twentieth century historicism – a heightened attitude towards history, and the understanding of architecture as a specific socio-temporal construct. However, still lacking at this stage was the defining feature of historicist architecture – the uttermost obsession with the unique conditions of the present time.

Heavily influencing historical scholarship, a modern philosophy of history emerged in the eighteenth century. Contrasting the work of the previous epochs, modern historiography rested ‘on the discovery of man as a peculiarly historical being, subject to a development transcending the life of any individual, nation or race.’ Since this period, scholars became increasingly devoted to a more rigorous investigation of sources and a critical study of historical facts and processes. As the professional historians of the Enlightenment era dedicated themselves to the careful particularisation of the history of the Western world, the same enthusiasm for the past extended to the study of architectural history. The eighteenth-century architectural historicism functioned primarily as an historiographical phenomenon, enabling the establishment of an interpretative framework for the study and understanding of works of other cultures. This intellectual climate brought upon the first modern history of architecture, which attempted to approach its object of study, based on a specific methodology. Titled Entwurff einer historischen Arkitektur (Towards a Historical Architecture), it was an extensive study divided into five volumes written by the Austrian architect Johan Fischer von Erlach, first published in 1721.

For the first time in the history of Western architectural historiography, the title presented a comparative history of architecture that covered all periods from its origins up to the eighteenth century.

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The book was also innovative in its consideration of architectural production from civilisations other than Greek and Roman. Von Erlach not only endeavoured with a comprehensive scholarly contribution, but he also used this publication as a platform to communicate his idea of history as the new basis for architecture. Trevor Garnham notes that von Erlach clearly expressed the idea of an historical architecture in his design for the Karlskirche (1715-25) in Vienna.\textsuperscript{244} The building is a grandiose eclectic assemblage of elements from past architectural styles. In Garnham’s words, with the design solution for Karlskirche, von Erlach reached beyond the existing compositional conventions of the Baroque, ‘to explore a new way of grounding architecture as a synthesis of collage of its own history.’\textsuperscript{245}

Concurrently with the growing interest in the systematic research of the architectural past, Enlightenment scholars expressed a passion for the inquiry of the ‘first causes’ – the study of origins of any phenomena. The eighteenth-century quest for the origin of architecture entailed numerous, often conflicting, approaches. One of the most influential ideas of the period was proposed by the Jesuit priest, and later Benedictine Abbot, Marc-Antoine Laugier (1713-1769). In the famous \textit{Essai sur l’architecture} (Essay on Architecture) published in 1755, Laugier searched for the universal origins of architecture in the concept of the primitive hut.\textsuperscript{246} The hut embodied three basic architectural elements – the post, the lintel, and the gabled roof – and, essentially, represented the natural origins of architecture. Mary Hvattum described Laugier’s concept of origin as a highly abstract idea.\textsuperscript{247} According to Hvattum, Laugier transformed the notion of architectural origins into a Cartesian axiom.

Postulating a rational nature as the origin of architecture, Laugier’s origin theory evoked an architecture that represented nothing but its own structural principle. Though profoundly influential, Laugier’s proposition attracted a certain number of critics. One of the challengers was his contemporary, the Italian artist Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1788).\textsuperscript{248} Piranesi ridiculed the concept of the primitive hut. His etchings of Rome illustrated the idea that history, more precisely, the Etruscan stone buildings, was the source from which Roman architecture developed. It is not possible to claim with certainty that Piranesi was familiar with Vico’s writings. However, it is possible to interpret Piranesi’s idea in relation to Vico’s claim that the human mind knows no other reality than history because humans create history. What Piranesi proposed is that architecture emerges from its own history. Architecture is, obviously, a human creation. Creating architecture within a historical stream of development, architects know no other reality than architectural history and, therefore, draw upon it in its concurrent creations.

\textsuperscript{244} Garnham, \textit{Architecture Re-Assembled}, 13.
\textsuperscript{245} Garnham, \textit{Architecture Re-Assembled}, 15.
\textsuperscript{246} Marc Antoine Laugier, \textit{An Essay on Architecture} (Los Angeles: Henessey & Ingalls, 1977).
\textsuperscript{247} Hvattum, \textit{Gottfried Semper and the Problem of Historicism}, 30-35
Profoundly influenced by Laugier, Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849) also aimed to formulate a ‘theory of originating principles from which the arts is born.’ Quatremère’s proposition can be put in the context of the previously discussed paradigm, the one that Andrew Reynolds named the ‘mundane historicism’: ‘to be understood properly things must be considered within their historical contexts.’ In contrast to Laugier’s universalising approach, Quatremère maintained that the origin of architecture is a historically and geographically specific principle. For Quatremère, architectural form was a result of the particular conditions from which it originated – it was not an emanation of a universal principle. He distinguished between two types of architectural expression, which he named architectural character – caractère essential and caractère relative. While the former denotes universal and ideal types, the latter was a relative architectural expression. Caractère relative was dependent on different conditions, such as climate, terrain, or government. Sylvia Lavin notes that following Quatremère’s theory of the dependent architectural character, ‘any architecture – whether good or poor – could be seen as revelatory of human civilisation and thus as a profoundly social phenomenon.’ Furthermore, as stressed by Hvattum, Quatremère’s line of argument contributed to the perception of past architectural styles as relative phenomena, potentially available to choice – ‘architecture now could be treated as a conventional entity.’ This concept was crucial for nineteenth-century architecture, when relativisation reached its peak, resulting in rampant stylistic and theoretical pluralism.

The term ‘style’ has continued to attract the attention of architectural scholars until the present day. It had been used since the Renaissance to denote the specific characteristics of individual artists, but, as Caroline van Eck has shown, made its way into architecture in the first half of the eighteenth century. According to van Eck, the understanding of style in French architectural theory of the late eighteenth century was closely related to the rhetoric concepts of caractère, maniera, and genre. Various architectural genres were expressed by means of style. Style, in this context, presupposed variations within the universally valid architectural language of classicism, from which one could draw. However, the second half of the eighteenth century was a time of intellectual ferment. According to John Summerson, ‘the changes that became manifest in the arts about the year 1750, have less to do with style than with the complete reorientation of European man to his historic past.’


250 Andrew Reynolds, “What is Historicism?,” 276.

251 Lavin, *Quatremère de Quincy and the Invention of a Modern Language of Architecture*, 70.

252 Hvattum, *Gottfried Semper and the Problem of Historicism*, 42.

253 For example, an entire issue of the *Fabrications* journal was dedicated to the issue of style in architecture: *Fabrications: The Journal of the SAHANZ* 17, no. 2 (2007); Caroline van Eck, James McAllister, and Renée van de Vall, eds., *The Question of Style in Philosophy and the Arts* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Crook, *The Dilemma of Style*.


asserts that historical study became the bedrock of architectural theory between the years 1778 and 1872 at the Beaux-Arts Academy in Paris. Systematically taught by the elite centre of the profession, the architectural past defined and shaped the discourse of modern architecture. Beaux-Arts teaching accepted the basic historicist premise that no historical phenomenon could be understood in isolation. Relative factors of geographic and social situation – climate, geology, human institutions – and of temporal situation in a sequence of development, were deemed essential to understanding the formal appearance, materials, and expression of any given monument.

This new consciousness of history would come to replace a general deference to the classical tradition. The ‘historicisation of life,’ as proposed by Lee and Beck and discussed in Chapter 2, poured into architecture, and was reflected in the appreciation of various periods from the past. As a result, the authority of the classical orders was undermined, and re-attributing supremacy to a single style became impossible. The repertoire of classical elements remained a valid means of architectural expression. However, the appeal of classical architecture was no longer in the presumed universal qualities it encapsulated. Since the historical styles came to be associated with the values of the societies that produced them, the validity of classicism stemmed from the fact that it manifested the best possible conditions and the qualities of its creators.

The grasp of classicism remained firm in the second half of the eighteenth century. Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1798), the German art historian and archaeologist, played a crucial role in the production of the theoretical framework that consolidated the emerging neoclassical architecture. A historicist methodological approach involving an exact, scholarly comprehension of the past underlined Wickelmann’s approach to art history. According to Winckelmann, there was only one way ‘for the moderns to become great and perhaps unequalled,’ and he asserted that the greatness could be achieved ‘by imitating the ancients.’ Winckelmann sharply distinguished between copying and imitation. For him, copying was reduced to a single object. In contrast, imitation gathered information from multiple ‘single objects’ and composed anew from their best individual qualities, resulting in a ‘general beauty, and its ideal images, and is the way the Greeks took.’

Hence, Winckelmann did not propose an imitation of the Greek product. What he proposed was to understand and learn from the creative process of the masters from Antiquity. Winckelmann did not offer any guidance for architectural imitation – however, it can be assumed that the architect was to approach the design process in a similar fashion. Winckelmann wrote only one essay on architecture,

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259 Johann Joachim Winckelmann, Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture, cited in Eitner, Neoclassicism and Romanticism, 10.
“Observations on the Architecture of the Ancients,” published in 1762. Developing the relativist approach to architecture, Winckelmann challenged Vitruvius’ universal principles, and proposed, instead, that the formal criteria depended on aesthetic experience. The aesthetic experience introduced the concept of personal taste of the spectator that was, on its behalf, influenced by the specific set of circumstances that shaped the individual.

The relativism of architectural expression was furthered by the development of an interest in medieval architecture in the second half of the eighteenth century. The English and the Germans helped establish the Middle Ages as an equal to the classical tradition. Gothic was seen as an indigenous, organic tradition, native to these countries. Horace Walpole (1717-1797) was one of the protagonists of this new sensibility gaining strength in England in the second half of the eighteenth century. Not only did Walpole stimulate the fashion for Gothic novels with his *Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Novel*, published in 1764, but he also made a series of Gothic-inspired additions to his villa at Strawberry Hill (1749). At the same time, new theories of sensation were developed. They praised the individual over the universal, sensation over reason, and were partially associated with the emerging interest in Gothic architecture. Edmund Burke (1729-1797) argued in his *Inquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1765) that there were two primal passions that were prompted by the imagination – ‘self-preservation’ and ‘self-propagation’. Sublime were those objects that threatened self-preservation, evoking sensations such as fear through vastness, the infinite, or obscurity. Beauty, in contrast, originated in objects that inspired tenderness or pleasure, with the attributes such as delicacy of form and colour, smallness, or smoothness.

Dismissing the beauty of universal proportion that required the vehicles of reason, Burke maintained that the aesthetic experience was wholly direct and sensuous. Following this line of argument, the idea of the Picturesque emerged at the end of the century. Richard Payne Knight (1750-1824) asserted that the Picturesque belonged to the sense of the vision, and related to the objects that, though obviously not beautiful, were stimulating to the eye. Uvedale Price (1747-1829) noted that roughness, sudden variation, and irregularity were the qualities of the Picturesque in his *Essay on the Picturesque* (1794). Developing at the same time, the Romantic Movement was most clearly


264 Uvedale Price, *Essays of the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful: And on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape* (Farnborough: Gregg, 1971).
expressed through the philosophical writing of Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, whose ideas were transmitted through Wordsworth and Coleridge to England.²⁶⁵ Romantics challenged the Enlightenment description of the Middle Ages as the ‘dark age’, and saw it as more worthy than the classical tradition. They placed feeling over reason; the indigenous (medieval) over the imported (classical); and, ultimately, the individual over the universal.

3.3 The Nineteenth Century: Relativist Historicism

The most defining characteristic of historicist architecture is the ultimate commitment to the unique conditions of the present. This was a result of a newly emerged outlook, which was developed in the intellectual and scholarly efforts of the eighteenth century. Secularisation and standardisation of scholarship in the age of the Enlightenment influenced research of the architectural past. The nineteenth-century architects inherited knowledge from the extensive studies of the architectural achievements of the past epochs, meticulously researched by enthusiastic scholars. History of architecture was approached more systematically, and seen as a part of a whole, determined by specific climatic, geographical, cultural, and socio-economic conditions. Furthermore, architectural history was described as a succession of unique styles, associated with specific qualities of the societies and epochs that produced them. The relativist perspective was also supported by the Romanticist ideas that praised the individual in their challenge to the supremacy of reason and the universal.

Exploring the past, historicist architects discovered that every period and every nation had attained its characteristic style – consequently, to quote the words by Heinrich Hübsch (175-1863), ‘modern art must be a clear expression of the present.’²⁶⁶ Armed with extensive knowledge of the past, and influenced by the relativisation of values and meanings, the architects of the nineteenth century developed an historical self-conscious. They turned their attention to the present. What was the role architecture of their time played in the course of history? More importantly, what was the architecture of their time? This ‘dilemma of style’, as Mordaunt Crook named the long search for appropriate architectural expression of the ‘modern’ age, remained the essential feature of historicist architecture.²⁶⁷ For a century and a half, architects were driven by the obsessive need to develop building forms expressive of, as well as suitable for, the unique conditions of their time.

The strategies employed and arguments provided during the search for the appropriate style of the age were numerous, and often conflicting. However, it is interesting to note that the historicist

architectural styles emerging from this obsession with today were, as a rule, developed in relation to history. Regardless of the intensity or the dominant attitude of a position, the connection with history was always present. Positions could be strong, moderate, or feeble. Attitudes ranged from positive, neutral, to negative. The two opposing poles of the historicist outlook were, on one hand, an appreciation of past experience that consolidated the premise *historia magistra vitae est* (history is a teacher of life), and, on the other, a rejection of the past styles as proposed by the Modernist architects. It is necessary to note that the strong positive attitude for the architectural past did not condition a cohesive emotional and intellectual response to the architecture of the present. Hence, the content students of history, confident of their work based on the study of precedents, were the contemporaries of the architects left paralyzed in the face of the great achievements of the past, haunted by the feeling of self-doubt. As Ruskin noted, ‘we are oppressed by the bitter sense of inferiority… we are walled in by the great buildings of other times, and their fierce reverberation falls upon us without pause, in our feverish and oppressive consciousness of captivity.’

The general acceptance of the relativist nature of architectural styles had been firmly established by the early nineteenth century. According to Mari Hvattum, styles had come to be seen as the relative character of a particular civilisation, formed by specific cultural and material conditions. However, architectural styles were not solely considered as passive reflections of their time. Communicating the dominant societal values in the epoch that gave rise to them, styles were employed to inspire certain ideas and behaviours amongst the ever-growing urban populations. Therefore, the selection of style was not a matter of aesthetic preference: ‘rather, it was a vehicle for moral improvement as in Pugin, a symbol of national renewal as in Schinkel and Klenze, an expression of rationality and progress as in Hubsch, or the self-representation of a new social class as in the Vienna Ringstrasse.’

Anthony Alofsin remarked that the analogy of architecture as language is one of the oldest tropes in the traditions of Western European architecture. According to Alofsin, attempts to theorise architecture in linguistic terms date back to the early fifteenth century, when Vitruvius’ scriptures were rediscovered and a proto-historical consciousness conceived. Among other similarities, the expressive potential of architecture inspired a wide discussion of the connections between architecture and language since the mid-eighteenth century. Peter Collins notes that the appeal of this approach dwindled in the second half of the nineteenth century ‘probably because it lacks the scientific glamor possessed

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by analogies with living organisms and machines. Nonetheless, the idea that every individual style represented an autonomous system of meaning remained imprinted on the minds of nineteenth-century architects. Perceived as carriers of meaning, architectural styles of the past became a powerful tool for the creation of meaning in the present. With the nineteenth-century architectural theories, architecture was intertwined with the activist and moralising tendencies of its creators. This line of argument triumphed in the design philosophy of the Modern Movement.

Architectural ornament was considered as the most conventionalised manifestation of style in the nineteenth century. Debra Schafter notes that ornament was in the focus of the discussion of stylistic development emerging in the mid-nineteenth century. Prior to this period, architectural ornament was mostly perceived as a descriptive element through which architecture could revive itself. Influenced by the nineteenth-century theories, ornament had become a powerful visual stimulus and a carrier of meaning. Analysing the writing by four influential nineteenth-century theorists – John Ruskin, Owen Jones, Gottfried Semper, and Alois Riegl – Schafter identities four general functions assigned to ornament in the architectural theory of the second half of the century.

According to Schafter, in the most literal sense, ornament operated as a reflective emblem, conveying a complete concept through its representational essence. Iconography of architectural ornament – the image of a natural element, an object or a human body – allowed the emblem to communicate a meaning independent of its context. Illustrating ornament as a reflective emblem, Schafter discussed the interpretation by Ruskin, who viewed ornament as a representation of a divinely ordered natural world and related it to the fundamental tenets of Christian doctrine. Distilling from forms a vocabulary of conventionalised motifs, ornament becomes a sign. In Schafter’s words, the arbitrary character of the sign ‘permits the ornamental composition to define and order an object by transferring the rational laws of nature (proportion, balance, unity) to the man-made article.’ In contrast to emblems, the meaning of ornamental signs is entirely dependent on its context. Schafter used a theory by Owen Jones (1809-1874) as an example of ornament functioning as a sign. In his extensive study, the Grammar of Ornament (1856), Owen Jones asserted that decoration should naturally be developed from the construction, maintaining that ornament should display the rigorous order that dictated surface structure in nature.

Designating an underlying concept – not in reflecting the appearance or the structure – ornament can operate as a symbol. Understanding the function of a building’s parts, the spectator senses a comprehensive order. As a symbol, ornament designates the function of the part, convening

274 Schafter, The Order of Ornament, 2.
275 Schafter, The Order of Ornament, 3
276 Schafter, The Order of Ornament, 3.
artistically the manner in which the building was made. Symbols are mediators between the whole building and of its parts. Analysing the theory of Gottfried Semper, Schafter demonstrated that the German architect searched for the underlying functions and the creative roots from which architecture emerged. For Semper, ornament was a functional symbol of the creative process. Finally, appealing directly to the senses of its audience as a perceptual *signifier*, ornament conveys the essential characteristics of a building. It recalls past sensory events, stimulating optical and tactile sensations. Triggering a perceptual memory of a past sensory activity, ornament helps the spectator in understanding formal elements and their relationships. According to Schafter, Alois Riegl defined the perceptual signifiers contained in ornamental compositions, identifying varying psychological dispositions that dictate stylistic schemas and proposing stages in which cultural groups throughout history have ordered and perceived information.277

The nineteenth-century fascination with ornament was inherited by twentieth-century theorists. Willingly or not, the twentieth-century architects ascribed a significance to the problem of architectural ornament, continuing to use it as a tool in the search for the architectural expression of their time. Whether perceived as the enemy or the saviour of architecture, ornament remained a popular topic. Three criticisms offered by unrelated thinkers – Adolf Loos (1908),278 Claude Bragdon (1915),279 and Talbot Hamlin (1916)280 – clearly reflect the divergence of early twentieth-century opinion, as well as the important place ornament held in the period’s understanding of architecture. Both Loos and Bragdon criticised contemporary eclecticism. However, the solutions they offered were quite different. Loos’ sharp rejection of ornament became iconic, while Bragdon aspired to invent elaborate geometrical solutions, based on his understanding of the four dimensions. In the most traditional of the three, in his chapter titled ‘Criticism of Ornament,’ Hamlin asserted that ornament is the climax of architecture. Hamlin’s only criticism was the imitation of stone in terracotta, a practice that he described as ‘an insidious artistic insincerity.’281 The three also addressed different audiences – Hamlin a general reader, Bragdon spoke to all artists, while Loos, preaching the ‘aristocrat’ ideal,282 communicated to a highly-cultured individual. Though the three positions were clearly of different pretensions – Hamlin strived to educate, Bragdon to enlighten, Loos to reform – they continued the nineteenth-century efforts, and consistent with the driving force of the period, the need to formulate an architecture expressive of the present conditions.

3.3.1 Articulating the Question: ‘In What Style Should We Build?’

Historicist architecture entailed a consciousness of unique traits of different epochs: a self-awareness of one’s place within the stream of history; and a purposeful aspiration to develop architectural forms expressive of the unique conditions of the present time. The question that would continue to haunt architects in the following century and a half was for the first time formulated in 1828. It was the year of the publication of a short book written by the German architect Heinrich Hübsch (1795-1836). The title formulated the question that settled heavily in the mind of architects: In What Style Should We Build? Hübsch was a student of the established Neo-Classicist Friedrich Weinbrenner (1766-1826), had studied in Rome, and travelled to Greece. However, he asserted that continuing to imitate classical antiquity would not be fruitful for the German architecture of his period. Instead, Hübsch set out ‘to establish a new style, alive to the demands of the present.’

In the search for a new style, nineteenth-century architects were faced with a challenge of innovation: new living and working conditions; new materials; new building processes; new building types; new perceptions of history; and a new consciousness of the present time. Crook notes that Professor Thomas L. Donaldson (1795-1885) kept on asking in lectures, letters, and books: ‘Are we to have an architecture of our period, a distinct, individual, palpable style of the 19th century?’ In his influential History of Christian Art, published in 1847, Lord Lindsay (1824-1913) wrote about the potentials of the Revivalist approach, trying to contribute to the affirmation of ‘a distinctly new style of Architecture, expressive of the Epoch in human progression of which Great Britain is the representative… founded not on servile imitation, but on sound principles and the inspiration of genius.’ Similarly, George Gilbert Scott wrote: ‘I am no medievalist. I do not advocate the styles of the middle ages as such. If we had a distinctive architecture of our own day, worthy of the greatness of the age, I should be content to follow it; but we have not.’ An article published in the Sydney Morning Herald notes that one of the questions debated at ‘the great artistic congress’ held at Antwerp in 1861 was: ‘why our epoch, superior in so many respects to former centuries, has not its own particular form of architecture.’ From its very first volume in 1843, the Builder consistently called for a new style: a style that would emerge ‘from the workshop, the mine, and the laboratory.’ But by 1853 the same journal could see no way out of the ‘dungeon’ of archaeology.

283 Heinrich Hübsch, “In What Style Should We Build?” in In What Style Should We Build: The German Debate on Architectural Style, ed. Wolfgang Herrmann (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 63-103.
285 Quoted in: Crook, The Dilemma of Style, 100.
286 Lord Lindsay, Sketches of the History of Christian Art (London: John Murray, 1847), ccxlvi.
289 Quoted in: Crook, The Dilemma of Style, 101.
This obsession with the idea of a new style was a novel concept—prior to the late eighteenth century, the prevalent architectural style was generally the undisputed, predominantly accepted language of the age. However, the altered understanding of history made architects self-conscious of their own place within the historical course, obstructing a spontaneous development of architecture. Fully aware of the source of their problems, some of the architects were left paralyzed. George Gilbert Scott remarked that ‘it is reserved to us, alone of all the generations of the human race, to know perfectly our own standing-point, and to look back upon a perfect history of what has gone before us, tracing out all the changes in the arts of the past as clearly as if every scene in its long drama were re-enacted before our eyes.’

Scott believed that this knowledge of the past was ‘a hindrance rather than a help to us as artists,’ for it urged them to look back instead of fully concentrating their creative energies on the present. Similarly, asserting that there was no need for architects to wish to be considered artists, Sir Edmund Beckett remarked: ‘in the days when there was real architecture there was no architectural philosophy.’

Resulting from the new perception of history, the relativisation of values and meanings, a sense of creative disorientation marked architectural production for the longer part of the historicist era. Prior to the answer the Modernist architecture provided in the twentieth century, the relativist crisis of historicism shook the foundations of the architectural profession. Carl Böttcher (1838-1900) worded the disorientated state the newly acquired historical relativism left the majority of nineteenth-century architects in: ‘we would find ourselves alone in an immense void, having lost all the historical ground that the past had provided for us and for the future as the only basis on which further development is possible.’

At his lecture on architecture at University College London, Donaldson warned that theirs was:

A most critical period. We are all in fact in a state of transition. There is no fixed style now prevalent…. There is no predominant predilection nor acknowledged reason for adopting any one of the old styles of Art. We are wandering in a labyrinth of experiments, and trying by an amalgamation of certain features in this or that style of each and every period and country to form a homogenous whole with some distinctive character of its own, for the purpose of working it out into its fullest development, and thus creating a new and peculiar style. This movement has placed the Schools of all Countries in a state of great uncertainty; as yet we have no fine leading principle as a guiding star.

Mordaunt Crook noted the similar concerns put forward by professors Sydney Smirke (1798-1877) and George Aitchison (1825-1910). Smirke noted in 1864 that aesthetics had not kept pace with

Scott, Remarks on Secular and Domestic Architecture, 260.
time. He proposed eclecticism as the best chance of ultimately arriving at a consistent and original style, ‘worthy of the genius and civilisation of the 19th century.’ Three decades later, in 1891, Aitchison claimed that the architectural profession had been lost since the fifteenth century. According to him, there was no architecture of the nineteenth century. However, as will be demonstrated, if there indeed was no architecture of the nineteenth century, it was not for lack of trying.

3.3.2 Consequences of the Question: Eclecticism and the Pluralism of Formal Experimentation

Relativism of meaning and values robbed the nineteenth century architects of a single guiding design principle. However, though creatively disoriented, dissatisfied with the contemporary state of architecture, and of contradictory convictions with regards to the way out of the stylistic dilemma, they were unified in a common goal – towards a new architecture expressive of the unique conditions of their period. During the 150 years of historicist architecture, various strategies were employed in the search for the ‘style of our times’. Nonetheless, no matter whether inspired by the architectural past, vernacular forms, nature, or geometry, their core argument always remained the desire to express the specific contemporary conditions. The second opinion shared by the majority was a dissatisfaction with the state of architecture. Debra Schafter shows that, despite the differences in their approaches to the subject of style, Ruskin, Jones, Semper, and Riegl all agreed that the architectural production of their age ‘had fallen into an abysmal state’. Driven both by the dissatisfaction and the urge to ‘build for the age’, architectural historicism was characterised by a strong sense of innovation and experimentation.

However, for the major part of the historicist era, the eagerness to innovate did not necessitate the creation of previously non-existent architectural forms. In fact, though the demands for a ‘new’ style were ever-present, influenced by the historicist notion of development the majority of architects shared the opinion that it was impossible to invent a new style. For example, Edmund Beckett started his chapter on principles of construction with an explanation of why a new style could not be invented and, even if it could, it would be useless. Beckett remarked – quite prophetically – that ‘if a new one [style] were invented to-morrow, it would very soon be old, and would be only one more than we have already to choose out of and copy.’ Beckett was, like many of his contemporaries, concerned with the break in the sequence of style, and focused on finding a way to continue the natural development interrupted by their predecessors. Similarly, Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829), one of the protagonists of German Romanticism, warned against the attempt at ‘creating a new art, as it were, out of nothing.’

295 Quoted in Crook, The Dilemma of Style, 101.
296 Debra Schafter, The Order of Ornament, 15.
298 Friedrich Schlegel, Deutches Museum (Vienna: Camefinafchen Buchbandiung, 1812), 1:283.
In Prussia, the esteemed architect and urban planner, Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841) claimed that imitation was in opposition to history, because history never copied history. ‘The only true historical act is one that introduces in some way an extra, a new element, into the world, from which a new history is produced.’ However, Schinkel’s designs illustrate the position that innovation is not achieved through the invention of novel elements. Rather, the elements drawn from architectural history can be reassembled anew to offer innovation and yet establish a continuity with the past.

Described as the first architect to grasp the condition of modernity, Gottfried Semper (1803-1879) developed a theory of style he named ‘practical aesthetics’, proposing an innovative reading of history. For him, history was not identified with architectural styles, nor were the styles rooted in the construction forms and the values associated with the society that produced them. Instead, Semper asserted that architectural elements were derived from the materials and traditional ways of making the objects. As a result, he maintained that the architects of his time had to adapt the traditional types of built form because of the historical orientation of their age. Claiming that ‘no century can be erased from world history,’ Semper asserted that contemporary architecture ‘must therefore give some indication… of the connections between the present and the past centuries.’ Architects should neither copy from history, nor try to invent new forms. They should try and express new ideas with the old types: ‘architecture has over the centuries created its own store of forms from which it borrows the types for new creations; by using these types, architecture remains legible and comprehensible to everyone.’

In his introduction to the German debate on style, Wolfgang Hermann remarked that as the discussion about a style gained traction and revealed its complexity, the idea of inventing a new style ‘at a stroke’ or ‘par force’ was dismissed as ‘foolish’ and ‘misguided’. However, the issue of a new style was taken quite seriously by the Germans – and not only by the architects of the period. At the order of King Maximilian of Bavaria, the Akademie der Bildenden Kunste in Munich organised a competition in 1850 ‘to invent a new style’. Herrmann notes that the conclusion would be reached if the aftermath of the competition reflected a general attitude of the period: ‘styles are not made; they develop.’

Unified in the common desire to work toward the establishment of an architectural representation of all the material and nonmaterial factors that formed the character of their own time, historicists experimented with architectural forms. While experimenting, these architects consciously chose appropriate elements from different epochs and cultures. The result was a unique period of

300 Mallgrave, Gottfried Semper and Modern German Theory.
301 See: Hvattum, Gottfried Semper and the Problem of Historicism.
302 Semper, quoted in: Granham, Architecture Re-Assembled, 62.
303 Semper, quoted in: Granham, Architecture Re-Assembled, 62.
architectural history, marked by an intricacy of formal solutions previously unheard of, and, quite possibly, unimaginable. Eclecticism remained a dominant theme in architectural production from the second half of the eighteenth century until the emergence of the Modern Movement. As a philosophical doctrine, eclecticism had first appeared in France in the 1830s, with the writings of Victor Cousin. Two types of eclecticism are observable in the epoch of historicist architecture: (1) in a general sense, it was expressed through a pluralism of different styles existing side by side; and (2) in a particular sense, elements from different styles were used in design of a single structure.

In his *The Common Sense of Art* (1858), Beresford Hope (1820-1887), one of the British leaders of the Gothic Revival, popularised and linked the two terms – progressive and eclecticism – which can be described as the period’s leitmotifs. Mordaunt Crook used the phrase Progressive Eclecticism as a chapter title, proposing that it was used in the nineteenth century to characterize the architecture that: was designed with the use of historical styles; employed the most recent building technologies; and was expressive of the period’s ‘progress’. Along with several of his contemporaries, Hope believed in the synthesising potential of architecture. Firmly believing in the concept of development (and evolution), acknowledging the culturally legitimised achievements of the architectural past, these architects were convinced that any new style must have its basis in the previous ones. Associational thinking – architecture as embodied memory – and the idea of architectural propriety – style as an expression of status and of purpose – provided support for the eclectic approach to design. In an article published in the *Saturday Review*, Hope wrote about the style of the future, explaining that it would borrow from Gothic and, at the same time, incorporate the qualities of other styles: ‘it will be as massive as Egyptian… as light as Saracenic… and… proportioned like a Grecian temple.’ However, Hope maintained that ‘the main ingredient’ must remain Gothic, because it represented a universal emanation of the spirit of Christian Europe ‘in the days when that polity which is now overspreading the world was cradled… With such an origin, we believe that it must prove itself a germinating power in the germination of Europe, in both hemispheres…’ Hope remained a devoted eclectic throughout his career:

To be truly eclectic, we must be universally eclectic – we must eclect from everything which has been eclected; and we must assimilate and fuse everything that we eclect, for without such fusion the process remains after all only one of distributive collection… Ours is only eclecticism of the past… I imagine there will be an eclecticism of the future…


There will be the knowledge of all architecture of all ages and countries, out of which to absorb a variety of materials, every day augmented to an extent almost bewildering; and there will be processes, gigantic as steam power, or minute as photography, to abridge labour or to facilitate invention... [New materials – structural and decorative] must in time revolutionise all architecture; but I believe it will be a peaceful... revolution... [in the] good tradition of the old time.309

Beresford Hope maintained that this ‘absorption’ of historical ideals was the main aspiration, one that would inevitably lead to invention. Crook notes that the architect George Godwin (1813-1888) supported eclecticism – not as an end, but as a means of transition, while the Buildings News agreed that 'Englishmen are the most eclectic of the human race.'310 However, eclecticism was far from being a device confined to the borders of the UK – it marked the architectural production of the period across the Western world.

Based on the dominant source of formal inspirations, the eclectic experiments could roughly be grouped around three leading concepts – medievalism, classicism, and vernacular. It has to be noted that, though the discussions were frequent and sometimes rather heated, this classification was rather fluid, and the borders between the three were often blurry. As their theoretical thought transformed and matured, respecting the wishes of their clients, or, simply, eager to experiment, the architects often moved between the camps. Furthermore, the aforementioned idea of architectural propriety was often one of the key factors influencing the choice of style for different building types.

In Germany, a number of Romanticist architects led by Heinrich Hübsch proposed an eclectic combination of elements from Byzantine, Romanesque, and early Renaissance architecture, which came to be known as the Rundbogenstil. The new style proposed by Hübsch was to be based on materials, technical expertise, climate, and – most importantly – present needs. Hübsch explained that the round-arch style was imagined ‘as it would have evolved, had it developed freely and spontaneously, unimpeded by all harmful reminiscences of the ancient style.’311 Hübsch’s ‘materialistic’ theory of style was challenged by his contemporaries. For example, commenting on his treatise, Rudolf Wiegmann (1804-1865) accused Hübsch of suggesting that matter dominates mind.312 Wiegmann might have criticised Hübsch, however, he accepted Rundbogenstil as a way out of the stylistic dilemma. Discussing the topic in the following years, Wiegmann offered a specific analysis of the reason why this style had never fully developed. According to Wiegmann, it was interrupted in the thirteenth century by ‘an outbreak of eccentric rapture, an indulgence in emotion at the expense of reason, a relapse into religious mysticism.’313

309 Hope, The Common Sense, 13-14
310 Crook, The Dilemma of Style, 165.
311 See Hübsch, “In What Style Should We Build?” 63-103.
312 See: Rudolf Wiegmann, “Remarks on the Treatise In What Style Should We Build?” in In What Style Should We Build?: The German Debate on Architectural Style, 103-113.
Though the promising historical beginnings of the round-arched style were abandoned for Gothic, it could now be developed to perfection: ‘If we wish to relate our art to a style of the past, then it can only be one that has been neither fully exhausted nor completely developed.’\textsuperscript{314} Gottfried Semper endorsed these arguments while explaining his choice of the Romanesque style in his design for the Nikolaikirche in Hamburg (1844): ‘this style, whose truly national development was interrupted through the newly arrived element of the pointed arch, has not outlived its time as the Gothic did; it is therefore capable of being further developed.’\textsuperscript{315} Interestingly, the proponents of the Gothic architectural forms used similar arguments in their campaign for a Neo-Gothic style. They insisted that the spirit of Gothic art remained misunderstood and underdeveloped due to the domination of the priesthood and other historical conditions.

One of the most prominent supporters of the Gothic Revival in England was Augustus W. N. Pugin (1812-1852). Pugin opens his famous title \textit{An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England} with a scrutiny of the contemporary state of architecture:

We are just emerging from a state which may be termed the dark ages of architecture…

The breaking up of this wretched state of things has naturally produced a complete revulsion in the whole system of arts, and a Babel of confusion has succeeded to the one bad idea that generally prevailed. Private judgements run riot; every architect has a theory of his own… Oh! Miserable degradation!\textsuperscript{316}

Pugin maintained that this confusion was caused by the fact that ‘architecture of our times is not the expression of existing opinions and circumstances, but a confused jumble of styles and symbols borrowed from all nations and periods.’ He continued with a sharp criticism: ‘styles are now adopted instead of generated, and ornament and design adapted to, instead of originated by the edifices themselves.’\textsuperscript{317} Pugin warned against looking at prints of buildings, and trying to imitate them – a popular practice of the period. Pugin’s solution to the problem of stylistic pluralism is well-known. The adoption of a single style – Gothic. For Pugin, Gothic symbolised the integrated form of society and was the expression of an integrated system of building. Pugin’s line of arguments for the use of Gothic style resonated with the historicist ideas – he was set in the belief that Gothic Revival was warranted by religion, government, climate, and the wants of society.\textsuperscript{318} John Ruskin (1818-1900) was another influential protagonist of the Gothic renewal in nineteenth-century Britain. George Gilbert Scott wrote in 1857 that ‘no man, Pugin alone excepted, has so strongly influenced [our architecture, as Ruskin]… the effect of his writings has been enormous.’\textsuperscript{319}

\textsuperscript{314} Quoted in: Herrmann, “Introduction.” 11.
\textsuperscript{315} Quoted in: Herrmann, “Introduction.” 11.
\textsuperscript{316} A. Welby Pugin, \textit{An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England} (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1895), 1-2.
\textsuperscript{317} Pugin, \textit{An Apology}, 5-7.
\textsuperscript{318} Pugin, \textit{An Apology}, 37.
\textsuperscript{319} Quoted in: Crook, \textit{The Dilemma of Style}, 69
For both Pugin and Ruskin, Gothic was a style that could be universally applied. However, their interpretation of the most important architectural qualities differed – for Pugin, those were structure and function; for Ruskin, aesthetic excellence. Driven by the historicist obsession with the unique period and physical conditions, Ruskin highlighted the importance of establishing an appropriate style. Criticising the invention of a new style, Ruskin voiced this need: ‘we want no new style in architecture… But we want some style.’ Following the universal adoption of a single style, a new style suitable for a new world would develop from its adaptation. However, Ruskin proposed a choice of four styles – he did not make the choice himself: Pisan Romanesque; Early Gothic of the western Italian republics; Venetian Gothic; and early English Decorated. Though he theoretically supported the choice of a single style, Ruskin’s name would become a synonym for a particular form of eclecticism.

Various forms of classically inspired architecture existed concurrently with the medievalist vision. Mordaunt Crook notes that only in England classical architecture went through at least eight phases in the historicist period: Roman, Greek, Graeco-Roman, Italianate, Baroque, Mannerist, Beaux-Arts and Neo-Georgian. The first three are late Georgian and Regency; the fourth – Italianate – is early and mid-Victorian; and the last four – Baroque, Mannerist, Beaux-Arts and Neo-Georgian – are late Victorian and Edwardian. Broadly speaking, according to Crook, the first three phases were prevalently Neo-Classical, while the other five are Neo-Renaissance, having mostly drawn from the English and French Renaissance.

Crook asserts that Neo-Classicism and the Greek Revival were products of both classical and romantic impulses, influenced by the classical/rationalist theory and romantic/associative archaeology. In time, the appeal of the associative prevailed, submerging the rationalist elements by the popularity of historical details. Regency architects, such as Robert Smirke (1780-1867) or John Soane (1753-1837), occasionally acknowledged the essential contradiction of this position. However, they continued designing the envelope autonomously, regardless of the structure. Alexander ‘Greek’ Thomson (1817-1875), the eminent Scottish architect and theorist, was perhaps the most influential proponent of the Greek Revival. Driven by the main historicist ambition, in his ‘Address to the Glasgow Institute of Architects’, Thomson asked: ‘how is it that there is no modern style of architecture?’ Stressing the importance of this question, Thomson continued:

… so persuaded am I of its propriety, and so sure am I that it must sooner or later be taken up in earnest, that I shall continue to reiterate the obnoxious question as often as opportunity offers, and at the same time do what I can to demonstrate the reasonableness of the demand… every past period of civilisation had its architecture growing out of it as

320 John Ruskin, The Seven Lamps of Architecture (Sunnyside: George Allen, 1889), 203.
321 Crook, The Dilemma of Style, 193.
322 Crook, The Dilemma of Style, 193.
by a natural process, and exhibiting in a permanent form the more important features of its
development.323

Dedicated to the search for the appropriate architectural expression of the age, Thomson accused
the majority of his contemporaries of failure to see beyond the archaeological facts of Greek
architecture: ‘they failed to master the style, and so became its slave.’324 For Thomson, the best way to
design for the epoch was to follow the example of the Greeks – to study the universal principles
embodied in their architecture, rather than to ‘copy their work.’325 The ‘eclecticism in a particular sense’
based on the inspiration with classicising elements – Greek, Roman, Neo-Renaissance, Neo-Baroque,
etc. – continued to influence the work of generations of architects. Charles Cockerell (1788-1863)
diluted Greek with Roman and Renaissance; Robert Kerr (1823-1904) maintained that a modern
European style must be an eclectic collage of classicising elements.

The debate between the medievalists and the classicists raged. There were, however, those who
maintained that the future of architecture lay in the union of the two. In contrast to his awareness that
the architects of his period ‘have fallen upon these chaotic times’, which produced architecture
belonging to the ‘school of anarchy’, when Basil Champneys (1842-1935) produced a Jubilee
assessment of ‘The Architecture of Queen Victoria’s Reign’, he came to the conclusion that eclecticism
had triumphed.326 Choosing three recent buildings as an example – the Alliance Assurance Office
(1881-3) by Norman Shaw; the School Board Offices (1872-9, 1886, 1891; demolished) by Bodley and
Garner; and the Examination Schools at Oxford (1876-82; 1887) by T. G. Jackson – Champneys
asserted that the union of the Classical forms and Gothic principles was ‘the germ of an original and
harmonious style in the future.’327

Crook notes that a number of architects supported the synthesis of the two styles previously
considered irreconcilable. For example, writing in 1893, E. W. Mountford noted that ‘architecture may
be in a bad way, but it is better than it was.’328 The general attitude was clear: ‘what is wanted is
something characteristic of the 19th-century life and requirements; we do not want people in the year
3000 to look back and be unable to determine whether buildings were erected in the 19th, the 13th or the
1st century.’329 Eclecticism reigned on, expressed in an endless sequence of design caprices. A style

323 Address to the Glasgow Institute of Architects by Alexander Thomson (1861), quoted in: Ronald McFadzean,
324 The Haldane lectures by Alexander Thomson (1874), quoted in: McFadzean, The Life and Work of Alexander
Thomson, 222.
325 The Haldane lectures by Alexander Thomson (1874), quoted in: McFadzean, The Life and Work of Alexander
Thomson, 265.
328 Crook, The Dilemma of Style, 184.
329 Crook, The Dilemma of Style, 184.
Crook named ‘Bric-A-Brac Renaissance’, used by C. W. Stephens in design solutions for Claridges (1894-8) and Harrods (1894-1912), emerged in the last decade of the nineteenth century.330

In addition to the medieval and classicising line on inspiration, architects in the UK eagerly experimented with other sources of architectural elements. The rebellion against the Gothic instigated by, amongst others, Eden Nesfield (1835-1888), Norman Shaw (1831-1912), and Philip Webb (1831-1915) caused a shift in taste in the second half of the nineteenth century. They first experimented with Old English – a revived form of rustic, vernacular architecture, complete with tile-hanging, hipped gables, casement windows, half-timbering, ribbed brick chimneys, and pargetting. Queen Anne Revival was the invention that gained popularity following the Old English experimentations. Crook describes Queen Anne as ‘a flexible urban argot, sash-windowed, brick-ribbed; based on late 17th-century vernacular classicism, Dutch, French, Flemish, German, and English – all seasoned with a dash of Japanese.’331

John J. Stevenson (1831-1908) was one of the pioneers of Queen Anne. His writing contributed to the establishment of the ideological significance of the style. In 1874, Stevenson wrote: ‘there has been recently in England a reaction of taste against Gothic architecture towards what is commonly called Queen Anne architecture, a name which, though inadequate and unsatisfactory, is sufficiently intelligible.’ Stevenson continued to explain that the new style was largely the product of converted ‘Gothicists’, who recognised ‘that there are elements of modern life which not middle-age chivalry nor asceticism, nor Gothic architecture, was fitted to satisfy.’332 These architects were not interested in classical architecture, having ‘still too much of the life and freedom of Gothic in their souls to submit to be bound down to ready-made lifeless rules. To classic life in them the infusion of the Gothic spirit gave… new spirit and new life, and the hope of higher development.’333 ‘The new spirit and new life’ were introduced to nineteenth century architecture through the ideas of the charismatic duo, William Morris (1834-1896) and Philip Webb. True to the demands of the historicist era, Morris developed a socialist theory of art as the basis for the production of a genuine nineteenth-century architecture, linking it directly to the needs of the present time.334

Numerous architects challenged the eclectic design methodology and the imitation of historical styles. However, the critics did not offer specific solutions, and nor did they propose the rejection of the architectural past – the mere concept was beyond them at this point. The historicist intellectual climate consolidated a strong sense of history, and, as discussed earlier, looking away from the precedents seemed preposterous to the majority of architects. Rather than copying, the solution proposed by many was learning from the experiences acquired through a long history of architectural

330 Crook, The Dilemma of Style, 186
331 Crook, The Dilemma of Style, 170.
practice. In fact, contrasting the accusations of their contemporary rivals, as well as the Modernists who inherited them, both the classicists and the medievalists were firmly set in their belief that they had evaded the pitfall of imitation. They often personally judged the practice of copying and asserted that they were, instead, learning from the past experiences. The problem of interpretation and evaluation rose from the difficulty to formally distinguish between the design products. Learning from history or copying from history – telling the difference is almost impossible from simply looking at the buildings.

Franz Theodor Kugler (1808-1858), German art historian and the editor of the journal Museum: Blätter für bildende Kunst, dismissed the eclecticism as ‘disgraceful and depressing’.\(^{335}\) Similarly, Crook notes that the French received it with reservations. According to Crook, Quatremère’s idea of progression by reduction – from historical model to historical type – still held in place. Architect César Daly (1811-1894) accepted the idea of eclecticism as a transitional phase on the road to a new style: ‘in the architecture of the future we shall have arches, vaults, beams, pillars, and columns, as in ancient architecture, but we shall also have an aesthetic principle which will bear the same relationship to past principles as a locomotive bears to a stage-coach.’\(^{336}\) Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Lassus (1807-1857) condemned eclecticism as the ‘plague of art… the common enemy… the scourge of our epoch.’\(^{337}\)

Concurrently with the enthusiastic experiments, the crisis of historicism brought upon architecture a growing sense of despair at such a chaotic state of affairs in the U.K. Distinctive was the remark by John Pollard Seddon (1827-1906): ‘Eclecticism! Eclecticism! What horrors have been perpetrated in thy euphonious name?’\(^{338}\) John D. Sedding (1838-1891) was even sharper in his criticism. Sedding painted a vivid macabre image in his speech delivered to Architectural Association in 1883: ‘What we call Victorian architecture is nothing in fact but a retrospective art, an art of plagiarism and odds and ends… [It] reminds me of an embalmed corpse in a ball dress. It is historic art made histrionic… We have no living art [of] our own.’\(^{339}\) Following the decades of capricious designs driven by a desire to experiment and innovate at all costs, devoid of a greater sense of meaning, a state of confusion spread. The crisis of historicism, the relativisation of values and meaning peaked as the century was coming to an end. ‘What style of architecture should we follow?’ was the question William Simpson (1823-1899) asked his audience at the Society of Arts in 1888.\(^{340}\) He neither offered nor received an answer.

\(^{335}\) Herrmann, “Introduction,” 6.
\(^{336}\) Revue generale d l’architecture (1853); trans. Builder 13 (1855), 89-90. Quoted in: Crook, The Dilemma of Style, 164.
\(^{337}\) Crook, The Dilemma of Style, 165.
3.3.3 The Unique Conditions of the Present: Architectural Historicism and the Importance of Technology

Historicist relativism and the obsession with the present time were clearly reflected in the numerous attempts to develop an architecture expressive of the period’s unique conditions. But the consequences of historicism went deeper than the debates on architectural form. The fundamental shift in worldview touched on the very essence of architecture, causing a split between the old Vitruvian trinity of *firmitas*, *utilitas*, and *venustas*. Dedicated to the present, historicist architects became increasingly influenced by the discussion of the prominent characteristics of the period. The Age of Industry was dominated by invention, demanded profitability, and put imperative on innovation. In addition to the secularisation of Western society and the relativisation of values, the fast-changing age of capitalism, industrialisation and profits gave rise to the need to be served efficiently, not uplifted artistically. As a result, the gap between architecture and engineering was opened. The discussion of building technologies gained traction, and structure was increasingly considered as separate from form. As the distance between the concepts of firmness (structural strength), commodity (utility or use) and delight (beauty) grew, architecture had to adapt, and even reinvent itself; it needed to mediate between the emerging technologies and previously undisputed artistic essence of architecture.

Faith in technology was the driving force for a number of architects. In an article published in the *Building News* in 1864, G. H. Guillaume noted that the ‘science of the architect is continually urging him onward… his art… is ever binding him to look… back.’ 341 Similarly, the review of *Lives of British Engineers*, published in the *Quarterly Review* in 1863, clearly illustrated the period’s fascination with the achievements of technical sciences, described as the ‘noble example of the dominion of man over the earth.’ 342 The article concludes with a discussion of the relations between engineering and architecture: ‘the constructive and the artistic branches of the [building] profession are divorced from one another, and practiced by different sets of men calling themselves by different names, and fancying they belong to different professions and have different objects in view. Till they unite, and work harmoniously together, we cannot hope to see beauty united with the grandeur.’ 343 The works of engineers are described as ‘the best and most complete examples that exist in modern times of an art carried out on scientific principles.’ 344 The efficiency of engineers originates from the fact they are solely focused on the problem before them – they are dedicated to the discovery of a solution with the most suitable materials, and within the limits of the means at their disposal:

They have never looked backwards to the exploded forms of the ancient days, but always acknowledged the age in which they lived trying to outstep even its rate of progress. In this respect the engineers contrast singularly with the architects who form the other branch

343 “Lives of British Engineers,” 331.
of one and the same profession. The latter, instead of following out principles, are content to copy forms, rarely thinking of what is really best under the circumstances. It is sufficient for them to know that a thing was done by some other people in some bygone day, and without thinking how social circumstances may have changed or the arts progressed since that time; if it has been done before, it ought, according to their creed, to be done again. They aim at restoring an artistic heptarchy in the midst of the progress of the 19th century.  

The article argues that the principles that the engineers were following were universal, ‘identical with those which taught the Egyptians how to erect wondrous temples.’ Architecture, however, had lost touch with the principles well understood in all previous ages. The building profession was divided against itself because its two branches were conducted on different principles, and hence could not work together. ‘Engineers cannot forego theirs because they are the only principles which men of common sense can follow; so, unless the architects will consent to forego some of their archaeological fancies, and work harmoniously with the engineers, we may be condemned to live in the midst of the ugliness for ever. To call architecture back within the domain of logic is most wanted on the part of the engineers.’

Describing the Gothic and Classical revivals as ‘the two absurdities,’ James Fergusson (1808-1886) remarked that ‘we have no Style of architecture.’ According to Crook, Fergusson insisted that the RIBA ‘must write over its doors Archaeology is not Architecture.’ However, as was the case with the majority of Fergusson’s contemporaries championing the imperative of technological progress, their designs demonstrated that the pull of history remained strong. John Claudius Loudon (1783-1843) observed in 1837 that the coming Age of Iron would mean an end to all established architectural systems. Instead of ‘adapting the new material to their designs,’ architects would have to ‘adapt their designs to the new material.’ Obviously, this progressive assertion would have to wait for decades to be fully implemented.

Despite a number of supporters, nineteenth-century thought was generally set in the belief that architecture and engineering were opposite poles. Buildings such as the Crystal Palace seemed to float between the worlds of architecture and engineering. The criteria by which it could be judged were yet to be formulated. Perhaps the most interesting attempt at integrating the new materials of iron and glass with the old architectural forms in mid-nineteenth century England was the Oxford Museum, sometimes referred to as the Ruskin Museum. The building was praised in 1855 as ‘an experiment… of the greatest

346 “Lives of British Engineers,” 331
349 Crook, The Dilemma of Style, 103.
importance to architecture. However, after its construction most of the period commentators agreed that the result was disappointing – once again, the building was a collage of past architectural elements, this time partly in metal rather than solely in traditional materials.

The possibilities of the new building technologies, and their consequences for architectural design, captured the attention of architects across Continental Europe. Pierre-François-Henri Labrouste (1801-1875) rose to the challenge of the Age of Industry with his design for the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève. In spite of his classically influenced formal education, and his leading role amongst the Romantic students who demanded teaching reforms at the Beaux-Arts Academy in Paris, Labrouste was driven by functional and structural qualities while designing this large public edifice. The utilitarian line of inspiration is manifested in the building’s appearance, dominated by a long blind arcade at the upper storey, reminiscent of a Roman aqueduct. The façade is not prevalently decorated with the usual repertoire of architectural ornament. Instead, the most remarkable decorative features of the building’s envelope are the panels with carved names of the authors whose books are kept inside. The interior of the building is famous for the application of exposed iron. Labrouste masterfully juxtaposed the traditional and the innovative in his choice of materials for the reading room of the upper storey. The ceiling is spanned by two rows of semi-circular iron arches, supported by cast iron columns resting upon tall base pillars of stone. Another French protagonist of experimentation with novel building technologies was Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879), architect and influential theorist. Viollet-le-Duc hoped to stimulate the emergence of new architecture through an educational reform by integrating architecture and engineering – a synthesis of novelty and tradition.

In Germany, following the line of arguments presented by Heinrich Hübsch, Eduard Metzger (1807-1894), professor at the Polytechnic in Munich, attempted to deduce the principles that influenced the development of architecture through history. For Metzger, these principles were derived from three principal sources – national character, with religion at its focus; nature; and building material. The first two – national character and nature – affected architecture in a significant, yet rather general, manner. According to Metzger, if they were to develop an architectural expression appropriate for the age, architects should focus on the third source; they should strive to understand the way in which material is used and ordered, in other words, the construction. Metzger asserted that a building was a result of ‘a rationally conceived order, based on natural and structural laws’ and its floor plans reflected ‘all utilitarian, climatic, and structural conditions.’ Within the following years, the significance of the influence of material and construction was generally accepted in nineteenth-century German

351 Crook, The Dilemma of Style, 120.
architecture. Carl Gottlieb Wilhelm Böttcher (1806-1889), a student of Schinkel, was one of the architects who continued the line of materialistic arguments on the question of style. Böttcher claimed that a new style could only evolve from the use of new materials, most importantly, iron.

3.3.4 The Unique Conditions of Society: Architectural Historicism in Service of Western Civilisation

Mentioned above, Metzger’s deduction of the three principal factors that determined the development of architecture through history – national character, nature, and materials – were a part of broader theoretical tendencies from the age of historicism, present in various European societies of the nineteenth century. As illustrated in Chapter 2 of this thesis, no matter how much they disagreed about other issues, historicist thinkers were unified in their belief that history was essentially a process constituted by the organic unfolding of ideas over time. Applied to the domain of social theories, the historicist outlook – characterised by the principles of holism, individuality, and development – gave rise to the idea that the present was a stage in a process of evolution in which the spirit of a particular people (most commonly, race or nation) came to realise itself. Linking past, present, and future in a continuous plot revolving around a specific group of people, historicism, thus, offered a worldview that embedded the experiences of change into a narrative of progressive development. Fuelled by the principle of individuality, historicism also enabled thinking in terms of differences. For example, as argued earlier in the thesis, historicist thinkers distinguished between various epochs from the course of history, recognising the specificity of their own age. Moreover, during this period Western societies became obsessed with their social self-identities. They strove to define themselves, and, at the same time, take their place in the rapidly expanding matrix of global socio-economic and political relations. Aspiring toward positions of power, various Western societies explored their own specific characteristics – racial, ethnic, cultural, national, socio-political, etc. Defining their socio-political and cultural self-identities, individual Western societies often utilised disparaging rhetoric towards the collectives perceived as the ‘Other’. Consequently, grand world histories developed using the comparative method became a popular medium of nineteenth-century historical scholarship, operating as a basis that offered ‘scientific’ justification for discriminating practices of racism and nationalism.

Considered contextual under the influence of a historicist outlook – inextricable from the society, physical environment, and the epoch of its creation – architecture became a potent tool of socio-political agendas. Studying the architectural stages of a race, civilisation, or a nation through history, the nineteenth-century theorists consolidated the status of architecture as an indication of a level of a specific people’s development. In doing so, nineteenth-century histories of architecture reinforced practices of discrimination, reinforcing racial and national distinctions, as well as principles of cultural exclusion. To paraphrase Joanna Merwood-Salisbury, for nineteenth-century theorists, the history of architecture was the history of civilisation, which was, in turn, the history of race and racial
In his exemplar study of Viollet-le-Duc, Martin Bressani notes that the nature of progress and change in architectural development has been identified as the central question of architectural theory in the nineteenth century, with historical exposition replacing an older tradition of treatises. The change in the approach to the research of architectural history coincided with broader historicist efforts to develop a scientific method of history, explained in Chapter 2. During the nineteenth century, researchers of architectural history pursued a scientific understanding of architectural origins and development. In the process, they rooted their reasoning in and borrowed concepts from disciplines established as sciences proper, such as ethnology, geology, biology or linguistics.

The idea of an ‘evolutionist’ scheme for the history of architecture permeated nineteenth-century theories. The scholarship by the eighteenth-century antiquarians offered prolific precedents for this approach. However, evolutionist histories dedicated to the issues of architectural change and development through the ages were imbued with a new character and intensity since the late-1820s and 1830s. Embedded with racist and nationalist overtones, the concept of evolution was eagerly adopted as a means of a ‘scientific’ classification of various epochs from architectural history. More importantly, the evolutionist paradigm operated as a mechanism that helped create a clear narrative of (architectural) history of a specific society – with its beginning, a middle, and end. In France, architects such as Jean-Nicolas Huyot, Duban, Labrouste, Léon Vaudoyer, and Albert Lenoir, to name a few of the prominent ones, were all fascinated by the traces of architectural development through history, interpreted as tangible evidence of an underlying ‘civilising process’. Documenting architectural transformations through time was a means of exploring architecture in its relationship with broader social, cultural, and material conditions. As Bressani notes, architecture seemed to afford a direct portrait of historical existence, and the study of its history thus helped define the unity of a universal history, identifying origins, tracking development through filiations, and determining its end.

In his transformation of the Abbey Church at Vézelay, Viollet-le-Duc, perhaps the most famous of the French nineteenth-century theorists, sought to capture the emergence of a specifically French way of building, an autonomous growth of a national ‘style’ of architecture. 

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359 Bressani, Architecture and the Historical Imagination, 177.

360 Bressani, Architecture and the Historical Imagination, 119.
Entretiens sur l’architecture (1863) could be described as his greatest effort at defining a complete system of architectural theory.\textsuperscript{361} In the first volume, Viollet-le-Duc attempted to define the nature of historical progress, while the second presented the consequence of that evolution for the present. According to Bressani, Viollet-le-Duc was impelled to write Entretiens to identify the ‘imperturbable’ historical laws of architectural evolution.\textsuperscript{362} A similar tendency to connect past with the present, employing the evolutionist paradigm, informed his Habitations of Man in All Ages (1875), where Viollet-le-Duc introduced two principles of architecture, represented by Doxious and Epergos.\textsuperscript{363} He criticised Doxius, whom he described as dedicated to tradition – a subject of the rules of proportion, the worship of style, the negation of progress in science and art. Epergos, on the other hand, sees in evolution and development evidence of godlike power given to humans – evidence that ‘life’ (the unique conditions of the modern age) and not ‘death’ (architectural past) is the keynote of the world, pulling forward and urging to strive – not to stagnate.

A quick reference to Viollet-le-Duc’s writings clearly shows nineteenth-century architectural histories were not merely accounts of architectural transformations through time. As Mark Crinson notes, ‘to write any history of architecture in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century was to make a study of cultural affiliations and differences.’\textsuperscript{364} Period commentators – such as James Fergusson or César Daly – described the efforts to extrapolate architectural evidence to assess, identify and link a human collective as ‘useful’ work, more significant than the inert accumulation of information.\textsuperscript{365} Daly criticized Viollet-le-Duc’s lectures at the Beaux-Arts Academy saying that ‘science concludes, philosophy concludes also, but history only tells; and telling is not enough for a course on aesthetics and the history of art.’\textsuperscript{366} Thus, historians were expected to draw conclusions from their subject matter, which could be applied to the period’s knowledge of current affairs. Crinson explains that this approach postulated architecture as a part of world history and as an expression of the organic vitality of nations. Under the circumstances, architectural history was instrumental in the assessments of origins and evolution of various societies, helping to explain the present.\textsuperscript{367}

Gottfried Semper was another influential advocate of the idea of evolutionary stylistic determinism, seeing the evidence of adaptive evolution in changing construction and structural

\textsuperscript{362} Bressani, Architecture and the Historical Imagination, 347.
\textsuperscript{363} Viollet-Le-Duc, Histoire de l’habitation humaine: Depuis les temps prehistoriques jusqu’a nous jours (Paris: J. Hetzel, 1875).
\textsuperscript{364} Mark Crinson, Empire Building, Orientalism and Victorian Architecture (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 38.
\textsuperscript{365} Crinson, Empire Building, 35.
\textsuperscript{367} Crinson, Empire Building, 38.
materials in various civilisations. Mari Hvattum explains that, for Semper, the development from allegorical to symbolic art could be construed in terms of a historical evolution, describing the rise and fall of civilisations according to their degree of aesthetic autonomy. For example, Semper maintained that, attempting to represent an extra-aesthetic content in tangible form, the Egyptians ‘sinned’ against the rules of formal beauty. Their ‘barbaric’ art would always remain an ‘aggregate’ in which ‘the elements of structure and decoration are joined in a more or less inorganic, almost mechanical way.’

In contrast, Greek art (the cradle of all subsequent Western creativity) achieved aesthetic emancipation, which allowed it to become truly organic – liberated from any other purpose, it presents a universal expression of formal beauty. Similarly, Bötticher dismissed Egyptian architecture as an inferior stage of evolution, failing to attain the ideal correspondence between form and idea exemplified in the buildings of classical Greece.

Analysing the texts published in the Chicago-based architectural journal Inland Architect, Joanna Merwood-Salisbury shows that the European theories explaining architecture in terms of ethnography, as a symbol of the racially determined progress of human civilisation, were also present in the nineteenth-century architectural circles of the United States. For example, as Merwood-Salisbury notes, the magazine featured images not of Viollet-le-Duc’s famous adaptation of iron to Gothic structure, but his sketches of the primitive hut – thus, focusing on the issues of society, not materiality in relation to architecture. Viollet-le-Duc’s evolutionist theories were employed to support the idea of an organic development out of industrial materials and building processes of a new American style in the West, which was imagined as a new ethnographic region. Chicago architects were heavily indebted to Viollet-le-Duc’s comparative approach, which provided a method of categorising architecture by region and race rather than by the development of styles. Semper is also listed as an important source of influence for a scientific understanding of architectural origins and development in Chicago architecture in the late nineteenth century. Texts from the Inland Architect show that Semper’s ideas were generally valued as providing a specific scientific model of architectural development based on architectural and racial types and the climate they inhabited.

Nineteenth-century theories linked architecture with the new science of ethnography, considering it as an expression of racial and national progress. It is important to note that the nineteenth-century architectural writing did not always clearly discern between the concepts of race and nation.

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369 Hvattum, Gottfried Semper and the Problem of Historicism, 105.
371 Karl Bötticher, De Tektonik der Hellenen, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Ernst & Korn, 1874), 2:27.
Moreover, texts about architecture expressed an univocal idea of nation, lingering between the concepts of ‘race’, ‘people’s character,’ and a more concrete awareness of locality in terms of terrain and climate. Writing about the early twentieth-century architecture in Australia, Paul Hogben explains that, as documented by the period architectural writing, ‘nation’ evoked the vague idea of a ‘civilised country’. Australian architects inherited the rhetoric of socio-political and cultural theories developed in Europe since the late seventeenth century and consolidated in the nineteenth century.

As Benedict Anderson famously demonstrates, the nineteenth century gave rise to the idea of the nation as an imagined community, a conceptual fabrication that allows cultural leaders to presume that a unity and communion exist between different factions and sectors of society. Similarly, in his recent paper about cultural and political collective self-identification of nations, Aleksandar Radaković notes that the idea of nationhood carries a distinctive answer to the questions of origin and justification of a political authority. Radaković condenses the process of political transformation from medieval feudalism to national states, which took place in various European countries in the period from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. In premodern times, governance of political entities was intimately linked with religion. The religious experience was immanent to how European societies conceived of themselves, and, consequently, how they organised themselves politically. This paradigm shifted from the seventeenth century, as the ruling aristocratic dynasties legitimised their sovereignty outside of religious law and the establishment. As the medieval monarchy transformed itself into an absolute monarchy, it increasingly needed the support of the wider public for its ‘artificial’ existence. Thus, to create feelings of political unity that would transcend old regional loyalties, new governing structures started taking notice of public opinion. Broader community support legitimised the monarch’s governance, and eventually the population became aware of itself in a political sense. The people began identifying as self-conscious political groups and nations were born, claiming self-legislative power and the right to self-determination. Ernest Renan describes a nation as a soul that consists of two parts – one being in the past and the other in the present. One constituent of this spiritual principle ‘is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form.’ Thus, during the nineteenth century, people ceased to be only the subjects of law and became a self-conscious group who claimed the right to self-governance – a nation.

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Unfortunately, the individual nation-states swiftly forfeited the initial ideals of emancipation and political self-governance, transforming themselves into aggressive, non-tolerant (both domestically and internationally), militarised political communities. This transformation realised itself both externally, as the rise of nation-states coincided with the last stage of high European imperialism (c. 1880–1918), and internally, as their individual strengths were measured by the national cohesion of its citizens. Consequently, though various Western countries showed signs of progress in their internal policies during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, their treatment of other countries and societies was often questionable. Racism and nationalism bloomed as the colonisation and exploitation of the Americas, the African continent and parts of Oceania intensified, culminating in numerous conflicts with native peoples. In addition to the obvious economic benefits, imperialism was considered as an instrument of ‘national’ expansion. Empires competed over international influence, perceiving the administration of foreign territories beneficial both to the motherland and to the ‘non-national peoples’ under their rule. Thus, imperialism was perceived as a demonstration of a nation’s strength, fuelling sentiments of pride in the homeland, while its military conquests were morally justified by identifying imperialism with the spread of cultural values and the civilising achievements of the nation.

Architectural historians have shown that the rhetoric of nationalism, racial expansion and colonisation informed the nineteenth-century theories of various Western countries – from North America across European countries to the Antipodes. Racial, national and geographic determinism remained an essential feature of various architectural theories developed in the nineteenth century, informing the thinking of traditionalist architects well into the twentieth century. Embedded in the nineteenth-century architectural thinking of Western societies, the concept of race operated as a social distributor whereby each nation held a relative position in a world order of social attributes and tendencies. The scale of aesthetic sensibilities revolved around the central axis of unique local (i.e. British, French, German, American, etc.) values and characteristics. Moulded by the historicist principles of individuality and holism, architecture created by other nations or races was perceived from a position of difference, conveying particular traits and social aspirations of the ‘Other’ – as a rule, considered inferior to the ‘Self’ – against which local values and achievements were contrasted.

The question of racial inheritance and characteristics fuelled period historical inquiries. In France, Comte Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau wrote his *Essay sur l’inégalité des races humaines* (1853-1855), one of the earliest key texts that provided the basis for the subsequent European theories of the Aryan master race. In this title, Gobineau aspired to affirm the supremacy of the white race in all civilisations, explaining the rise and fall of all human cultures exclusively through the law of blood transmission. According to Gobineau, any case of social degeneration is caused by a loss of vigour of ‘the primordial race-unit’ that constituted a given society: ‘the word degenerate, when applied to a people, means… that the people no longer have the intrinsic value they once had, because they no longer have the same blood in their veins, continual adulterations having greatly affected the quality of that blood.’ Though by far a less extreme example, *The Formation and Progress of the Third Estate in France* by Jacques-Nicholas-Augustin Thierry revolved around the idea of the movement of the people predicated upon racial displacement and conquests.

Positions rooted in the mechanisms of discrimination – nationalist, racist, or otherwise – informed period thinking about architecture. Bressani explores Gobineau’s influence on the formation of Viollet-le-Duc’s positions. The first systematisation of Viollet-le-Duc’s racial understanding of architectural history was presented in his ‘Antiquités américaines’ (1863). Viollet-le-Duc accepted Gobineau’s polygenic theory, according to which three separate racial types made up the human race at its origin: white, yellow, and black, subsequent variations being the product of racial mixtures. His texts resonated with the nineteenth-century beliefs in racial inequality – the white race being superior to the other two, the black being the lowest on the scale. Viollet-le-Duc employed the term ‘Aryan’ for the white race, describing the ‘primitive’ people who developed the civilisation of India. To each race, according to Viollet-le-Duc, corresponded a specific constructive system: Aryan – timber; yellow – earth and, consequently, masonry; while black ‘carved their dwellings out of the slopes of calcareous hills.’ Bressani stresses that this precisely articulated racial-constructive scheme was what distinguished Viollet-le-Duc from period archaeologists and historians who employed racial tropes in their writings about architecture. In his analysis of pre-Columbian architecture, Viollet-le-Duc identified with complete confidence which racial groups were involved in a monument’s construction based on specific architectural elements – either ornamental or structural. In doing so, he created the idea of a complete identification of architectural form and race.

It should be noted that Viollet-le-Duc was more inclined to the affirmative reading of the question of racial hybridity, as proposed by the famous Romanticist historian and author Prosper Mérimée (1803-1870), rather than those of Gobineau. However, this is not to suggest that Viollet-le-Duc’s theories were not racist – rather, it is to show that discriminating attitudes of the period could be communicated through seemingly positive formulas. Namely, while Gobineau condemned ‘crossbreeding’, in his Entretiens, Viollet-le-Duc identified racial fusion as the trigger for all stages of Western artistic development. According to Viollet-le-Duc, through racial hybridity humanity created its greatest creative achievements: ‘any artistic explosion… in history is produced through the contact of two different races. It seems that art is never but the product of a sort of intellectual fermentation of natures endowed with different aptitudes.’

Racial fusion understood as a process of ‘intellectual fermentation’ was the fundamental principle of Viollet-le-Duc’s system of architectural evolution. The theory was, however, imbued with principles of racist segregation – left to themselves, the Aryan would never produce any art, for ‘he governs, he is endowed with high moral aspirations, he establishes cults, he goes to war; … but he despises working with his hands.’ Adopting Gobineau’s description of the respective aptitude of each race, Viollet-le-Duc noted that ‘yellows’ and ‘blacks’, for their part, would never reach even the most primary form of civilisation without the addition of ‘white blood’. Martin Bressani notes that the emergence of the race factor in Viollet-le-Duc’s theories markedly contradicts his perennial insistence that architecture is a rational response to need – if racially determined, architectural forms would be inherited rather than the product of broader circumstances.

The closest precedent to Viollet-le-Duc’s three constructive types was Quatremère de Quincy’s typology of three primitive dwellings, mentioned earlier in this chapter. However, Quatremère associated his three forms of buildings not with different races, but with different modes of living – the tent for nomadic shepherds, the grotto for hunter-gatherers, and the wooden cabin for agrarian peoples. Each was then identified as the source of a specific architectural tradition – the grotto led to the Egyptian, the tent to the Chinese, and the cabin to the Greek, the latter being the only one capable of coherent ‘imitative’ development. Viollet-le-Duc was not the first to have picked up Quatremère’s system of tripartite typology of dwelling. In fact, tripartite schemes were popular among Romanticist thinkers. In his influential Historical Essay on Architecture (1835), for example, British collector Thomas Hope adopted Quatremère’s typology, but, like Viollet-le-Duc, shifted its terms by loosely associating each dwelling form with a race. According to Hope, the Greeks, members of the ‘handsomest of the human races,’ relied on the forms of wooden construction for their architecture.

394 Bressani, 348.
Comparable to the difference between Viollet-le-Duc’s and Quatremère’s interpretations, Georges Teyssot notes that the Victorian classification of architecture into types based on race had little to do with the architectural typologies of the eighteenth century.\(^{397}\) Noted previously in this chapter, the eighteenth-century enthusiasm for accumulation of historical information was replaced in the nineteenth century with efforts to assess it critically and put it in service of the period socio-political and cultural pretensions. According to Mark Crinson, racial frames of reference enjoyed wide currency in Victorian culture, and to write any history of architecture in the nineteenth-century British Empire was to make a study of cultural affiliations and differences.\(^{398}\) Victorians understood races as scientifically established entities, distinguishable in character and physiognomy – the inner and outer traits of humans.\(^{399}\) Crinson notes that the conceptions of architecture and its history were not exempt – since at least Wickelmann, histories of architecture had interpreted art as representative of the spirit of a people. ‘Art and architectural history in general were thus given a new impetus to relate cultural form to race and to define cultural difference by race.’\(^{400}\)

As mentioned earlier, since the mid-nineteenth century, Victorian architectural commentators considered historical writing ‘useful’ if it were critical and capable of cultural differentiation through the deployment of discourses about ethnicity, derived from models in natural history, philology, the social sciences or religion. James Fergusson based his ambitious *A History of Architecture in All Countries* (1865) on a theory of race.\(^{401}\) According to Fergusson, since races left distinctive traces in their buildings, the study of these racial records should be considered an essential branch of ethnology.\(^{402}\) Fergusson asserted that architecture should be taken as equal in evidential value to language in the study of races and therefore developed an extensive comparative study of architecture that would, as comparative grammar had done for language, illuminate evolution of architectural styles. Relying on the models devised by comparative philology and its extension of linguistic groups into racial classifications, Fergusson defined the typical features of what he described as the four great building races – the Turanian, Semitic, Celtic and Aryan.

Fergusson adopted the genetic analogy of the German *Altertumswissenschaft* (Classical Studies) historians, such as Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900) who, born in Germany, relocated to


\[^{398}\] Crinson, *Empire Building*, 38.


\[^{400}\] Crinson, *Empire Building*, 39.


England to pursue his special interest in Sanskrit philology and the religions of India. However, rather than presenting a lifecycle of one race, Fergusson placed the races of the world in an evolutionary sequence – from the Stone Age (Turanian), through the Bronze Age (Celtic), to the Iron Age (Aryan and, outside Europe, Semitic). Fergusson’s racial categories also signified unchanging cultural and psychological characteristics – Semitic, for example, entailed stasis, belief in the unity of God, patriarchal government, poetic temperament, and little interest in architecture, while the Aryan cultures were seen as having monogamous morals, self-government tending towards republicanism, expertise in industrial and practical sciences, overly literary art forms, and an architecture primarily concerned with convenience. Though Fergusson described his categories as forming sequentially, he maintained that they continued into the present and that there was no single line of development from one to another of these stages of a society’s progress. Instead, race predetermined the stage of relative advancement, and because there were various races, multiple stages coexisted at any one period. Fergusson, thus, employed racial categories to establish a modern-day image of a hierarchy of social progress. In the process, he consolidated the advanced position of the ‘intellectual’ and ‘scientifically minded’ Aryans, the creators of modern industry and empire.

The issues of race and nation were key tropes of theories developed by John Ruskin. Ruskin maintained that architecture was linked to a nation’s ‘mind’ and determined geographically. Similarly to Viollet-le-Duc, Ruskin embraced the idea of racial hybridity as the very source of architectural achievement. Establishing the Ducal Palace as the central building of the world, in *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin offered a model for British imperial architecture, born out of the mixture of racial and historical elements. However, by the late 1850s, Ruskin’s position grew into one of overt racism. For example, in his lecture titled the ‘Unity of Art,’ published in *The Two Paths*, Ruskin explained that by his reference to the ‘detestable’ ornament of the Alhambra in *The Stones of Venice*, he meant to illustrate the base condition of the moral being of its creators, the Arabs. Crinson notes that while in *The Stones* the racial argument remained mostly beneath the surface, in *The Two Paths* it became the foremost element of Ruskin’s polemic, ‘by which he could persuade his audiences that the issue was not one of mere difference in design philosophies and attitudes to industrialism, but one that bore on the very survival of the nation through its power over other peoples.’ Thus, Ruskin placed architecture in relation to the broader issues of cultural identity and colonial power, suggesting that it was key for the

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403 For example, Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language: Delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in April, May, & June 1861* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1866); Müller, *India: What Can it Teach Us?: A Course of Lectures Delivered Before the University of Cambridge* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1883).


408 Crinson, *Empire Building*, 60.
survival of culture in the face of utilitarian policies and in the globalising context of the growing British Empire. Accordingly, Ruskin’s construct of ‘uncivilised conventionalism’ essentially influenced theories of primitivism developed towards the end of the century.409

Ruskin considered architecture and race primarily emanations of geography – the national landscape and climate. In the fifth volume of Modern Painters (1860), Ruskin divided the world into five climatic areas. He stressed the importance of climate for the development of a nation’s mind and its consequences for the arts. For example, Ruskin asserted that the tropical forest considered typical of India did not help the growth of the mind and therefore only a savage, grotesque art could be created. In contrast, the ideal circumstances were those of the ‘grape and wheat lands’, such as Greece or Italy, where the ‘highest intellect’ and the ‘most perfect’ art developed.410 Crinson notes that, following the ideas of the Romantics, nineteenth-century Victorian architects believed that nations (and races) were deeply characterised by the landscapes they inhabited, and that architecture was considered the expressive locus of this conjunction.411

In fact, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the notion of climate was embedded with scientific, religious and political implications, informing thinking about architecture across the British Empire. David Livingston shows how ‘discussions of climatic matters’ during this period played a significant part in the unfolding of the ‘imperial drama’ and were frequently ‘cast in the diagnostic language of ethnic judgement.’412 Livingston examines how the Ethnological Society of London and Royal Geographical Society fostered what he calls ‘the moral discourse of climate’ that aimed to document the effects of regional climate on racial constitution. This discourse was profoundly implicated with the mechanisms of racism, as exemplified in Arnold Guyot’s title, The Earth and Man:

... The Creator has placed the cradle of mankind in the midst of the continents of the North, so well made, by their forms, by their structure, by their climate, as we shall soon see, to stimulate and hasten individual development and that of human societies; and not at the centre of the tropical regions, whose balmy, but enervating and treacherous, atmosphere would perhaps have lulled him to sleep, the sleep of death in his very cradle.413

Theories about the causality of climate differed. However, they were unified by the assumption that race and place were closely connected – either because climate determined race or because God or

411 Crinson, Empire Building, 49.
‘Nature’ had created different races and placed them in appropriate geographical settings.\textsuperscript{414} Paul Hogben notes that the question of how climatic influences altered white people’s racial and intellectual traits within tropical regions – which included Australia, the focus of Hogben’s paper – was central to the nineteenth century debates about the colonisation process and the limits of acclimatisation of civilised cultures in ‘improper places.’\textsuperscript{415} Hogben explains that in the architectural discourse of late nineteenth-century Australia, the concept of the climate-race causality was being used by architects to envision the rise of ‘Australasian architecture.’ The following chapters of this thesis will show that similar attitudes informed the early twentieth-century architectural writing in New Zealand. Local geography, most notably climate and flora, were considered as potential sources for the establishment of a specific New Zealand architectural tradition. However, whereas the Australians employed the discourse of climate to delineate the emergence of a new type of Britisher, displaying a different appearance and temperament to the home-grown original,\textsuperscript{416} feeling a strong connectedness with the British Empire, New Zealand architects used the climate to illustrate similarities between the land they inhabited and the Motherland.

3.4 The Twentieth Century: Determinist Eclipse of Relativist Historicism

The previous discussion has shown that architectural historicism should not be understood as an architectural style, nor a single mode of design. Starting with the second half of the nineteenth century, a changed perception of history recognised the individuality of different epochs, each simultaneously producer and the product of a unique sets of historical, socio-economic, political, geographical, and cultural circumstances. Resultant was a heightened historical self-consciousness. A product of human creativity \textit{par excellence}, architecture was inextricable from the specific period and the environment that gave rise to it. And if architecture is intrinsically the expression of unique conditions of its time and locality, as well as the ever-present Zeitgeist, architectural styles of the past are not appropriate for contemporary structures. And thus the search for the ‘style of our times’ commenced. Historicism denotes design culture dedicated to the development of suitable architectural forms in response to the unique characteristics of the present.

Not reaching a consensus, the debate did not lose traction as the nineteenth century was coming to an end. The historicist search for architecture expressive of the unique conditions of the present reached its peak in the first decades of the twentieth century. Building for the age remained the period’s leitmotif. The notion was equally employed as a leading argument by both of the two conflicted camps of architectural thought that polarised during the first three decades of the century – the traditionalist and the Modernist. The proponents of the former were part of the institutionalised mainstream, while

\textsuperscript{414} Livingston, “The Moral Discourse of Climate,” 414.
\textsuperscript{415} Hogben, “Nationalism in Australian Architectural History,” 101.
\textsuperscript{416} Hogben, “Nationalism in Australian Architectural History,” 102.
the latter were an emerging minority before the Second World War. This ratio gradually shifted in the interwar period, as the Modernist ideas increasingly attracted supporters. The fact was also noted by Henry-Russell Hitchcock, one of the most vocal spokesmen for the architecture of the Modern Movement in the USA. As noted in Chapter 1 of this thesis, according to Hitchcock, traditionalist architecture included ‘the majority of buildings designed before 1930 in most countries of the western world, and a considerable, if rapidly decreasing, proportion of those erected in succeeding decades.”417 However, the majority mostly remains anonymous in the pages of the major architectural histories of the twentieth century. The reasons behind this blind spot in architectural historiography are well known. The ideas of the Modern Movement, prevailing after the Second World War, have been widely discussed, and, therefore, will not be examined in greater depth here.

In his seminal title The Historiographies of Modern Architecture, Panayotis Tournikiotis examined the crucial contributions of three art historians who laid the theoretical foundations of the Modern Movement, playing a decisive role in shaping of the Modernist ideology – Nikolaus Pevsner, Emil Kaufmann, and Sigfried Giedion.418 Tournikiotis has shown that, in addition to other fundamental principles of the German tradition of art history, the spirit of the age was at the core of their reasoning.419 In the tradition of determinist historicism, articulated in various forms by various philosophers and historians maintaining that human decisions and reasoning are historically determined, the writings of the three inextricably link architecture and Zeitgeist. The new architecture they proclaimed – the architecture of the Modern Movement – is the architecture of reason and function, tantamount to a new spirit of the Machine Age.

For Pevsner, whose theories have been described as historicist by David Watkin, those historians and architects who grasped the Zeitgeist were in a position to decide what the architectural expression of their age actually was and what it ought to be.420 Obviously, not all who practised architecture or history understood the spirit of their time, and, therefore, not everyone could become the catalyst of social evolution.421 This right was reserved for the proponents of the Modern Movement. Tournikiotis notes that David Watkin criticised this ‘committed’ side of Pevsner’s Pioneers.422 Watkin maintained that the ‘art-historical belief in the all-dominating Zeitgeist, combined with a historicist emphasis on progress and the necessary superiority of novelty, has come dangerously close to undermining, on one hand, our appreciation of the imaginative genius of the individual, and, on the other, the importance of artistic tradition.”423

417 Hitchcock, Architecture, 392
419 Pevsner, Pioneers; Emil Kaufmann, Von Ledoux bis Le Corbusier. Ursprung und Entwicklung der autonomen Architektur (Vienna: Rolf Passer, 1933); Gideion, Space, Time and Architecture. For a thorough consideration of the concept of the Spirit of the Age: Kadijević, Architecture and the Spirit of the Age.
420 Watkin, Morality and Architecture, 104-111.
421 Pevsner, Pioneers, 72
422 Tournikiotis, The Historiographies of Modern Architecture, 275
423 David Watkin, Morality and Architecture, 115.
Similarly to Pevsner, Giedion wrote that ‘the historian has to give insight into what is happening in the changing structure of his own time. His observations must always run parallel to those specialists of optical vision whom we call artists,’ because the artists express the unique qualities of their period through symbols even before the majority of people became aware of them. The discussion of a ‘new’ architecture expressive of the unique conditions of the age was lively in post-October Revolution Russia. Style and Epoch by Moisei Iakovlevich Ginzburg was, according to Anatole Senkevitch, the first and most important elucidation of early Constructivist theory in Soviet architecture. Similarly to the early writers on Modernist architecture in the West, Ginzburg’s thesis was historicist in its essence. Proposing a new architecture, suitable for his own period, Ginzburg maintained that style was an immediate expression of the unique qualities of its time: ‘each historical period, or rather each vital creative force, is characterised by certain artistic organisms; each epoch in the plastic arts thus has its favourite types, which are especially characteristic of it.’

It was not only the early writers about Modernist architecture who used the unique qualities of their time and the Zeitgeist to validate their radical rhetoric. The ideas of the pioneer architects whose work they promoted also developed in the context of the intellectual climate of historicism. According to Iain Boyd Whyte, with reference to the inseparable bond between architecture and the period, ‘the architect functioned as a seismograph, highly and predictively responsive to the demands of the age.’ In his influential essay ‘Ornament and Crime,’ articulating a criticism of traditionalist architectural ornament crucial for the later aesthetics of Modernist architecture, Adolf Loos (1870-1933) cried: ‘Every epoch had its own style, and ours alone should be denied one?’ Stanford Anderson thoroughly examined the connections between the unique conditions of the period and the work of Peter Behrens (1868-1940) in his Peter Behrens and a New Architecture for the 20th Century, claiming that the German architect showed incessant interest in the Spirit of the Age in his buildings and writings. Le Corbusier (1887-1965), the venerated virtuoso of the early Modernist architecture, often expressed the relevance of the link between a specific period and architectural style in his writings.

Branko Mitrović opens his discussion of architectural Modernism in relation to historicism with words by Le Corbusier. In his seminal Toward a New Architecture, Le Corbusier wrote that ‘our own epoch is determining day by day its own style.’ Whyte noted another occasion when Corbusier ‘very predictably hailed the particularity of the moment: ‘There is a new spirit: it is the spirit of construction

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426 Moisei Ginzburg, Style and Epoch, 78.
430 Mitrović, Philosophy for Architects, 112.
and of synthesis, guided by a clear conception. Whatever may be thought of it, it animates to-day the great part of human society." Mitrović aligned Le Corbusier’s writing with the historicism of Hegel, who interpreted human creativity as a manifestation of a single spirit. Richard A. Etlin discussed the architectural responses to the Zeitgeist on both sides of the Atlantic, exploring the relations between the spirit of the age and the ideas of the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) and Le Corbusier.

A conclusion can be drawn that the ‘new’ architecture, as proposed by the Modernists in the West, or the Constructivists in Soviet Russia, was the last phase, and the key achievement of historicism. Almost a two centuries’ long quest for a ‘style of our times’ was concluded in the shared vision of these revolutionary architects. Driven by an historicist self-consciousness of one’s place in the stream of history, they developed an architectural vocabulary expressive of the present. This should not come as a surprise, given that all of these people matured in the same intellectual and academic tradition of historicism. As did most of their peers – regardless of their preferred mode of design – the Modernist architects acted in response to the same initiative to express the individuality of their own time, the Age of the Machine. Their creative efforts were driven by the same exigency to architecturally communicate the unique characteristics of the present.

One of the most striking characteristics of the historicist period was the pluralism of architectural theories and forms, driven by the incentive to build for the age. Scholars have examined this phenomenon thoroughly in the context of nineteenth-century architecture. However, comprehensive research of the said pluralism in the architectural histories of the twentieth century, notably the decades preceding the Second World War, was obstructed by the assertive campaign led by the proponents of the Modern Movement. As noted in Chapter 1, only one monograph on the topic was published to date. As Tournikiotis explained with reference to the examples of Pevsner’s, Kaufmann’s, and Giedion’s writings, the Modernist rhetoric was polemical. According to him, these early texts had the ‘effect of making the past topical so as to vindicate the present.’ An easily discernible pattern of polemical intent can be observed – in order to constitute Modernist architecture in positive terms, the authors treated all other design modes derogatively.

The same mechanism was employed by practising architects. They wrote passionately against the copying of historical styles for the architecture of the present and criticised subjection of functionality to the conservative demands for symmetry in planning. Interestingly, as will be shown in

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433 Mitrović, *Philosophy for Architects*, 112
Chapter 4, strikingly similar attitudes were expressed by their traditionalist contemporaries. In the decades following the Second World War, generations of scholars inherited the rhetoric of the early Modernists, directly contravening the imperative for open-minded and systematic historical research. The fact that traditionalist and Modernist architecture are part of the same – historicist – narrative from architectural history has been overlooked. Scholarship popularised the meaning of the term historicism as a conservative design mode, based on eclectic copying of past architectural styles. Discussion is mostly focused on the forms – styles – of these structures and their semiotic potential, while the functionality, building technologies, and wider public reaction are disregarded or dismissed entirely.

Traditionalist historicist architecture of the twentieth century was the final mode of a century of relativist historicism in architecture. Exploring the writings by the most notable architects and individual structures in three European countries – the U.K., France, and Italy – Pigafetta and Abbondandolo gleaned seven main points of traditionalist architecture. Most of the points proposed by Pigafetta and Abbondandolo drew from the nineteenth-century positions, discussed earlier in this chapter:

1. Use of the notion of ‘common sense’ to support their arguments;
2. Opposition to the radical research of novelties, incomprehensible to the wider public;
3. Understanding of a fundamental relationship between ‘decorum’, usefulness and constructional honesty in architecture;
4. The idea that true architecture evolves from the architectural past;
5. The belief that modern society and modern architecture are the fruit of decadence and that the state of crisis can only be overcome by reinforcing the links with the past;
6. Understanding of ‘race’ and ‘climate’ as guarantees of regional and national identities, as opposed to Modernist internationalism;
7. Conviction that Modernism is a foreign movement – most notably, German – that is not rooted in local and national culture.437

The following chapters will demonstrate that, to a varying degree, these ideas permeated the reasoning behind traditionalist twentieth-century architecture in New Zealand. The traditionalist architects employed architectural principles, forms and elements culturally legitimised by their historical longevity, supported by the official educational and governing institutions. Easily understood, engaging and widely appreciated by the general public, this manner of architectural expression was abundant in communicative potential. The value of traditionalist architecture was beyond doubt in the minds of the patrons and general audience, as well as the majority of architects until the late 1930s. Hence, as a rule, it was chosen for important public structures and ambitious private projects. These

437 Pigafetta, Abbondandolo, and Trisciuoglio, Architettura tradizionalista, 29.
edifices were designed by the most esteemed architects of the period, employed the latest building technologies, were widely appreciated by the public, and were deemed to be aesthetically pleasing.

To this day, these buildings remain important features of cityscapes, and a number of them are still used for housing public institutions or prosperous businesses. Most of them represent national and civic symbols of associative power, or, are simply appealing to the spectator. In spite of its obvious value, traditionalist architecture of the twentieth century exists in a scholarly vacuum. The prominent traditionalist examples are acknowledged, but not thoroughly researched; appreciated, but not properly evaluated. The sheer number of these buildings, and, in certain environments, their prevalence, makes it impossible not to consider them when researching twentieth century architectural history. However, as a rule, when discussing traditionalist architecture of the twentieth century, scholars mostly offer descriptive and factual information, remaining diffident in their critical assessments.

Failing to impartially evaluate and generate knowledge about twentieth-century traditionalist architecture, scholars have not raised awareness about its broader historical and socio-cultural importance. By not doing so, they should be considered partially responsible for enabling uncritical demolitions that scar urban environments. A series of demolitions executed during the 1980s in Queen Street in Auckland were a fine example of this. However, negative public reaction to Queen Street demolitions illustrates the broader socio-historical value of these structures. Though heavily criticised as anachronistic by the Modernist tradition, the twentieth-century traditionalist architecture serves as a memory of complex socio-cultural identity in a transitional period in the history of the Western world, caught between tradition and modernity. 438 No exploration of twentieth-century architecture can truly be complete without a discussion of this topic. The second aim of this thesis is to contribute to the better understanding of this side of twentieth-century architectural history – Modernism’s ‘other’ – the pre-Second World War traditionalist historicist architecture. The following chapters will explore this topic in the context of a specific time and place – the architectural transformations of Queen Street in Auckland.

Conclusion: The Three Principles of Historicist Architecture

This chapter argued that historicism should be perceived as a phenomenon that grew out of the context of the academic discussions from the philosophy of history. Embedding the experiences of change into a narrative of progressive development, historicism operated as an outlook that influenced the way Western culture conceived of history and, consequently, itself. Perceiving history as a stream

of individual epochs, each uniquely shaped by a set of specific historical conditions, Western civilisation became increasingly self-conscious, and preoccupied with its own period. Having recognised dominant characteristics, values and the achievements of past societies, the West started to contemplate the specific conditions of their own epoch, understood as a unique stage in the course of history. The new historical self-consciousness heavily influenced thinking behind the architecture from the 1750s, culminating with the twentieth-century inventions of the Modern Movement. This chapter proposed that architecture of this period could be regarded as historicist.

Historicist architecture was driven by the need to create forms expressive of the unique conditions of the present epoch, understood as a phase in the development of architectural history. For historicist architects, architecture was determined by specific material and immaterial factors of the epoch (i.e. climate, landscape, specific purpose, function, technology, cultural, economic, political conditions, etc.) and, above all, it was inextricable from the society that created it. Hence, like the societies of Western civilisation, architecture was rooted in the past and had a responsibility to the future.

The period was characterised by a heightened attitude towards history – thus the need to maintain a continuity with past architectural forms – and the understanding of architecture as a socio-temporal and contextual construct. It plastically expressed unique conditions, and, most importantly, dominant values of a certain period. However, historicist architects did not conceive of the built environment as a passive construct, a mere scenery for the unfolding of everyday lives. Communicating values legitimised by their historical longevity, it was considered as an active contributor to better a society. In nineteenth-century architectural theories, architecture was intertwined with the activist and moralising tendencies of its creators. This line of argument triumphed in the design philosophy of the Modern Movement.

What were the core concepts of historicist architecture that also informed traditionalist architecture of the twentieth century? Underlining the Western outlook, three key ideas – holism, individuality and development – informed two centuries of historicist architectural theories and production. Holism perpetuated the attitude that architecture is inextricable from, and determined by, broader historical conditions of the epoch and locality of its creation. Recognising various epochs, physical and socio-cultural environments as unique and determined by specific sets of factors, the principle of individuality builds on the concept of holism. The concept of individuality informed the understanding of architecture as the expression of the unique historical conditions of the individual period. The principle of individuality also informed theories about the differences between particular human collectives, such as nations and races, often causing discriminatory behaviours. The ideas of architectural temporality and complex societal implications resulted in the emergence of specific design motivations and mechanisms. Architecture of the historicist epoch was embodied in the conscious desire and active efforts to architecturally express – and influence – the unique conditions of the period,
society, and the physical context. Consequently, architectural forms became associated with specific socio-cultural values of an historical epoch, becoming deeply imbued with meanings.

In the relativistic intellectual climate, the search for architecture expressive of the unique conditions of the present time was polemical, as there were no longer fixed values to uphold. Consequently, eclecticism reigned – expressed through a pluralism of different styles existing side by side or elements from different styles used in the design of a single structure. Carriers of meaning, styles were perceived as dependent on ornament – the primary communicator of social values. Historical styles and architectural ornament were employed as a vehicle of communication par excellence. Democratising societies developed an awareness that architecture surpasses the needs and expectations of its primary occupants – most often, the patrons – and became increasingly concerned with the effect it might have on the rapidly growing urban populations. Carving social values into solid materials, historicist architecture was not only created by society, but for society.

Individuality advanced innovation and experimentation. In search for the style suitable for the expression of the present conditions, historicist architects conducted countless design experiments. Drawing the inspiration from the deep pool of architectural tradition – classical, medieval, vernacular – architects tested their suitability for modern needs. At the same time, in the climate of the increased fluidity of values and political, socio-economic and cultural change, architects turned to technological inventions as a more tangible expression of modern achievements. New building technologies became the carriers of modernity. Thus, the topic of novel materials gained traction in discussions about the architectural style expressive of the present.

Individuality contributed to transformation of design methodology during the period of historicism, prompting deeper investigations into architectural functionality. The traditional means of architectural art for the development of a well-balanced architectural composition such as symmetry and proportions, etc. remained a relevant topic for historicist architects, and were still taught and widely discussed in the twentieth-century. However, in the atmosphere of an increased professional interest in the unique, or the individual, the understanding that design must be developed in response to a specific set of conditions – such as a building’s function, materiality, and physical and socio-cultural context – instilled itself in the minds of architects. This idea reinforced the relevance of a design principle named architectural propriety, or the quality of fitness in architecture, which will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 2 has shown that the majority of historicist thinkers perceived development as ‘the historical process within which individuality manifests itself and is to be explained not by “laws” (and hence is not predictable), but by innate tendencies, “spiritual spontaneity,” and special or external factors.” This directly contradicts perhaps the most famous reading of historicism offered by Karl Popper, who maintained that it stems from the premise that ‘there are to be found in history general

laws, rhythms, or patterns. And with these the social sciences can make predictions about the future. This thesis favours the former claim. The influence of individuality – of the specific conditions and unique traits of different periods and cultures – was too strong to allow for predictable patterns. However, there existed enduring themes from the history of humankind, thus, it is possible to trace the course of religious worship through time, or study the transformations of governance, etc. Moreover, members of human collectives such as nation or race, were considered to have common origins, history and a shared vision of the future. Thus, though it was possible to trace the great historical narratives of specific human collectives, with a beginning and a middle, it was not possible to predict where they were heading – one could only assume so and project the image of desired outcomes. Architecture was an essential tool in the process.

Thus, the historicist concept of development entails the understanding of the present as a stage in the course of history. Understood in that context, the present is rooted in the past and is responsible for the future. In the theories from the tradition of relativist historicism, the concept of development perpetuated the attitude that it was impossible to invent a new style of architecture. As modern societies have evolved from certain traditions, so must architecture, as their plastic expression relies on the lessons from the past. In this intellectual climate, learning the principles – not copying – from architectural history became a modus operandi for the majority of architects. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the Modernists claimed that their inventions, in fact, continued the natural development of architectural history, interrupted by the period of ‘copying’ from the past.

This chapter argued that architectural historicism should be defined as a conscious aspiration to architecturally express unique qualities of the present epoch. Does this mean that every architecture – or creative activity – created with a deliberate effort to express the conditions of its time, and self-conscious of its historicity, should be characterised as historicist? Addressing this (indeed interesting) question goes beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it should be noted that there existed a period in the architectural history of the Western world, starting approximately in the second half of the eighteenth century, and reaching its zenith in the architecture of Modernism. During this time, a common thread can be observed in the essence of numerous architectural theories – in spite of all the diversity, complexity, and often polemical character of their narratives. An altered perception of history, which recognised the individuality of different historical epochs, resulted in an intensified self-consciousness that acted as a catalyst for creative efforts. Regardless of all the differences between these multiple architectural positions, the heightened historical self-awareness and conscious efforts to develop appropriate expression for the unique conditions of the present age – perceived as a specific stage in the stream of history – remained a unifying constant behind their reasoning.

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440 Andrew Reynolds, “What is Historicism?,” 277.
Chapter 4. Traditionalist Historicist Architecture of the Twentieth Century: New Zealand Architecture before the Second World War

Chapter 3 argued that the concepts of holism, individuality and development informed most Western architectural thinking and production in the period ranging approximately from the second half of the eighteenth century until the Second World War. Flourishing during the 1800s, historicist experiments continued in the first four decades of the twentieth century. Resultant was a diversity of architectural modes coexisting together, until the final triumph of the Modern Movement. It was noted in the previous chapter that, due to the well-known polemical rhetoric of the Modern Movement, traditionalist architecture, one of these modes, remains under-researched in the histories about twentieth-century architecture. The same can be said about New Zealand architectural historiography.

Much has been written about the roots, reception and development of Modernist ideas in twentieth-century New Zealand. In comparison, rich traditionalist architectural heritage of the first four decades of the twentieth century remains largely unexplored. Some scholars – such as Terrence Hodgson, Peter Shaw, or Donald Bassett – have delved into the study of the traditionalist architectural mode in New Zealand. However, though their contributions are helpful, they are but a first step towards a comprehensive understanding of the topic, leaving much space for more systematic and deeper research.

Exploring the arguments and core principles of traditionalist pre-Second World War architecture, this chapter aims to contribute to the comprehensiveness of the histories about twentieth-century architecture. The main commercial throughway of New Zealand’s biggest city, Queen Street in Auckland, is the selected case study. Attracting some of the largest public and private investments in the country, the architecture of Queen Street operates as a representative sample, showcasing wider architectural tendencies in New Zealand. Hence, the chapter opens with a brief consideration of Queen Street in the nineteenth century. From there, to set the stage for the focus of the thesis – traditionalist historicist architecture of the twentieth century – the chapter continues with a discussion of the general historicist principles of holism, individuality and development within the context of New Zealand’s pre-Second World War architectural history. Considering period texts by local architects, the chapter deepens the understanding of traditionalist design philosophy and methodology. It demonstrates the similarities between the traditionalist and Modernist positions, as well as differences: some design principles advanced by the former were shunned by the latter.
4.1 The ‘Culture of Historicism’ and Queen Street Architecture in the Nineteenth Century

Western culture, later the carrier of the historicist outlook, first sighted the shores of New Zealand through the eyes of Abel Tasman, commander of the Dutch East India vessels, and his crew, on 13 December 1642.441 One hundred and twenty-seven years later, in 1769, James Cook, commander of the ship Endeavour, reached New Zealand, heralding the arrival of the first British settlers from the 1840s. From the middle of the nineteenth century on, the ‘Europeanisation’ process increased rapidly, and the seeds for a New Zealand identity were planted (Figure 1). Scholarship has shown that New Zealand identity is multifaceted, complex and dynamic concept.442 The scope of the problem transcends the possibilities of this thesis. However, the ‘culture of historicism’ is an appropriate tool for

deciphering certain influences behind New Zealand architecture from the 1840s until the Second World War.

As discussed in Chapter 2, John Toews used the phrase ‘historical principle’ to designate the nineteenth-century attempt to redefine membership in various communities – religious, ethnic, ethical, and political – as historical identifications, that is, in terms of the subjective identification of individuals with a shared past or public memory. According to Toews, this principle inculcated itself into the *culture of historicism*, influencing everyday human experiences and creative efforts. In a context of modernisation and historicisation, historicism’s genealogical thought structure offered a means for maintaining a continuity with the past while sustaining hopes for stable and steady societal progress in the future. Due to its ability to connect the past and the present in a narrative of developmental progress, historicism serves as a system of meaning, a mode of interpreting the world, which enabled people in times of rapid change to see a relationship between where they came from and where they were heading to. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, historicism also operated as an outlook that enabled thinking in terms of differences, providing a basis for discriminative social practices of racism and nationalism.

It could be argued that the process of European New Zealanders acquiring a ‘sense of place’ in the new land they inhabited developed in the climate of the historicist culture. Place here is understood as a complex interaction of human experience, history, and environment, intimately associated with a broader cultural and national identity. History served as a compass in the long process leading from the discovery of a place, through living in it, to gaining a sense of it. As John Andrews notes, at first, the Europeans had no intention of making a fully committed adaptation to their new environment: instead, they intended to create an environmental and cultural version of the one they left behind. In doing so, they exhibited racist modes of behaviour towards the native population and discriminated against both non-white (mostly Asian) and ‘other European’ (read non-British) members of New Zealand society.

Drawn from the formal repertoire of the Western tradition, architecture plastically maintained a continuity with a European past, allowing British settlers to become more comfortable with the country they had colonised and develop a stronger feeling of belonging. James Belich asserts that the aspirations from the early days of the colony were clearly visible in the efforts to make New Zealand seem more Britain-like to the next echelon. And what a better way to do so than to create a built environment reminiscent of home? Fierce in Europe since the second half of the eighteenth century, historicist stylistic debate lost its fervour crossing the distance to nineteenth-century New Zealand. It appears that the young colony was too busy trying to get established during the 1800s. As a result, the

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443 Toews, *Becoming Historical*.
446 Andrews, *No Other Home than This*, 248.
quantity of building construction surpassed the amount of architectural writing. Unlike the turbulent history of the period’s architectural theories in Europe, developed in the atmosphere of the outlook deeply shaken by the relativistic crisis of meaning, nineteenth-century architecture in New Zealand developed free from deeper professional doubts or self-reflections. For the time being, British colonists were content to construct – whenever they could afford it – in a manner that reminded them of home. Colonial architecture also projected a desirable image of the Empire’s supremacy over and abundant contributions to the betterment of the original local conditions. This line of reasoning is well presented in the speech delivered by Archibald Philip Primrose, 5th Earl of Rosebery, at the Anniversary Banquet of the Royal Colonial Institute, of 1st of March 1893:

There are two schools who view with some apprehension the growth of our Empire. The first is composed of those nations who, coming somewhat late into the field, find that Great Britain has some of the best plots already marked out. To those nations I will say that they must remember that our colonies were taken – to use a well-known expression – at prairie value, and that we have made them what they are. We may claim that whatever lands other nations may have touched and rejected, and we have cultivated and improved are fairly parts of our Empire, which we may claim to possess by indisputable title. But there is another ground on which the extension of our Empire is greatly attacked … that our Empire is already large enough and does not need extension … We have to consider not what we want now, but what we shall want in the future. We have to consider what countries must be developed either by ourselves or some other nation, and we have to remember that it is part of our responsibility and heritage to take care that the world, as far as it can be moulded by us, shall receive the Anglo-Saxon and not another character.448

Nested between two natural harbours, Auckland was founded in 1840, and selected as the capital city of the Colony of New Zealand.449 During the twenty-five years of its status as the capital (1840-1865), firm foundations were laid for the future importance of Auckland for New Zealand as a major socio-economic, political, and cultural centre. A town plan was established from the earliest days of Auckland.450 An early scheme, proposed in 1840 by Felton Mathew, New Zealand’s first Surveyor General (1801-1847), shows Queen Street as its main urban axis (Figure 2).451 Located in the centre of the plan, Queen Street connected the docks at its north end with the outskirts of the town. Queen Street’s

448 Quoted in: Bennett, The Concept of Empire, 310-311.
450 Hodgson, The Heart of Colonial Auckland, 1.
disposition was retained by Charles Ligar (1811-1881), Mathew’s successor responsible for the town plan that was put in place permanently, and which remains discernible to the present day.

![Original Plan of Auckland, 1840](image)

Figure 2. Original Plan of Auckland. 1840. Created by Felton Mathew.

Numerous articles published throughout the period discussed by this thesis and events such as the celebration of the ninetieth anniversary of Queen Street held in April 1931, confirm that it kept its status as Auckland’s most important business throughway for decades. Based on the attention it has received by period newspapers since the nineteenth century, a conclusion can be drawn that the growth of Queen Street was a favourite topic for Aucklanders. Its development was equated with the prosperity of the community, for, to use the words by a period commentator, ‘the record of its growth is an epitome of the progress of the city of Auckland.’ In a true historicist manner, Queen Street was described as an impressive monument of past achievement, one that inspired self-confidence in the present, and promised optimistic future prospects.

The heart of Auckland’s business district, Queen Street was considered a prime location for business premises, commercial, and public buildings. Terence Hodgson’s efforts resulted in a, to date,

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453 “Early Queen Street,” 11.
most comprehensive discussion of the architectural history of nineteenth-century central Auckland. Hodgson notes that the first Queen Street buildings, from the time when the street followed the line of the Ligar Stream, were predominantly wooden structures. The needs and development of the city quickly surpassed these structures, and they were soon referred to merely as shanties or hovels, outdated monuments to the first challenges faced by the early settlers. According to Hodgson, the first brick buildings in Auckland were constructed from the 1850s. The press praised them, and were also quick to point out how advanced such a building material was compared to those used in a city like Wellington, ‘which was loathe to embrace brick until well into the 1870s.’ The reign of brick over Queen Street continued until the first decade of the twentieth century. The start of its demise was marked with the erection of the then famous Security Buildings in 1906. The Security was the first commercial structure on Queen Street to be constructed with the structural use of reinforced concrete, marking the dawn of a new age in architectural transformations of Auckland’s main thoroughfare.

According to Stacpoole and Beaven, the mid-1860s witnessed a building boom owing to the influx of money brought by the Imperial troops engaged in fighting in Waikato, in spite of Auckland being deprived of its status as a capital. During this period, Queen Street underwent a substantial architectural change (Figure 3), ‘transforming many of its wooden shops to ornamental bricks and plaster blocks.’ Keen to make an impression and create a noticeable public image, banks and insurance companies invested in their new Auckland premises. What resulted was a number of recognizable architectural ‘ornaments to the city’. Three of these structures still stand in Queen Street, reminders of Auckland’s early business successes. Perhaps the most famous one of these is the Bank of New Zealand (1866-1867), designed by the Australian architect Leonard Terry (1825-1884). Hodgson notes that when the ‘chaste and elegant’ Renaissance Revival structure was officially opened in 1867, three columns of one page in the New Zealand Herald were devoted to a ‘minute inspection’ of the building, which was described as ‘unquestionably the finest in Auckland.’ The building remained a treasured architectural landmark of central Auckland, and when the Bank decided to demolish it to make place for a new high-rise in the 1930s, Cyril Knight (1893–1972), the first Chair and Dean of the Auckland School of Architecture, passionately opposed its destruction.

454 Hodgson, The Heart of Colonial Auckland.
455 Hodgson, The Heart of Colonial Auckland, 3.
458 Shaw, A History of New Zealand Architecture, 34.
Designed by prominent New Zealand-born architect Edward Bartley (1839-1919), the South British Insurance Building (1878-79) and Auckland Savings Bank (1884) were both lavish structures in eclectic interpretations of Classical and Renaissance Revival styles. Amongst the most notable nineteenth-century banking and insurance buildings was the New Zealand Insurance Company Building (1870), designed by Richard Keals, another recognised Auckland architect. Easily distinguishable by its tall clock-tower, the NZI Building was considered as one of the most important Queen Street landmarks for decades – until it was replaced by a new structure (1914-1917), which was considered a genuine architectural icon of its age, discussed in Chapter 5.

One building that clearly stood out among the numerous nineteenth-century commercial structures built for offices and retail purposes, the Victoria Arcade (1883), designed by Alfred Smith, was unfortunately demolished in the late twentieth century. According to Hodgson, Victoria Arcade was notable for several reasons – it was big, it was built for a well-known public company, it was expensive, and illustrations of it made their way into prestigious magazines. By the 1930s, the building was considered extremely outdated, and major alterations were made as part of a project to make it more functional. Victoria Arcade was the only major Gothic-styled nineteenth-century Queen Street structure that survived well into the twentieth century. Most other nineteenth-century

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commercial buildings – some of which still stand: D. Graham and Company’s Building (1862-63) by James Wrigley; Gilfillan’s Store (1865), and Craig’s Building (1882) by Richard Keals – employed eclectic vocabularies of Classical and Renaissance forms.

Figure 4. A View of Queen Street, Showing West Side Between Wellesley Street West and Victoria Street West, with the United Services Hotel, Left, Premises of J. Smith, Drapers, Strand Arcade and Albert Hotel. Photograph, 1880s Created by James D. Richardson.

Eclectic combinations of Classical and Renaissance forms were favoured for the design of hotels – a building type that bloomed in nineteenth-century Queen Street but was completely abandoned during the first three decades of the twentieth century (Figure 4). According to Hodgson, the hotels were predominantly two or three storeys high, with private and public bars on the ground floor, and bedrooms and suites on the upper floors reached by what the press almost universally termed ‘grand staircases.’ The staff quarters were usually located in the attics or in back quarters. New Zealand architect of Irish origin, Edward Mahoney (1824-1895), designed the two-storeyed United Services Hotel (1874) at the intersection with Wellesley Street West. Still standing, though in poor condition and neither listed nor protected by New Zealand heritage institutions, the United is the oldest surviving Queen Street hotel. The Thames (1860) and Waitemata (1866) hotels marked the northern entrance to

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466 Hodgson, The Heart of Colonial Auckland, 6.
Queen Street, at the intersection with Customs Street. The first section of the Waitemata was constructed in 1866, after designs by Richard Keals. Edward Mahoney (1824-1895) made the plans for its reconstruction and extension in 1899. Mahoney also designed the additions to the Thames that transformed it into a luxurious hostelry in 1883. At the same time, while he was supervising the Thames, Mahoney was also designing the new Metropolitan (later extended and called the Imperial) – one of the two surviving nineteenth-century Queen Street hotels.

![Figure 5. Looking North Along Queen Street, Auckland Central Showing (from the Left) the Union Bank of Australia, Thomas McEwin City Buffet Dining Rooms and (on the Right) the Mutual Assurance Society of Victoria. Photograph, 1890s. Created by James D. Richardson.](image)

From the earliest days of Auckland, Queen Street was perceived as the city’s most important throughway. The period press reported heavily on even the humblest of Queen Street projects, communicating that Aucklanders held the street in high esteem. As the city’s most valuable location, Queen Street attracted some of the biggest public and commercial investments. The resultant

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468 For example, Queen Street was described as ‘the main artery of Auckland’ in: F. C., “The Proposed Cutting. Upper Queen Street,” *New Zealand Herald* 44, no. 8941, December 1, 1887, 6. In another article, J. S. I. insisted that, to be ‘of any service’ and competitive on the market, coffee-houses need to be on, or in close proximity to, Queen Street, ‘the main thoroughfare of the city’: J. S. I. “Coffee-Houses,” *New Zealand Herald* 17, no. 5843, August 9, 1880, 6.
architecture was considered the best in the country, and on par with the international achievements. Hence, it clearly expressed the prevalent ideas and dominant taste in architecture. Queen Street of the nineteenth century set the course for its future architectural transformations. Mostly lined with two- and three-storeyed structures, its most valued landmarks were the tallest buildings, clearly showing an early tendency towards verticality (Figure 5). New buildings were constructed with use of the most up-to-date available technologies – brick – and embellished with carefully selected elements drawn from the long architectural tradition of Western culture. Designed and constructed by the most prominent building professionals, these structures were eagerly greeted by the public. However – with the exception of the Bank of New Zealand and Victoria Arcade – when new technologies arrived, the earlier buildings were dubbed as outdated, discarded in the name of the progress, and not mourned for a very long time.

4.2 Setting the Stage: New Zealand Architects and Architecture before the Second World War (1900-1939)

A very fair idea may be formed of the enterprise and progressiveness of a community by the style of its street architecture. In the infancy of every settlement the people are for some time doubtful of the permanence of their experiment. Their uncertainty is reflected in the make-shift character of their habitations. As their confidence deepens and their prospects brighten, the canvas tent and the raupo whare give place to the severely plain but substantial wooden shanty. The infant settlement grows apace into a pushing, go-ahead township, and the shanties are supplanted by wooden buildings of some pretensions, brilliant in paint and plate-glass and gorgeous with gilt lettering. In time the township swells into the proportions of a city and the enlarged conceptions of its people, are expressed in solid and yet graceful architecture.469

Published in a popular daily newspaper in 1900, the above paragraph is from a lengthy reportage of the ‘major improvement’ to Auckland’s business centre – the ‘magnificent’ Strand Arcade, erected in Queen Street at the turn of the twentieth century. The ambitions of an anonymous journalist were straightforward – public confidence and progress of Auckland seemed an appropriate opening to a story about a ‘public-spirited’ endeavour of a prominent local businessman. After all, as James Belich discusses, public enterprise had been a beloved feat of the forward-looking New Zealand community since the nineteenth century.470 The paragraph also illustrates the darker side of the period’s social practices, rooted in racism and principles of social exclusion. As discussed in Chapter 3, architectural

470 Belich, Making Peoples, 349.
evolution, closely associated with the level of a society’s development, was a common theme of nineteenth-century histories. In the colonial context, development of the built environment was considered an illustration of the evolution of human society from a primitive to a sophisticated state, which was but one of the many ‘gifts’ from the British Empire to the conquered lands.\textsuperscript{471} Indigenous architecture – in this case, the ‘raupo whare’ – signified the extant primitive form of culture that must be eliminated if progress was to be achieved.

Clearly expressing the historicist understanding of architecture as the expression of the unique historical and socio-economic conditions, inextricable from the society that produces it, the paragraph encapsulates the attitudes of the governing and financially soundest layers of New Zealand society that were in the position to influence Auckland architecture in the period before the Second World War. Business confidence and internal investment bloomed as New Zealand entered an era of prosperity in the mid-1890s.\textsuperscript{472} The early twentieth century – more specifically, the years preceding the First World War – were described as a golden period in New Zealand history. The country’s economy was recovering from the long depression of the 1880s and early 1890s; the socio-cultural matrix was transforming as the old towns were developing into cities and the population shifted from an immigrant-based to a native-born one; and the transition of New Zealand from a colony to a dominion in 1907 influenced the political climate and growing self-confidence.\textsuperscript{473}

The atmosphere of general prosperity at the start of the twentieth century contributed to the professionalisation of architecture in New Zealand. As Donald Bassett notes, this was the period when the New Zealand architectural profession ‘came of age.’\textsuperscript{474} What were the most significant agents of this maturation? Following the formation of the Canterbury Association of Architects, other major centres followed suit, and in 1905, they united as the New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA).\textsuperscript{475} The NZIA played a crucial role for the professionalisation of architecture in New Zealand. Following its establishment, the NZIA started publishing the Journal of the Proceedings of the NZIA (1912), devised a comprehensive set of professional examinations based on the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) standards, and made membership mandatory for practising architects in 1914.\textsuperscript{476} According to Nigel Isaacs, the 1910s were a period of transition from the multitude of building by-laws

\textsuperscript{471} Radaković, “Peoples and Nations,” 8.
\textsuperscript{475} Stacpoole and Beaven, Architecture 1820-1970.
in use around New Zealand to more structured codes and controls. In the following decade, building design, construction, and inspection benefitted from the 1924 Building Conference, which provided the first national building code for timber buildings. The 1930s saw the devastating impact of the 1931 Napier earthquake, which in turn led to NZSS 95: 1935 ‘Standard Model Building By-Law,’ described by Isaacs as ‘the ancestor’ of the modern New Zealand Building Code.

Another agent of maturation was the printed media about architecture. Justine Clark and Paul Walker have discussed the importance of local publishing during the 1940s for the development of New Zealand architectural Modernism. Similarly, the physical remoteness of New Zealand impeded frequent travels, making publications the essential means of informing architectural design in the pre-Second World period. Books and periodicals such as Architectural Review or The Builder were imported from the U.K., the U.S., and Australia. Specialist journals were valuable tools for the professionalisation of architecture. To use the words of Joanna Merwood-Salisbury, they served as a documentary record of practice and a venue for theoretical writing aimed at reconciling local architecture with a wider history and linking it with global professional achievements. The year 1905 was especially significant in this regard as it saw the founding of New Zealand’s first architectural periodical – Progress. Published in Wellington from 1905 to 1924 and heavily illustrated with photographs, drawings and plans, it was an essential resource that kept the profession up to date with the international discussions on architecture, and, perhaps more importantly, facilitated the expression of local professional voices. The magazine was initially published by Wellington patent attorneys, Baldwin & Rayward. Harry Tombs (1874-1966), a well-known printer, patron of the arts and publisher of fine arts periodicals, took over in 1910. Under Tombs, Progress focused on the issues about architecture and building, ultimately changing its title to Building Progress in 1914. The final issue of the Building Progress was printed in April 1924, with the idea to resume the publication when ‘conditions become more favourable.’ However, this never happened.

Adrian Humphris and Geoff Mew have shown that there were 307 architects practising in New Zealand in 1914. Ten percent were employed by local or central government, while a striking majority of 90% worked in private practice. Architecture was a male dominated profession. The average architect was 42 years old and had been in practice or involved in architecture for 13 years. In terms of qualifications, 62% of architects were members of the NZIA by 1914, a further 4% recorded qualifications.

478 Isaacs, “‘Each Council,’” 62.
483 In fact, they managed to track only one female architect, Lucy Adelaide Greenish, who had registered in 1914 and worked in the office of Atkins & Bacon: Humphris and Mews, “How to Characterise a 1914 Architect,” 53.
overseas qualifications (predominantly registration with Australian institutes or the RIBA), leaving 34% without a record of architectural ‘qualification’.\textsuperscript{484} This data corresponds with the practice observed in Queen Street during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Not a single building was designed by a woman architect during this period and the majority of projects were developed by architects working in the private sector.

As for their educational background, Ann McEwan and Lucy Treep have independently shown that in New Zealand, as in Britain and the United States, the study of architecture existed for decades outside of the university context.\textsuperscript{485} Aspiring candidates could learn their craft in the office of a senior architect, by correspondence or – for the few who could afford it – studying at an overseas university. New Zealand architects who were educated abroad most often studied in the U.K. or the U.S.A., where they were developing their skills under the heavy influence of the École des Beaux-Arts design methodology.\textsuperscript{486} Lacking systematised architectural education, the United States and the United Kingdom adopted and adapted the Beaux-Arts model for the development of their tertiary-level instruction during the course of the nineteenth century. In both countries, architectural knowledge was previously acquired through the traditional system of pupillage. In contrast, the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris developed a centralised, government-funded and systematic education from the middle of the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{487} The United States employed the Beaux-Arts model for the first time at MIT in 1865.\textsuperscript{488} England got its first full-time architectural programme in 1895, again based on the Beaux-Arts system, at the University of Liverpool.\textsuperscript{489}

Both the British and the American schools taught the Beaux-Arts design principles and, especially at first, aimed to employ French design tutors. However, they did not copy the programme of the École des Beaux-Arts – rather, the content taught at the French school was adapted to fit the

\textsuperscript{484} Humphris and Mews, “How to Characterise a 1914 Architect,” 54.
\textsuperscript{489} Cristopher Crouch, Design Culture in Liverpool 1880-1914: The Origins of the Liverpool School of Architecture (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002).
system of the university teaching in the British and the American context. Architectural schools in the U.K. and the U.S. taught architectural design in standardised studio courses, whereas the École combined lectures with ateliers run by practising architects. The Beaux-Arts tradition instilled the belief that without art, or careful consideration of the meaning of selected forms, architecture is reduced to a mere piece of construction, not much different than an animal shelter. The preferred architectural language of the Beaux-Arts tradition was classicism, which gave rise to the grandiose mode of Beaux-Arts classicism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Though it insisted on explorations into architectural composition and aesthetic devices such as ornament, resulting in beautiful student drawings, the Beaux-Arts students were also trained to develop functional designs, sensitive towards the building’s programme and context. This was necessary in order to respond to the requirement of the ‘propriety of architecture,’ a design concept that will be explored in more detail later in the chapter. In essence, Beaux-Arts teaching adopted the basic historicist premise that no historical phenomenon could be understood in isolation. Relative factors of geographic, socio-cultural and historical conditions – climate, geology, human institutions – and of the temporal situation in a sequence of development, were deemed essential to understanding the formal appearance, materials, and expression of any given structure.

What made the Beaux-Arts method such a fitting model for the development of tertiary-level architectural curricula elsewhere? Discussing Beaux-Art influences on the architectural profession in the United States, Joan Draper and Joan Ockman formed some insightful conclusions, and ones that are also relevant to the British and New Zealand experience. The standardisation of education following the Beaux-Arts model offered solutions to two major problems. First, the establishment of systematic rules helped overcome the rampant pluralism of nineteenth-century architectural styles. The French school developed a precisely defined, universal formula of historical architectural styles and a rational method for applying it. Furthermore, the Beaux-Arts system helped the development of specific professional abilities that would differentiate architects from the other professionals of the construction industry. This contributed to the emergence of a specific, standardised approach to architectural design and, officially supported and acknowledged by the public, institutionalised education therefore played an important role in the professionalisation of architecture.

In New Zealand, in an atmosphere of general prosperity, confidence in the future of the architectural profession gained strength. The changes in New Zealand’s architectural profession instigated by the prosperous years of the early twentieth century encouraged the first steps toward the development of more systematic architectural education in the country. Bassett notes that by 1915, ‘the

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490 See: Joan Ockman, Architecture School.
cry had already gone up for some form of Beaux-Arts training’ in New Zealand. These ambitions were fuelled by personal overseas experiences published in the contemporary press. For example, an account by F. Eric Gooder, a New Zealand architectural student, asserts the importance of studying abroad, because in none of the major domestic cities ‘is there anything approaching the various institutions in Europe and America where architecture is taught upon some recognised system.’

Basset notes that a first step towards the introduction of the Beaux-Arts method in New Zealand was the establishment of students’ associations in the main centres – Wellington had an Architectural Students Club as early as 1910, and the Auckland Architectural Students’ Association began in June 1914. By November 1914, the Auckland Association had established a type of atelier system, with changing patrons – the first one was Noel Bamford, followed by R. K. Binney, and Daniel Patterson in October 1916 – all well-known architects of the day. Determined to raise the profession to a more advanced level, architects campaigned for the establishment of an architectural school in New Zealand. A three-year diploma course in Architecture was offered by Canterbury College from 1914, run in conjunction with the Schools of Art and Engineering. However, aspiring towards greater recognition, the profession was not fully satisfied. Debate, the relentless efforts of the NZIA and individual practitioners continued, ultimately bearing fruit. The first New Zealand School of Architecture was officially established at Auckland University College in 1917. The Auckland School of Architecture appointed its first Chair and Dean in 1925, Professor Cyril Knight, educated in the Beaux-Arts tradition at the University of Liverpool. Knight introduced the first fulltime five-year Bachelor of Architecture in 1926, producing graduates from 1931.

The culture of historicism contributed to another feature of pre-Second World War architecture in New Zealand. Considered inextricable from the society that created it – a consequence of the historicist principle of holism – architecture was more than a reflection. The selection of a suitable architectural style was not merely a matter of aesthetic preference, ‘rather,’ to recall the words by Mari Hvattum quoted in Chapter 3, ‘it was a vehicle for moral improvement as in Pugin, a symbol of national renewal as in Schinkel and Klenze, an expression of rationality and progress as in Hubsch, or the self-representation of a new social class as in the Vienna Ringstrasse.’

In the context of developing a democratising New Zealand society, architecture was perceived as a factor that might actively contribute to the betterment of society by inspiring certain ideas and behaviours. Hence, architectural problems concerned everyone – they surpassed the bounds of the profession and did not merely exist in...
the pages of professional journals. As Frederick de Jersey Clere (1856-1952), an esteemed Wellington architect, wrote in 1906, architecture was an everyday art.\textsuperscript{497} According to him, the preservation of the ‘true forms’ of architecture, inseparable from everyday life, is founded on the enlightenment of the layman, as had been previously discussed by Ruskin.

The press played a crucial role in keeping the public informed about period architectural production. The amount of attention given to buildings constructed in Auckland’s Queen Street clearly illustrates this. Daily newspapers such as the \textit{Auckland Star} and the \textit{New Zealand Herald} frequently published texts about architecture – written by local authors and reprints of British, American, and Australian articles – throughout the period. An article published in \textit{Progress} in 1908 commented upon the importance of press in the popularisation of architecture: ‘the only hope of a proper comprehension and appreciation of the great part which architecture plays in human affairs rests in the attitude which the press in future may take up in regard to it.’\textsuperscript{498} The relationship with the community was deemed important, and through it, the belief that architecture was larger than the profession. The importance of informing the wider public on the matters of architecture was repeatedly stressed.\textsuperscript{499}

In contrast to the general lull in post-First World War construction, the tendency to educate the wider public intensified. Inspired by the words by William J. Locke, the former secretary of the RIBA and a famous novelist, the popular press proclaimed itself responsible for the popularisation of architectural art.\textsuperscript{500} Locke criticised the relative anonymity of architects in the eyes of the general public – especially when compared with other creatives – maintaining that the main cause was the lack of adequate advertisement. As a result, the architectural profession was underappreciated and often misunderstood. Being the only art whose products are ever-present in one’s everyday life, and always visible, an anonymous journalist for the \textit{Auckland Star} called upon the public to recognise architecture as necessary to the community.\textsuperscript{501} Cynical towards the common practice, the journalist stressed that under New Zealand law no one but a licensed plumber was allowed to put in a drain, yet anyone could design the house to which the drain was attached: ‘drains, being tangible and material things, are of more importance than dignity and beauty.’\textsuperscript{502}

Bridging the gap between the public and the architectural profession, the \textit{New Zealand Herald} published ‘hints to architects’ by Lady Astor, the first woman to sit as a Member of Parliament in the House of Commons in the British Parliament.\textsuperscript{503} Opening the Exhibition of American Architecture at the RIBA in London, Lady Astor stressed that ‘no architect ought to be allowed to plan a family house

\textsuperscript{497} Frederick de Jersey Clere, “Every-Day Art,” \textit{Progress} 1, no. 7 (May 1906): 167.
\textsuperscript{498} “Architecture and Press,” \textit{Progress} 3 (October 1908): 419.
\textsuperscript{502} “Art and Architecture,” 17.
\textsuperscript{503} “Hints to Architects,” \textit{New Zealand Herald} 59, no. 17991, January 17, 1922, 6.
unless he is married and has three children, and he should submit the plans to his wife. Reportage on the Auckland Society of Arts Exhibition held in Auckland in 1922 contributed to the wider promotion of architecture. The Society of Arts was praised for ‘rightly following the example of the British Royal Academy and similar Continental art institutions in giving a place to this very important branch of art.’ Participation at the exhibition was the first public showing of the Auckland Branch of the NZIA. Numerous architectural drawings were well received by the public and described as proof that New Zealand possessed architectural talent of the highest degree.

However, it should be noted that the press failed to capture the voices and opinions excluded from the period’s socio-cultural mainstream. It mostly conveyed the attitudes of the media-reading public and, inevitably, promoted certain agendas. Period texts about architecture reveal a tendency to connect New Zealand to Western culture and an image of cosmopolitan growth. This meant appropriating the language from political and other social discourses to promote an idea of the modernity of the architectural achievements in New Zealand. In reality, whilst portraying an egalitarian civic sentiment devoted to progress and overall betterment of society, pre-Second World War texts about architecture most often reinforced old racial distinctions and principles of cultural exclusion. The thesis acknowledges that architectural writing in New Zealand echoed the broader period attitudes that were discriminating against different races, cultures, and nations. During the first four decades of the twentieth century, the social strata that had the media at its disposal required architecture to communicate the British roots of New Zealand society, indicating the country’s continuity with the civilisation of the West. In the process, the press projected a carefully constructed desirable image of New Zealand society, which excluded many layers of the population, overlooking the period’s multifaceted socio-political and cultural circumstances.

4.3 Traditionalist Historicist Architecture in Twentieth-Century New Zealand

The previous section offered some insight into demographics, educational background, and employment options for traditionalist historicist architects in New Zealand prior to the Second World War. Equally helpful in trying to establish a ‘typical’ profile of a New Zealand architect in the period covered by this thesis was reading about their self-perception and reflections on architecture. What did being an architect mean for traditionalist historicist architects; how did they define their role? How did the traditionalist historicists conceive of architecture, in general? This section explores the historicist principles of holism, individuality, and development through the examples of architectural texts published in New Zealand periodicals.

504 “Hints to Architects,” 6.
505 “Art Exhibition,” *Auckland Star* 53, no. 133, June 7, 1922, 7.
4.3.1 Holism, Individuality and Development Reconciled: Dual Essence of Architecture. Architectural Art or Architectural Science?

Born in Invercargill, John T. Mair (1876-1959) was one of those early New Zealanders who was educated in the Beaux-Arts tradition abroad. Mair studied at the University of Pennsylvania for a time and earned the post of Government Architect later in his New Zealand career. In his well-known article ‘The Study of Architecture,’ published in Progress in 1910, Mair explains that ‘a twentieth century definition of an architect might be stated as ‘a person who builds with available materials in the most structurally scientific and aesthetic manner, to fulfil the requirements of his fellow men’.”506

Echoing a long tradition of Western architecture and the principles of firmness, commodity and delight, Mair clearly formulates three guiding principles of the period’s design practices: a building needs to be structurally sound, visually pleasing, and functional.

The importance given to ‘available materials’ and building technologies, placed at the start of Mair’s list, communicates the dominant professional interests of the epoch. As discussed in Chapter 3, perceived as the most tangible expression of modernity and the period’s unique conditions, building technologies were a major topic for historicist architects. The interest in novel materials and technological achievements did not bypass New Zealand architecture. Quite the contrary – in the years before the First World War, greater attention to innovative building technologies than the formal characteristics in architecture is noticeable in the period’s writing on architecture. Articles about earthquake resistant and fire-proof building, principles of ventilation, the ‘hygiene’ of the house, flat roofs, lighting, and other practical issues dominated the pre-war architectural press.507 Reinforced concrete, the ultimate building material of the Machine Age, became the driving force behind architectural thinking in New Zealand. This trend was also present in Queen Street buildings – until the construction of the New Zealand Insurance Company’s new premises (1914-1917), structures were, as a rule, noted for the use of ‘up-to-date’ technologies and planning. The commentary on the building style, though full of praise for ‘handsome piles’ and architectural ‘ornaments worthy of the city,’ reveals lesser interest in the topic of style, and often seems as an afterthought. Greater interest in the building technology than the architectural language of the Edwardian Baroque might be explained by the fact that the former changed, while the latter remained static.

However, were there other causes for the formal uniformity of public and commercial architecture in the years preceding the First World War? It has been shown earlier that, in accordance to the notion of holism, the intellectual climate of historicism associated architecture with the unique conditions of the period that produces it – and architectural styles with the dominant social values. In

the first decades of the twentieth century, the ‘unique’ conditions of the period were rapidly changing with the modernisation of everyday life, resulting in the increased interest in technology – the prime feat of the Machine Age. However, the dominant values and the general mind-set of the social strata that could afford architectural commissions were altering at a slower pace. The latter remained relatively fixed during the first fifteen years of the twentieth century and, consequently, so did the forms of architecture. The horrors of the First World War introduced the uncertainties of a true relativistic crisis of meaning and challenged the previously undisputed value system into the New Zealand environment. 508 Whenever one looks at life in New Zealand during the 1920s there is evidence of a loss of confidence, hesitancy, disillusionment… These were years of loud talk and little faith. 509

While the First World War robbed New Zealand society of stability and firm values, the aftermath brought greater formal experiments in architecture. 510 Furthermore, the architectural profession reached a greater level of maturity, inspiring greater design liberties. Bassett notes that professional discussion of architectural art intensified during the First World War. 511 It might be that, finding themselves in the circumstances of a reduced construction business due to an economic crisis, architects felt compelled to write. In addition, the artistic component of architecture was the key argument for making a distinction between architects and other construction professionals. Hence, during the years of active efforts towards the professionalisation of the discipline, discussion of an architectural art became increasingly relevant. Building technologies and functional planning remained equally important in the 1920s, however, the discussions of styles gained traction, resulting in a pluralism of architectural languages, also evident in Queen Street structures of the period. 512

This dualism that reconciled the changing conditions of the modern period with a continuity of Western socio-cultural constructs was the basic premise for the majority of New Zealand traditionalist historicist architecture prior to the Second World War. The position that defined architecture as a unity of two distinct components – art and technology – was developed in the nineteenth-century theoretical treatises and perpetuated by the Beaux-Arts teaching, stemming from the ideas by Labrouste who was the first to make a distinction between structural principle and decorative form. Labrouste demanded that forms of decoration be rationally induced from materials and methods of construction as well as from the specification of programme. 513 This approach underlined a design principle called architectural fitness, which will be introduced later in this chapter. Carefully developed plans and selected materials were then tastefully clothed with simplified classical facades acting as communicators of the specific meanings of the building.

510 Hodgson, Looking at the Architecture of New Zealand, 48.
512 Hodgson, Looking at the Architecture of New Zealand, 44.
Mair notes that an architect’s training was essentially divided into two distinct branches: (1) the technical, and (2) the artistic, and ‘his success in business is measured by the extent to which he combines excellence in both in his works.’ The renowned New Zealand architect William Gummer (1884–1966), another Beaux-Arts disciple, stressed the importance of technical education for architects, but:

He who knows all about the characteristics of marble and sandstone, or iron and bronze, their comparative strengths, durability and possibilities; also if he knows how to bridge spans by trussing timbers, how to economise area of supporting members and yet obtain the maximum of strength, as in steel frame construction, or exactly where to use piles or a raft formation for his foundation – if he knows how to produce a good working drawing, then he may well be allowed to proceed to knowledge of some of the finer qualities that go to make the architect.

Or, in the words of Samuel Hurst Seager (1855–1933), a notable New Zealand architect from Christchurch, architecture was both a useful and a fine art; it needed to satisfy the sense of beauty, and, at the same time, cater for one’s material needs. However, if functionality was only considered, ‘the work is not raised beyond the useful art of building. But,’ Seager continues:

if, without in any way affecting its utility, the work is made to give pleasure by the expression of solidity, appropriateness, harmony and proportion of masses, and the disposition and contrast of light and shade; by variety of lines and purity of form in the contour of surfaces; by harmonious colouring and judicious ornamentation of the constructive features, then it becomes a work of fine art.

It should be noted here that though they championed the necessity of the artistic qualities, traditionalist architects placed equal importance on functionality and structural soundness of architecture. In sum, employing the latest building technologies in combination with the past historical styles – in other words, merging architectural ‘art’ with architectural ‘science’ – in order to create architecture expressive of its time and suitable for its locality, traditionalist architecture of the twentieth century reconciled the historicist principles of holism, individuality and development.

4.3.2 The Concept of Individuality in Historicist Architecture: The Unique Conditions of Time and Place

It was noted in Chapter 3 that the concept of holism informed the idea of architecture as inextricable from the various material and immaterial circumstances of the broader context of its creation. These circumstances were perceived as unique and variable in terms of different epochs.

localities, and societies – this idea was the essence of the historicist principle of individuality which, in turn, influenced the search for architectural forms expressive of the present. Typical historicist comments about a style expressive of the unique conditions of the modern age and the physical context were present in the theoretical writing on architecture in New Zealand since the beginning of the twentieth century. From the earliest texts about architecture, it becomes obvious that the New Zealanders were thinking of architectural individuality in both temporal and physical terms; discussing the architecture expressive both of the twentieth century and of their own land. As discussed earlier in this chapter, this was closely related to the process of European New Zealanders acquiring a ‘sense of place’ in the new land they inhabited, developed in the climate of the historicist culture. Maintaining a plastic continuity with Western culture, the architectural past served as a compass in the complex process leading from discovery of a place to gaining a sense of it.

However, at the turn of the century, the simple transposition of forms from European architectural tradition into the New Zealand built environment ceased to suffice. New Zealand architects drew from the nineteenth-century theories discussed in Chapter 3, which contemplated links between geography (most notably, climate and terrain), races/nations, and architecture. As Don Basset notes, 1900 saw the earliest example of a New Zealander considering the issue of this country’s architecture. It was the year in which Samuel Hurst Seager published his essay, ‘Architectural Art in New Zealand’. Discussing the conditions for the development of a New Zealand architectural tradition, expressive of its time, Seager employs long-established historicist arguments for the need to build for specific cultural and geographical circumstances. Ian Lochhead described Seager’s paper as a call for a greater expression of independence in New Zealand architecture. Lochhead stresses that, among other factors, the achievement of dominion status in 1907 and the demographic shift from a population of immigrants to a native-born one resulted in a growing sense of national identity among Pākehā New Zealanders at the turn of the twentieth century. Clark and Walker also acknowledge the place of Seager’s paper in the course of a discussion about a local architecture. Brought up in the historicist tradition, Seager proposed history and the unique local conditions as a means of creating a distinctive New Zealand architecture, comprising New Zealand’s tradition of colonial timber buildings and the use of vernacular materials.

Closer to the end of the first decade, a criticism of New Zealand’s architecture by the country’s sixteenth Governor, Sir William Plunket (1864-1920), found its way into the technical papers of the ‘Old Country’, attracting attention in local architectural circles. Plunket’s general impression was that the architecture of New Zealand cities and suburbs was ‘contemptible’: ‘There are no traditions, and such forms as there are, are generally adaptations of English designs to achieve the greatest accommodation at the least… Ornamentation is avoided, as a rule, on the ground of expense, for economy is a ruling factor in colonial affairs.’

An article written in defence of New Zealand architecture stressed that condemnation of imitation should not be confined to the works of architects working locally. For example, it is explained, Professor Patrick Geddes (1854-1932) was complaining that many cities of both England and America were crude and hasty adoption of city plans, inspired, not by local life, but by imitation of the costly and meretricious pomposities of great Continental capitals. The ideal that both Geddes and the author of the article preach was individuality:

The problem which every city has increasingly to face is to conserve and express its local individuality, its uniqueness and character, yet to reconcile this with a full and increasing participation in the material appliances and the immaterial advantages of other cities.

Another voice expressed the hope ‘to see grow up among us a style in which reasonable homogeneity is not shrunk to a soulless monotony, and originality is not encouraged to freaks of perverse independence.’ In this manner a school of architecture might eventually be developed from the daily efforts of the architects of the dominion, ‘which would make its mark on the face of the country and be respected in the world for its grace, suitability, and soundness.’ Criticising modern architectural practices, Seager later proposed to observe ‘more fully the beauties spread out in this our adopted land so lavishly for our welfare,’ in search for the underlying principles that should serve as the standard for contemporary solutions. The principle of individuality – expressed as a (self-) consciousness of the unique socio-cultural and physical conditions of a certain time and place – informed the thinking about a New Zealand architecture.

**Individuality Embodied: The Quality of Fitness in Architecture**

Architectural historiography commonly associates the design process of the traditionalist twentieth-century architects with the primacy of architectural art, perpetuated by Beaux-Arts teaching practices. Beaux-Arts students were taught to start with an analysis of the given programme, the

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relations between the necessary functions and their expression in an architectural composition. The design parti formed the basis of the preliminary design relative to the final solution. Students would firstly develop ‘the general, the most ‘ideal’ aspects of the design before turning to its particularities.’ The Beaux-Arts system taught its students both a precisely defined formula of historical styles and a rational method for applying it, through ‘a command of the design method by which any problem, from a small house, to an entire city, could be systematically solved.’

However, though composition and other aesthetic vehicles were, indeed, important to traditionalist architects educated in the Beaux-Arts tradition, they were equally devoted to the functionality of architecture. An important design principle of twentieth-century traditionalist historicist architecture was architectural propriety or, as the organizers of the fiftieth writing competition organised by Progress named it – the ‘quality of fitness in architecture.’ The architectural quality of fitness could be characterised as a tool for the translation of the abstract historicist notion of individuality into the domain of architectural design. The first-prize essay by J. F. Ward proved to be a concise yet highly informative source for the exploration of the topic. The essay conveys the strong influence of the Essentials of Architecture by John Belcher, a popular handbook on design principles and architectural qualities published in 1907. The author explains that, to satisfy the requirement for fitness, it is not sufficient for a building to be beautiful in form and design. It should also be structurally sound, and respond to – as well as express – all of the relevant material and non-material factors that relate to it:

The design and construction of the work must also be in keeping with the purposes to which the building is to be placed; the decorative details must also be appropriate to the materials used; and the complete building be in harmony with its natural surroundings and local tradition.

In sum, to fulfil the quality of fitness a work of architecture should be developed in response to the specific conditions of the purpose, materials of construction, and context. Ward stressed that it is not only necessary that the structure be actually suitable – it must also have the appearance of being so. What did this mean for traditionalist design? For instance, a wooden bank building, with a properly constructed strong-room, is a safe place, however, a bank with brick or stone exterior would appear to offer more security. In the case of monumental buildings, where beauty and grandeur are the prime considerations, for traditionalist architects the sense of fitness is not disturbed when practicality is

529 Egbert and Van Zanten, The Beaux-Arts Tradition in French Architecture, 12.
sacrificed to appearance. On the other hand, in commercial or residential structures, subordination of utility to appearance would be inexcusable:

When it is considered that the home is the life-long shelter of the family, the pranks of design committed by architects of the eighteenth century cannot be tolerated. With them, convenience and homeliness gave way to effect and symmetry; bedrooms went windowless so as to fit in with the grand fenestration schemes of the front, and to obtain symmetry of masses, kitchens were separated by the length of the house from the dining rooms. In endeavouring to impart a monumental character to homes, they failed to bear in mind the whole fitness of purpose in domestic Architecture.\(^{535}\)

The importance placed on functional design by traditionalist architects, and their dissatisfaction with the practice of sacrificing utility at the expense of the visual effects and symmetry, are clearly visible.

The second requirement in judging architecture from the standpoint of fitness is the nature of the setting. In other words, architectural design needs to respond to its physical context – urban surroundings, landscape, and climate. Historically, the locality of architecture was expressed through the use of available building materials. However, architects of the twentieth century were no longer bound by locally sourced materials due to increased facility of manufacture and transport. Remembering that local materials are more fitting to the site, it becomes increasingly difficult – and crucial – to choose wisely from these foreign materials, to ensure that they will not clash with the site surroundings. According to Ward, one of the most common violations against the quality of fitness was one material imitating the characteristic properties of another material. For him, the quality of fitness was not transgressed when plaster or stucco was used to cover materials structurally strong enough, but ‘inferior in appearance.’ However, whenever stucco is employed was imitation of stone, one material is ‘making a poor pretence at being another, sacrificing architectural truth to the artifice.’\(^{536}\)

In other words, for traditionalist historicist architects, concealing was not harmful but imitating was. Another violation of the quality of fitness was the placing of whole facades of brick and stone above areas of plate glass. Defying the physical laws of nature, another form of deception takes place, for ‘no glass could be made which would bear this weight, but even the fact that the concealed steel columns do the work, does not remove the sense of unfitness.’\(^{537}\) According to the principle of architectural fitness, it was not enough for a building to simply be something – a structure made with the employment of the appropriate materials, designed functionally, and sensitive to the unique conditions of the local context. For traditionalist architects, architecture was deeply imbued with meaning, hence a building needed to look in a certain way – its appearance should clearly communicate its purpose.

\(^{535}\) Ward, “The Quality of Fitness in Architecture,” 891.  
\(^{536}\) Ward, “The Quality of Fitness in Architecture,” 892.  
\(^{537}\) Ward, “The Quality of Fitness in Architecture,” 893.
Communicating Architecture: Honesty through Materials and Society through Ornament

Ruskinian notions of honesty, and the essential role of building materials in architecture, were deeply rooted in New Zealand architectural theory, and clearly expressed in writings about the development of a style suitable to the unique conditions of the present period. On one hand, the discussion of a style appropriate for the modern age in New Zealand developed mostly along the pragmatic lines of cutting-edge building technologies. This was closely related to the quality of fitness in architecture. As discussed earlier, the general understanding of traditionalist architects was that architecture needed to be true to its purpose, construction materials, and locality. Present since the earlier stages of the historicist debate, the idea seemed clear in New Zealand architectural writing – a new age creates new materials, and architecture expressive of this age must be developed with the new materials in mind.

Ward was critical of contemporary architectural practices in their conclusory remarks. They echo the idea dominant in the period’s historicist writing that the key to finding an appropriate architectural style, expressive of the present period, lay in using modern construction technologies:

In the development of a truer sense of fitness in modern Architecture there awaits a great problem. Until our architects are given a more thorough training in the right use of materials, and a little less time on the ‘orders,’ one may not look for much improvement. All the great advances made in machinery, cheapness of transport and production of new materials cannot be ignored. To keep in touch with them, Architects must adapt themselves to new conditions, and, the general fitness of modern work. For a sense of fitness in Architecture can only be developed on a basis of a real knowledge of modern materials and methods, their uses and deficiencies.\(^{538}\)

Gummer also appealed for honesty of materials, condemning practices such as the imitation of brick in red stucco lined out, masonry forms reproduced in wood, or cast iron designed in wrought iron forms.\(^{539}\) In the previously quoted journal paper, John Mair stresses the importance of the study of history in the development of construction in reinforced concrete, ‘instead of attempting, as at present, to express forms founded on brick and stone construction in a monolithic material.’\(^{540}\) Referring to Mair’s discussion of a report by the German Concrete Association, Bassett notes that the ‘battle for an appropriate style for reinforced concrete was initiated in the very first issue of the *Journal of the NZIA*.’\(^{541}\) Editorial comments asserted that ‘a style belonging peculiar to ferro-concrete buildings has been evolved by giving expression to structural elements, and making it a feature in the design.’\(^{542}\)

\(^{538}\) Ward, “The Quality of Fitness in Architecture,” 895.
\(^{541}\) Bassett, “Stylistic Debates,” 47.
\(^{542}\) As quoted in: Bassett, “Stylistic Debates,” 47.
Criticising the frantic stylistic pluralism of the period, a prominent New Zealand architect from Dunedin, Leslie Coombs (1885-1952), warned about the crimes against architecture committed by architects who sacrificed the rationality of architecture to the whims of ‘fickle fashion.’ According to Coombs, during its history the formal development of architecture logically followed inventions made in construction:

During the last few years we have made use of what may be considered as new materials – steel and ferro-concrete. Surely we can invent a suitable finish for these materials – a finish that will not only be suitable for the construction, but suitable also as an indication of the times!  

Chapter 3 has shown that the historicist architects perceived ornament as the most conventionalised manifestation of a style. By the first decades of the twentieth century, ornament had become a powerful visual stimulus and a carrier of meaning. Traditionalist New Zealand architects considered ornament as the essential expressive means of the architectural art. Consciously or not, they carried on Semper’s argument that ‘architecture has over the centuries created its own store of forms from which it borrows the types for new creations; by using these types, architecture remains legible and comprehensible to everyone.’ Associational thinking – architecture perceived as an embodied memory – and the idea of architectural propriety – style as an expression of values and of purpose – provided support for the eclectic approach to design. Traditionalist reluctance to forego reliance on historical forms and ornament was, in its essence, an issue of architectural function. As discussed earlier in this chapter, traditionalist architects perceived of architecture dually, as union of science and art created to satisfy both material and spiritual needs. Therefore, architecture relates to two distinct sets of problems: of structure and planning on one hand, and of form, on the other. To ‘minister to the spiritual side of life’ – as Charles Reginald Ford of the Auckland-based practice of Gummer & Ford put it – and to, ultimately, contribute to the betterment of a society, architecture needed to ‘speak’ clearly.

Proud of their built environment, New Zealand architects maintained that the various styles of ornamentation made New Zealand buildings compare favourably with the plainer types erected in the U.S. and Canada, ‘where in the majority of cases, very little time is spent on what they consider useless ornamentation.’

However, conceiving of ornament within the context of architectural honesty, traditionalist architects remained critical of its excessive or inappropriate uses. An article written by an anonymous author asked openly ‘What could be more utterly senseless and tasteless than the cornice and central

545 Quoted in: Garnham, Architecture Re-Assembled, 62.
ornament in the average suburban parlour or drawing-room?" The article stressed that too often the cornice has no relation to the wall, and the central rose ornament looks as if it had been stuck on as an afterthought. The author insisted that the cornice needs to be a ‘natural’ and ‘pleasing’ junction between wall and ceiling, and to give to all the decorative work the effect of being built up from the plane surface – not precariously attached to it. Commenting on New Zealand architecture, another anonymous writer published in the pages of Progress notes that in contrast to various buildings of ‘handsome design, good construction, and useful in every way’, in the streets of the major cities also existed a ‘class of building which appears to have been made to fit some heavy design of aimless ornament… Some of these buildings have the air of being all facade and nothing else.’ New Zealand architects approached architecture pragmatically. The need for practicality manifested itself in a profound belief that architecture, above all else, needed to be functional and, as perpetuated in the writings by Ruskin, honest.

4.3.3 Concept of Development in Historicist Architecture

‘Styles Are Not Made; They Develop’

Chapter 2 has argued that historicism offered a worldview that embedded the experiences of change into a narrative of progressive development. History was perceived as a succession of epochs, shaped by specific sets of unique conditions. Influenced by an historicist outlook, people had learned to see themselves in terms of history, positioned themselves in genealogical narratives, and had defined themselves as heirs to traditions that they hoped to develop further in the future. The same attitudes contributed to the understanding of architecture. Chapter 3 showed that architectural historicism was characterised by a strong sense of innovation and experimentation. However, for the major part of the historicist era, the eagerness to innovate manifested itself in the increased interest in novel building technologies – it did not necessitate the creation of previously non-existent architectural forms. In fact, though the demands for a ‘new’ style were ever-present, influenced by the historicist notion of development, the majority of architects shared the opinion that it was impossible to invent a new style. Chapter 3 mentions an interesting event when, at the order of King Maximilian of Bavaria, the Akademie der Bildenden Kunste in Munich organised a competition ‘to invent a new style’ in 1850. The conclusion was clear: ‘styles are not made; they develop.’

Traditionalist twentieth-century architects firmly shared in this belief. Pigafetta and Abbondandolo note that the idea of architectural evolution was one of the two ways in which the traditionalists attempted to adapt their discipline to modernity. Chapter 3 has shown how evolutionist architectural theories reinforced mechanisms of social discrimination. Understood strictly in the context of design process, regardless of its burdensome socio-political and cultural implications, the concept of

architectural evolution (i.e. development) precluded invention of new forms. Namely, architecture gradually transforms through the individual structures in a timeline that exceeds the lifetime of a single architect, though they participate in this process.\textsuperscript{551} In New Zealand, the debate on architectural art, embodied in the question of style, intensified during the First World War.\textsuperscript{552} Following the Edwardian obsession with progress and up-to-date construction technologies, the war years saw publishing of short quotes by acknowledged architectural theorists, most notably Ruskin, in the pages of \textit{Progress}. The quotes were to remind the profession of the established views on the stylistic debate. A short lesson by Ruskin stressed that ‘a day never passes without our hearing of our English architects called upon to be original and to invent a new style… We want no new style of architecture. But we want some style.’\textsuperscript{553} An article written in a somewhat disillusioned tone echoed Ruskin’s view: ‘the search for an architectural style that shall hand down monuments of this time of upheaval and unrest is lost labour.’\textsuperscript{554} The author concludes that the only architect whose work will not be scorned in the days to come are those who are primarily focused on solving structural problems, ‘with an honest desire and healthy instinct for beauty, and who has little time and less inclination to discover a new style, or to supply obsolete styles to order at the whim of the client, or the demand of the curious, or the whims of taste of self-constituted critics.’\textsuperscript{555}

William Gummer also warned against forced originality. Quoting Reginald Blomfield (1856-1942), the famous British architect, Gummer maintained that architecture was too ‘old and great an art to lend itself to originality.’\textsuperscript{556} Architectural originality should not be that of the inventor of new and unheard of shapes and forms such as are exhibited by the ‘Cubists’ and ‘acrobats’ of Art Nouveau, nor is it to be sought in ‘brilliant caricatures’ of well-known features. The twentieth-century architects should aim at originality of the great masters of the past who used the historical forms but applied them with a richness of invention and resource that doubled their possibilities. To support his argument, Gummer quoted William Lethaby (1857-1931), who claimed that ‘true Originality is to be found by those who, standing on the limits of the sphere of the known, reach out to some apprehension of what is beyond.’\textsuperscript{557} Gummer’s advice was straightforward: ‘Ignore mere fashion. Be sincere in all things.’\textsuperscript{558} For Gummer, as well as for the majority of his peers, it was difficult to accept the logic behind the radical change from past styles, because, for them, architecture was the ‘Art of Reason.’ Gummer’s arguments supporting this claim clearly show that traditionalist architects prioritised context, functional planning and building technologies over selection of particular building style:

\textsuperscript{551} Pigafetta, Abbondandolo, and Trisciuoglio, \textit{Architettura tradizionalista}, 36-37.
\textsuperscript{553} John Ruskin, “Originality,” \textit{Progress} 12, no. 6 (February 1917): 871.
\textsuperscript{554} “Style in Architecture,” \textit{Progress} 8, no. 11 (July 1913): 572.
\textsuperscript{555} “Style in Architecture,” 573.
If, for example, a building is being considered, the plan should instantly show the relative importance and use of the various apartments, access to these should be of the easiest, and a true architectonic feeling obtained in the whole by allowing the nature of the site and its position with regard to the compass, the character of the materials used in the building, and the habits of the people to use it, together with the personal temperament of the designer shown in his use of mass, line, proportion, light and shade, scale, etc., to express themselves fully. It is not a matter of ‘I wonder what style I shall do this in’. The above set of circumstances determines the style.\textsuperscript{559}

For traditionalist historicist architects, design development was an extremely complex and highly rational process, and thus, accepting an historically untested formal vocabulary seemed dubious. Furthermore, since modern societies had developed from the earlier ones, inheriting certain traditions, architecture, as a socio-cultural expression par excellence, must also internalize the lessons from the past.

\textit{Learning from History: Principles, Not Copying!}

Though it might seem contradictory from a twenty-first-century perspective, for traditionalist architects the key to forms expressive of their age lay in the study of the architecture of the past. This idea was perpetuated in the first decades of the twentieth century by Beaux-Arts teaching, strongly influenced by the typological studies of Durand, which rendered established historical – classical – forms as modular proportions.\textsuperscript{560} Hence, emphasis was placed on the study of historical architecture – not to be copied, but to be understood and then applied to contemporary problems. In the article quoted earlier in the chapter, Leslie Coombs explained that, though the architects should not copy historical forms, they should learn from them and develop them further: ‘Let us improve on what we have had handed down to us, and in course of time a new style, better for our purposes than anything we at present have, will develop.’\textsuperscript{561} Traditionalist architects approached the design process through a scholarly comprehension of the past. Their practice was heavily influenced by historicism. As discussed in Chapter 2, challenging the older conceptions, the historicist notions of holism, individuality and development altered the way humans perceived history.

The historicist thinkers formulated the idea, today a default for historical scholarship, that each historical phenomenon – whether a person, an event or a complex political structure such as a state – was unique, different from others, and shaped by a specific set of conditions. Maintaining that the present was a part of the historical stream of development, humans started conceiving of culture historically. Architecture was traditionally deemed to be a product of ‘high’ culture par excellence. Christchurch architect Richard Harman (1859-1927) vividly illustrated the significance of architecture

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\textsuperscript{559} Gummer, “The Study of Architecture,” 293.
\textsuperscript{561} Coombs, “The Styles of Architecture,” 698.
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in an address given to the New Zealand Society of Artists in 1934. He stressed that the ‘people of the past were judged by their architecture and people of the future would judge those of to-day in the same way.’

Architecture was an integral part of civilisation. ‘Races without architecture were called barbarians, but those who built were held to be civilised. Architecture confirmed history...’

The intellectual climate of historicism contributed to the prestige of historical study in the official educational institutions. Gwendolyn Wright notes that history legitimised professional training in architecture. According to Wright, professors of architecture at universities maintained that the history curriculum lifted their programmes above the technical schools where they were often first located: ‘History gave them autonomy and legitimacy within the academic setting.’ Similarly, the systematic approach to history contributed to the professionalisation of architecture in practice. Architects set off to examine the architectural production of the past and, guided by the notion of holism, took into the consideration the wider sociocultural background of any particular period. Students were encouraged to study the past not in the positivistic way of an archaeologist, but to understand the complex circumstances significant for the progress of human culture and their influence on the forms and ornaments of architecture. The educated – and well-argued – choice of historical styles, dependent upon authoritatively generated precedents, resulted in a clearly identifiable model for architecture that was highly regarded throughout the Western world.

The belief in the relevance of the study of the past is apparent in New Zealand architectural theory of the period. Mair stresses that modern architects should not study the historical monuments ‘as our forefathers did, to become walking encyclopaedias of details and dates,’ but to try and get an understanding of the principles leading to excellence of historical styles. For Mair, to study the details of any style with a determination to use them without modification, or thought of suitability, is to waste valuable time, and the results are foredoomed to failure: ‘Modern commercial architecture requires for its satisfactory solution a mind free from the fetters and limitations of bygone ages and conditions, but having a full knowledge of them all.’ In a clearly evident example of historicist thinking, Mair notes that ‘the great architecture of the past was a true and legitimate expression of the utilitarian needs of the time, and it should be our aim to make ours equally truthful.’

Thus, historic masterpieces should be studied as ‘the product and culmination of the spirit of the age in which they were built.’ To understand this, a thorough knowledge of the political and

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religious history of the time and place is essential – without this knowledge the architectural student becomes a mere copyist, and, ‘like the English architects of the early eighteenth century, builds something which was good in its day and locality, but absolutely useless as a solution of present day requirements.’ Mair concludes: ‘to apply the principles of Old World architecture, instead of the work itself, should be the aim of all study; and out of the critical use of past tradition, considered as a whole, we must strive to build up a current custom, a tradition of our own.’

Samuel Hurst Seager also employed rhetoric of the spirit in his advice to architects in search of an appropriate expression of the modern times: ‘it is the spirit, then, in which our forefathers laboured, rather than the mode in which they expressed themselves, that we should strive to imitate.’ William Gummer articulated this belief in and address to Auckland Architectural Students’ Association in 1915. He stressed that the purpose of historical study was comprehension, not reproduction:

We do these things in order to be the better able to design in our own land. We do these things because architecture is intensely human, because the peoples of all ages – and this includes the present age – whether consciously or unconsciously, expressed themselves in the structures of their times.

Learning from history, Gummer insisted a strong and healthy New Zealand architectural tradition could be developed – one that was expressive of the peculiar conditions of country, climate, materials, ‘and the people that we are or hope to be.’ In the same year Coombs, in another lesson to architectural students, stressed that modern architecture should be in accordance with modern civilisation. And since:

… our civilisation has developed from the experience of the past so our architecture should reasonably be expected to develop. Therefore study the history of architecture and the forms that were designed by the men who came before us, and make full use of the ideas. I say make use of the ideas, I do not say copy blindly the works.

The architectural profession clearly appreciated the importance of past achievements for the contemporary design process, and Pākehā New Zealanders conceived of themselves culturally in the context of the Western tradition. However, the early twentieth-century media recorded a particular socio-cultural process – the moment in which the New Zealanders passed a judgement to themselves. Since there existed no lasting tradition of Western architecture in the country – that is to say, according to the self-imposed European standards – a choice was made to the embrace the opposite; the most recent, the novel. In the context of architecture, this was reflected in a great interest in innovative building technologies, eagerness to experiment, and a general lack of motivation to preserve old

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570 Seager, “What is Art IV,” 947.
buildings. The idea was consistent with the historicist notion of development that classified the present as a stage in the course of history – a unique period, connecting the past with the future, yet, ultimately, of passing character. James Belich shows that this attitude of the Pākehā New Zealanders was present since the nineteenth century – for them, the ‘paradise’ that they were trying to turn New Zealand into was always a matter of the future, while the present was but a step towards it.575

Conclusion: The Four Ages of Queen Street

Recovering after the economic crisis from the 1880s and the early 1890s, New Zealand entered into the twentieth century confidently. Progress was the period’s leitmotif, and New Zealand’s architectural profession thrived under the circumstances. The period writing about architecture illustrates that the architectural ideas in New Zealand developed along the lines of the historicist concepts of holism, individuality, and development. According to the principle of holism, historicist architects considered architecture to be inextricable from the context, and, above all, the society that created it – a plastic expression of its achievements and dominant social values. However, architecture was not considered a mere imprint of human ideas and activities – it was a facilitator of the overall betterment of society. Communicating values through easily discernible system of historical forms and architectural ornament, architecture was supposed to inspire certain behaviours and thinking patterns, leading the way to a bright future.

Another feature of traditionalist historicist architecture showcased in the period’s texts was the idea of the dual essence of architecture. Traditionalist historicist architecture was a union of science and art. Resonating with the all-prevailing Machine Age interest in inventions and productivity, architects contemplated the use of the latest technologies, understood as the most tangible expression of the period’s unique conditions, and stressed the importance of planning in response to modern needs. For traditionalist historicist architects, the ‘art of architecture’ was rooted in a historically legitimised repertoire of forms, which eloquently conveyed desirable socio-cultural values of the Western world. Traditionalist historicist architecture of the twentieth century expressed the individuality of its epoch through the application of cutting-edge technologies and functional planning, and merged them with the principle of development embodied in the historical styles of architecture.

This chapter has shown that the interest in building technologies played an essential role in the shaping of the pre-Second World War architecture in New Zealand. Hence, it is not a wonder that a 1928 discussion of Queen Street classified the transformation of Auckland’s most important thoroughfare with regards to dominant building methods of the period:

1. ‘The first was the brief raupo period;
2. The second was the wooden;

575 Belich, Making Peoples, 447.
3. The third was that of brick walls and wooden floors;
4. The latest is the era of steel girders and reinforced concrete.\textsuperscript{576}

The following chapters focus on the ‘fourth age’ of Queen Street, which lasted from approximately 1907 to 1939. During this period, the erection of numerous buildings transformed Queen Street into a large construction site in three waves. Analysing the selected examples of the traditionalist historicist architecture, Chapters 5, 6, and 7 discuss each of the waves individually. Ultimately, they explore the consequences of the dualist understanding of architecture, and the notions of holism, individuality and development, for the architectural practice during the first four decades of the twentieth century.

\textsuperscript{576} “Growth of the City. Four Ages of Queen Street,” \textit{New Zealand Herald} 66, no. 20158, January 19, 1929, 17.
Chapter 5. The First Wave: Queen Street 1900-1918

Chapter 4 has shown that the intellectual climate of historicism marked New Zealand architectural thinking and practice during the first decades of the twentieth century. Continuing the tradition rooted in the eighteenth-century theories about the origins of architecture discussed in Chapter 3, New Zealand architects conceived of architecture as dual in nature – a union of art and science. In practice, influenced by the historicist principles of holism, individuality and development, architecture was considered inextricable from the historical and physical context of its creation, and it was created with use of the latest building technologies in combination with historic styles. Perceived as the true expression of the unique conditions of the epoch, innovative construction technologies – tangible achievements of the Machine Age – were a major topic of traditionalist historicist architecture.

On the other hand, considering architecture to be inextricable from society, architects employed forms from the architectural past to communicate continuity with a specific tradition and convey the dominant values of the modern epoch. For historicists, architecture was deeply imbued with meanings. However, architecture was not perceived as a passive expression of the unique conditions of a certain epoch. It was not created merely by society, but for society. Associated with traditionally acclaimed values legitimised by longevity, the historical styles and architectural ornament eloquently conveyed the ideals that buildings’ patrons – especially in the case of public architecture – intended to inspire the ever-growing urban population. Transforming the built environment into intelligible representations of traditional Western virtues and modern achievements, historicist architecture spoke volumes.

The chapter aims to explore the idea of architectural duality in practice, and to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of twentieth-century traditionalist historicist architecture. Relying on period texts as the principal vehicle for observing the early twentieth-century architecture through its own eyes, this chapter focuses on select examples – individual structures from the first wave of the Queen Street transformation. Research focused on the early twentieth-century texts revealed that – in contrast to the gap in more recent architectural scholarship – the task taken on by this thesis is, in fact, not a novel one. The importance of Queen Street has been long recognised, and period commentators occasionally endeavoured to document its architectural transformation. An observation written by one such individual in 1912 still holds – ‘it would be a huge task to take Queen-street, yard by yard and recapitulate its history, but by traversing it and stopping here and there various chief buildings can be pointed out and the period of their construction suggested.’ Detailed study of every individual structure erected in Queen Street would far exceed the world limit for a PhD thesis. Hence, the chapter mentions many of the period’s buildings and concentrates on six of them.

Printed media of the period helped with identifying the structures that attracted the most attention of architects and the wider public in the first decades of the twentieth century. Chapter 4 notes that the interest in construction technologies informed New Zealand architectural thinking to such an extent that, when an article published in the *New Zealand Herald* presented an overview of the four ages of Queen Street transformation, it used building materials – not architectural styles – as the means of classification.\(^{578}\) This chapter opens with a concise consideration of the buildings from the ‘third age’ of Queen Street – structures built in brick. The second part of the chapter explores the structures built with the structural use of reinforced concrete and steel frame, focusing on three public buildings (the Town Hall (1909-1911), the Chief Post Office (1910-1912), and the Ferry Building (1909-1911)), and three commercial ones (the Security Buildings (1907-8), the Australian Mutual Providence Society (AMP) Building (1914) and the New Zealand Insurance (NZI) Company Building (1917)). Considered to be expressive of the age, true landmarks of the society that created them, these buildings combined innovative construction technologies – the dominant architectural topic of the period – with forms from the architectural past.

5.1 Progress and Modernity in Turn-of-the-Century Auckland: The Third Age of Queen Street

In his Master’s thesis ‘Architecture and the New Zealand Mythos’, Chris Orsman explains the symbolism of Queen Victoria’s death in 1901, and her prior reign, for New Zealanders.\(^{579}\) A contemporary of some of the first British and European immigrants who came to New Zealand, Queen Victoria had come to the throne in 1837, three years before the official founding of the colony of New Zealand. Their generation, too, by the turn of the century was passing away, and ten years before, in 1890, local-born New Zealanders outnumbered those born in Britain.\(^{580}\) According to Orsman, the early twentieth century marked the passing of the old colonial days and the beginning of a new age for New Zealand. For the architecture of Queen Street the same happened in 1907, when the erection of the Security Buildings opened the ‘fourth age’ of Queen Street – the age of reinforced concrete. However, before this happened, construction of a number of brick structures, interpreted as ‘sure a sign of a city’s advancement as can be given’, transformed Queen Street into a busy building site, since the grip of the economic crisis had loosened around the mid-1890s.\(^{581}\)

The twentieth-century chapter of Queen Street architectural transformations opens with the construction of two buildings. A ‘magnificent structure’ – the Strand Arcade (1900) – and a ‘handsome pile’ – His Majesty’s Theatre and Arcade (1901-2) – are well-known in New Zealand architectural

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\(^{578}\) “Growth of the City. Four Ages of Queen Street,” *New Zealand Herald* 66, no. 20158, January 19, 1929, 17.  
\(^{581}\) “Progress of Auckland – the Strand Arcade – the Finest Building in the Colony,” *New Zealand Herald* 37, no. 11454, August 18, 1900, 5.
Perceived as proof of Auckland’s prosperity, the two buildings became beloved Auckland landmarks, continuing to attract public attention for years to come. Following the extensive media coverage the Strand received in the course of construction, the building was once again in the public eye during a reconstruction following major damage it suffered from a fire in 1909. To this day, the Strand Arcade remains an important Queen Street landmark, recognised for its heritage value. His Majesty’s Theatre and Arcade, unfortunately, did not share the same fate. Once considered a symbol of civic pride and progress, the building was demolished in 1988.

Construction of the Strand Arcade was perhaps the biggest architectural topic at the turn of the twentieth century in Auckland (Figure 6). ‘Incomparably the largest and finest building of its kind in New Zealand,’ the Strand was described as the most noticeable of all buildings under construction in Auckland. The structure was a matter of great pride for Aucklanders: ‘nothing in this colony [comes]

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**Figure 6. Front View of the Strand Arcade from Queen Street. Constructed 1899-1900. Architect: Arthur P. Wilson. Photograph by Milica Mađanović.**

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within “coo-ee” of it, and you won’t even be able to match it in the big Australian capitals.”

Employed consciously or not, comparisons with other cities in the country and overseas were a potent tool in this early period of construction of a specific Auckland civic pride.Sibling rivalry with other New Zealand cities and ambitions towards a greater recognition within the British Empire remained a common point of reference for the pre-First World War commentary on the ‘progress of Auckland’. Auckland’s progress was equated with the material growth of the city as manifested by the large number of construction projects: ‘everything points to the fact that the day is fast approaching when this isolated centre will have passed from an important town to the status of a great Imperial city. Auckland is rapidly outdistancing all other cities in the Dominion.’

Continuing the nineteenth-century trend of public enterprise described by James Belich and mentioned in Chapter 4, the period press popularised the ‘public-spirited’ locals, citizen-patrons who, developing their own businesses, spared no resources for the beautification of New Zealand Queen City, which is how Auckland was sometimes called out of affection.

The leading business men of a city really mould and determine its characteristics. If they are broad-minded, liberal, and enlightened they show their faith both in themselves and in the community amongst which they have cast their lot by freely investing their capital in legitimate industrial enterprises of large magnitude, and in equipping the city with the social and commercial conveniences which help to attract a well-to-do residential population.

One of those businessmen was Arthur Myers (1868-1926), managing director of the Campbell and Ehrenfried brewing and liquor business, and a future mayor of Auckland (1905-1909). Anéne Cusins-Lewer and Julia Gatley’s research of the Myers Park and Kindergarten (1915-1916), as well as his future role in Town Hall’s construction, eloquently convey Myers’ lasting devotion to building endeavours of communal significance. The Strand Arcade was his project, and his role was not overlooked by the press: ‘one striking feature about the [Strand Arcade] is that it is not the work of some powerful corporation or large company, but in due to the enterprise of one man, Mr. A. M. Myers, who is public-spirited enough to invest a large amount of capital in an enterprise which is a great improvement to the city, and a credit to the colony.’ Another source praised Myers because he was not ‘avaricious and merely devoted to the sordid business of amassing dollars in the easiest and quickest

586 Belich, Making Peoples, 349.
way possible, as too many rich men are,’ but has, instead, ‘given abundant proof that Auckland possesses in him an enthusiastic, public-spirited citizen, who is keenly interested in every large-minded undertaking tending to the progress of the district, to the amelioration of the conditions of life for the people, and to surrounding them with those artistic and educational institutions that soften manners and sweeten existence.’

Constructed by the generous public-spirited patrons, architecture was a recognised tool for the betterment of society.

Numerous articles about the Strand demonstrate that, in line with the historicist obsession with innovation and the unique conditions of the epoch, being ‘up-to-date’, or modern, was the most appreciated quality in the newly erected structure. As discussed by Mari Hvattum and other scholars in *Tracing Modernity: Manifestations of the Modern in Architecture and the City*, modernity in architecture is a multifaceted and dynamic concept. However, it is clearly observable that in the context of traditionalist twentieth-century architecture, to employ a distinction proposed by Paul Walker, modernity was a quality that made architecture a matter of professional expertise, technological advancement, and technique – not only a stylistic Modernism.

Reporting on planning details, style, structural features, or equipment, the newspapers repeatedly assured their readers that the newly constructed buildings featured the latest technological inventions. The underlying message was – though remote from the major centres of the Western world, in a physical, geographical sense – New Zealand was not lagging behind. Neither was its architecture.

What made the four-storeyed Strand ‘up-to-date’ in the eyes of the period commentators? Offering a vivid first glimpse into the completed structure to their readers, numerous detailed descriptions published in the daily press help in answering the question. ‘In every detail one recognises that the predominant idea has been to study public convenience in lighting, ventilation, easy transit and other accessories and to maintain through all its parts the harmony of the general design.’ The author of the article concluded that ‘one cannot go through the building without being struck by the thoroughly up-to-date manner in which everything is planned.’ Newspapers also noted the architect’s contribution to the modernity of the novel Queen Street premises. Arthur P. Wilson (1851-1937), designer of the Strand, was described as a member of ‘the younger generation of home-bred architects,’ at a time when ‘home’ meant Britain.

Wilson was born in London, where he trained under William Oakley, FRIBA. The citizens of Auckland could rest assured that Wilson ‘imbibed the most progressive ideas that were projected by the leaders in his profession, and it has been his aim ever since to keep

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596 “Progress of Auckland – the Strand Arcade – the Finest Building in the Colony,” 5.
himself fully abreast of the latest discoveries, modifications, and improvements in modern architecture. Stately and graceful’, the Strand was described as the most complete demonstration of Wilson’s architectural ability in Auckland, primarily recognised for its height, functionality of planning, and modern equipment.

Following the upward tendency put forward by the four-storeyed Strand Arcade as a most palpable response to the requirements of the growing economy, the five commercial brick buildings constructed in Queen Street between 1905 and 1910 were all tall by period standards, consisting of four or more storeys: Partridge and Co., and Darby’s Buildings – four storeys; Endean’s, City Chambers, and Premier – five storeys. Out of these five structures, two stand until today – Endean’s and Premier. Endean’s Building is listed by Heritage New Zealand as a Category 2 Historic Place. Although it is not listed by Heritage New Zealand, the Premier Buildings are included in the Auckland Council’s 14.1 Schedule of Historic Heritage. Not one of these buildings has been the focus of scholarly research. Hodgson and Shaw are the only researchers to make note of them, however, they offer only surface information and no deeper contextual analysis.

The new building erected in Queen Street by Partridge and Co. was described as a handsome pile, while a report on building progress in Auckland published in the New Zealand Herald marked Darby’s Buildings as one of ‘the principal structures started during the past 12 months.’ Endean’s, ‘a noble pile of buildings,’ was considered to be the first imposing structure that would welcome ‘the eyes of arrivals by train or steamer’ on the east side of Queen Street, at its north end, between Quay and Customs Streets (Figure 7). The City Chambers block was erected after the old City Hall had been destroyed by fire in 1906, at what was deemed the prime location in the city – the corner of Queen and Victoria Streets. Arthur Wilson, the architect of the Strand, was hired to design the new structure. The press noted that the investors ‘recognise that their site is one of the best in the city, and that they have resolved to do full justice to it by erecting a thoroughly up-to-date building.’

604 The fire was disastrous and subject to heavy media coverage: “City Chambers Fire,” Auckland Star 37, no. 158, July 4, 1906, 4; “Fire in Queen Street,” Auckland Star 37, no. 162, July 9, 1906, 3; “Great Fire in Queen Street. City Hall Buildings Destroyed,” New Zealand Herald 43, no. 13210, June 22, 1906, 5.
Erected at the northern corner of Queen Street and Durham Street East by the trustees in the estate of the Michael Corcoran, the five-storeyed Premier Buildings were the most popular of the high-rise brick structures built between 1905 and 1910 (Figure 8). Newspapers reported amply on the building, describing it as a true ‘adornment to the city.’\(^{607}\) The Premier Buildings were always included in the overviews of the most significant construction projects of the period.\(^{608}\) The vogue of the structure was further enhanced (and, possibly, funded) by its most famous tenant – the firm of Stewart, Dawson and Co., jewellers, who occupied the whole of the ground and first floors. It was especially noted that the jewellers’ premises were practically distinct from the main building, ‘there being a ferro-concrete floor between the first and second stories, and a private staircase.’\(^{609}\) At the rear of the shop was another point of special public interest – a strong room, also constructed of reinforced concrete. The newspapers stressed that the architect, R. W. de Montalk, provided each office with access to natural light.\(^{610}\) The modern equipment of the building attracted a lot of attention, especially the instalment of an electric lift

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\(^{609}\) “Premier Buildings,” Auckland Star 37, no. 186, August 6, 1907, 3.

\(^{610}\) “Premier Buildings,” 3.
capable of travelling at the rate of 175 feet per minute. The lavatories were fitted ‘with all modern conveniences, such as tiled walls, and a shower bath.’\textsuperscript{611} The Premier Buildings were deemed to be a highly successful project, and de Montalk was commended for designing ‘an ornament’ to the city. Even with more ornate or technologically advanced projects at hand, the Premier was listed amongst the principal Queen Street structures in the years to come.\textsuperscript{612}

Figure 8. Front View of the Premier Buildings from Queen Street. Constructed 1907. Architect: R.W. de Montalk. Photograph by Milica Mađanović.

\textsuperscript{611}“Premier Buildings,” 3.

Starting with the Strand Arcade, and finishing with the Premier Buildings, the brick structures constructed in the first decade of the twentieth century outline the dominant attitudes about architecture, which marked the first wave of Queen Street architectural transformations. Discussions of increased height, functionality of planning focusing on circulation, natural lighting, and ventilation, as well as the modern technological features dominated texts about architecture. In contrast, though always included in commentary on the newly erected premises, and praised for its beauty, questions of architectural language were not explored in greater detail at this stage of Queen Street transformations.

5.2 Plastically Expressing the Unique Conditions of the Age: Innovative Building Technologies in the Service of Progress

It was noted above that the development of Auckland was closely related to the concurrent building programme, described by the period press as a ‘practical illustration of the steady progress’ the city was making.613 ‘Building reports’ on the new structures erected across the city were published regularly. The ‘handsome shapes’ and the structural qualities of the new buildings were widely discussed. These articles traced the latest architectural stylistic trends, and, as mentioned in the previous section, focused on the use of innovative building technologies, perceiving them as an expression of up-to-date quality and progress.614 Aligned with the historicist notion of development, which postulated the present as a stage in the course of history responsible for the generations to come, the new buildings were interpreted as symbols of the city’s bright future. As discussed in the previous chapters, historicism deemed architecture a societal product par excellence. Accordingly, Queen Street structures were considered to be an expression, or better yet, tangible proof of the betterment the city – and the country – were experiencing.

The six structures from the fourth age of Queen Street that are the focus of this chapter have been documented to various extent in New Zealand architectural historiography. Distinctive features of Auckland’s central cityscape, the Town Hall, the Chief Post Office, and the Ferry Building have been well researched.615 In comparison, though generally recognised for its architectural value, the NZI

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614 For example, praising the “wonderful activity in the building trade,” an article highlighted that “in the business area ferro-concrete buildings from five to eight storeys high are in course of construction…” “The Closing Year: Record of Progress,” New Zealand Herald 44, no. 13633, December 30, 1907, 6.
Building has attracted significantly less scholarly attention. Regularly included in overviews of New Zealand’s early twentieth-century architectural history, the NZI building is, as a rule, concisely described and characterised as a valuable Queen Street commercial building – without contextualisation or deeper consideration. No mention of the AMP or the Security Buildings has been found in the historiography of twentieth-century New Zealand architecture. The Security Buildings, the first Queen Street commercial structure erected with the use of reinforced concrete, was overlooked by Geoffrey Thornton in his major, and so far unsurpassed, study of concrete construction in New Zealand.

Of the six structures, five are still standing. The three public structures and the NZI Building are listed by the Heritage New Zealand as Category 1 Historic Places. The future of the Security is less certain as it is anonymous in historiography and has not been included in neither the Heritage New Zealand list nor the Auckland Council’s 14.1 Schedule of Historic Heritage. The old AMP Building was replaced with a new one in 1962, a high-rise sheathed in a curtain wall glazed with heat absorbing glass and green opaque glass spandrel panels. Mostly focusing on stylistic qualities, the researchers place the public buildings amongst the country’s most successful achievements of Imperial Baroque architecture. Similarly, the NZI Building is most commonly aligned with the grandiose classical tradition as applied to early twentieth-century commercial architecture. Unlike these earlier texts, this chapter is focused on the relationship between the materiality and the architectural language of the Queen Street structures, considered as the plastic expression of the historicist principles of holism, individuality and development.

In his seminal study of architecture as language, Anthony Alofsin illustrated the complexity of communication mechanisms behind the architecture of the Habsburg Empire created with the eclectic use of historical styles in the period 1867-1933. Similarly, Chapters 3 and 4 note the important role the idea of communication played for historicist architecture. Deeply imbued with meanings, traditionalist historicist architecture expressed the unique conditions of its own period, the dominant values of the society that produced it, and the continuance with the tradition inherited by modern Western culture. Developed in the intellectual climate of historicism, the patrons of Queen Street buildings – the Auckland municipal authorities in the cases of the Town Hall and the Ferry Building; the New Zealand Government for the Chief Post Office; and the private investors of the Security, AMP, and NZI buildings – were determined to create highly communicative architecture that would stand as

617 Geoffrey Thornton, Cast in Concrete: Concrete Construction in New Zealand 1850-1939 (Auckland: Reed, 1996).
619 Alofsin, When Buildings Speak.
the monument to the high period achievements for generations to come. To do so, two strategies deeply rooted in the historicist understanding of the dual nature of architecture were implemented.

The first strategy was the employment of cutting-edge technologies (and making certain that the public was well informed about these efforts). Openly communicating that their structures (and, implicitly, their society) were up-to-date with the latest technological inventions, the New Zealanders heeded the raucous call of the Machine Age. The interests in inventions corresponded with the wider period tendencies, developed since the nineteenth century, which equated technological progress with the expansion, growing power and ‘civilising mission’ of the British Empire. Cutting edge building technologies – most notably, reinforced concrete and steel-frame – were employed structurally, allowing for a considerable increase in height and larger aperture size. Novel construction materials also contributed to functional and ‘hygienic’ planning, developed according to ‘modern’ needs. All of the new buildings boasted the latest inventions, from fast electric lifts to modern sanitation equipment.

It was noted in the previous chapters that, rooted in the notion of individuality, the intellectual climate of historicism advanced interests in the unique conditions of the modern age, plastically expressed in the technological inventions of the period. The potentials of the new building materials remained a major topic of discussion in the context of architecture, gaining traction since the nineteenth century. Encapsulating the extent of New Zealand interest in the matter, a period source noted that, ever since the use of reinforced concrete was first proposed by engineers for the construction of Auckland wharves, ‘it is improbable that any other subject has been more generally a topic for discussion and controversy on the part for both press and public.’

Ferro-concrete was praised for its innovativeness, advertised as ‘the modern iron-stone – a material which promises a revolution in building schemes.’ Employing historicist rhetoric, an article from 1908, published in the Auckland Star, proclaimed that ‘wood, like the stone axe, has had its day, and as far as huge constructions are concerned, we are largely entering into the cement age.’ Similarly, rooted in the historicist notion of development, frequent comparisons with the building practice of Ancient Rome imbued reinforced concrete with a historical legitimacy. For instance, the Wellington architect, James O’Dea, maintained that reinforced concrete would soon supersede all other building materials, ‘for not alone is it fireproof and earthquake-proof, but its age is as unlimited as that of the aqueducts and bridges built by Rome when she was mistress of the world.’

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621 “Reinforced Concrete: An Engineer’s View,” *Auckland Star* 34, no. 262, November 2, 1908, 3.
624 “Ferro-Concrete Buildings,” *Evening Post* 81, no. 117, May 19, 1911, 2.
Reflecting the popularity of the up-to-date construction technologies, the structural qualities of Queen Street buildings attracted a great deal of public attention in the early twentieth century. Though the period sources stressed the use of reinforced concrete, the extent of its use varied in these six structures. The three public structures were, in fact, mostly constructed of unreinforced masonry. Indeed, in the structure of the Town Hall building, reinforced concrete was used only in the construction of the Queen Street retaining wall, the floors and the stairs (Figure 9).\textsuperscript{625} In contrast, an article published after the winning design was selected, highlighted that ‘a fine structure was proposed,’ with fireproof elements of reinforced concrete.\textsuperscript{626} Both the lengthy study of the new Town Hall building, published in the May 1909 issue of \textit{Progress}, as well as the booklet published two years later for the opening


\textsuperscript{626} “Auckland’s Town Hall,” \textit{New Zealand Herald} 44, no. 1343, March 12, 1907, 8.
cowered the arrangement of the building’s reinforced concrete foundations. They described this as a special feature of the construction, and stressed that the method of piers and beams, reinforced with Kahn steel bars, had previously been used by the architects in several important buildings in Australia.627 Similarly, a report on ‘buildings in progress’ noted that the Ferry Building stood on a foundation of ferro-concrete piles and that all the floors were laid down in the same material, ‘rendering the building practically fireproof.’628 The Chief Post Office in Auckland was built upon 260 reinforced concrete piles. The material was also used for the floor of the ground floor and for the roof structure. A period source concluded that ‘the building will thereby be greatly strengthened, and rendered immune from the threat of fire from either the basement or the floor.’629

The first building constructed in Queen Street with the structural use of reinforced concrete was the Security Building. It was noted that the name ‘Security’ declared the building’s ‘true character’, due to the material’s fire- and earthquake-proof qualities.630 The building, numerous sources insisted, was rendered almost entirely fireproof owing to the structural use of reinforced concrete. The press reported on the structural features of the Security in great detail, stressing that around 336,000lb of steel and 5,896,800lb of concrete were used. The steel pieces numbered 39,022 in all, and the bars, ‘if put end to end, would measure 74 miles.’631 Unfortunately, no archival records about the Security Buildings were found, and the period press did not offer any further detail as to whether the reinforced concrete was used as a frame with infill for walls, or for loadbearing walls.

Therefore, it remains unclear in what manner exactly concrete was used in the construction of the Security. In contrast, it was clearly noted that the AMP Society Building was constructed employing a full steel framework, with the floors, walls, and staircases constructed in reinforced concrete.632 Again the New Zealand Herald stressed, ‘the building is thus practically immune from fire.’633 The construction of the ‘fine modern’ NZI premises in Queen Street was also steel frame, ‘and the side and

627 “The Town Hall, Auckland,” Progress 4, no. 7, May 1, 1909, 246; Programme of the Official Opening of the Town Hall (Auckland; Auckland Council, 1911), 23. During the early twentieth century, John and Edward Clark worked on a number of commissions, including the Melbourne City Baths (started 1902); the Ballarat offices of the National Mutual Life Assurance Association (competition, 1904); the Maitland Hospital, New South Wales (1903-05); the Women’s Refuge (1907) and extensions to the Women’ Hospital (1907-17), both in Carlton, Melbourne; and the new Melbourne Hospital, Lonsdale Street (begun in 1912 after a second prize awarded in 1905). However, at this stage I was not able to determine if reinforced concrete was used for the construction of some of these buildings. More on life and work of John J. Clark: Andrew Dodd, JJ Clark: Architect of the Australian Renaissance (Sydney: UNSW Publishing, 2012).
other walls will be merely what are termed curtain walls – that is to say, they will carry no weight. The walls, floors, and stairs were built in reinforced concrete.

The use of cutting-edge technologies was reported on in great detail in the writing about all three commercial structures. The introduction of reinforced concrete was described as an ‘important and striking feature of the present additions to the modern business structures of the city.’ It was especially stressed that one of the most beneficial consequences of the structural use of novel materials was the increased size of apertures, providing an abundance of fresh air and sunlight. Contributing to the overall functionality of planning, the potential of new construction materials was well recognised and utilised. The steel reinforcements enabled substantial reduction in the usual thickness of the main walls and the internal partitions, allowing the design of larger offices and retail spaces. In the case of the NZI Building, the newspapers explained in detail that the steel-frame structure carried the superimposed loads, with walls being ‘mere enclosures’, only 6 inches thick. A significant feature of the NZI Building planning, ‘an arrangement made possible by the steel construction of the building,’ as explained by the newspapers, was the open floor planning for the head and branch offices, which occupied the first four floors (Figure 10). The private offices of the departments’ heads were partitioned off with panelling and leaded glass.
5.3 Communicating Dominant Societal Values through Architecture: Classical Landmarks of ‘Progressive’ Auckland

The second strategy in creating communicative architecture ‘worthy’ of the future was the selection of the most suitable architectural language. Rooted in the historicist notions of holism, individuality and development, the historical styles conveyed the dominant values of New Zealand society, plastically expressing the connections with the long Western tradition the country claimed. Period sources documented the pride people took in the fact that Queen Street buildings were shaped in the latest fashion – the style often referred to as the ‘English’, ‘modern’ or ‘free interpretation’ of the Renaissance. The first wave of Queen Street transformations in the twentieth century was dominated by eclectic combinations of Classical, Renaissance and Baroque Revival elements, and characterised by a homogeneity of expression.

What were the reasons behind the uniform architectural syntax of pre-First World War architecture in Queen Street? Chapter 4 has illustrated that New Zealand architects were not left unscathed by the historicist efforts to develop a style expressive of the unique conditions of their own epoch. They acknowledged the role that new building technologies should play in this process, and recognised the relevance of the specific qualities of the local context. However, historicist contemplations about a specific style expressive of the unique conditions were not fervent in New Zealand architectural writing before the First World War. Public and commercial architecture of Queen Street echoed these attitudes. Why did the relativistic crisis of values that informed much of the historicist architectural thinking sidestep most local public and commercial architectural practice of this period?

Perhaps a correlation between the relatively stable socio-economic and politic conditions of the period – as well as confidence in Britain’s place in the world – and stylistic homogeneity of public and commercial architecture might be observed. As mentioned previously, the early twentieth century could be considered a golden period in New Zealand’s history. The country’s economy experienced growth after the long depression of the 1880s and in the next decade the population shifted from an immigrant-based to a native-born one. Urban areas were expanding and lastly, New Zealand gained the status of dominion in 1907. Notwithstanding technological modernisation and the general climate of prosperity that resulted in changes of everyday living (contributing to the increased interest in technology – the prime feat of the Machine Age), these developments were not equally followed by the changes in the society’s cultural and political self-perception. Namely, New Zealand was one of the most loyal subjects to the British Crown during the reign of King Edward VII (r. 1901-1910) and a

sense of British patriotism flourished in the years following the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). It is thus not surprising that the national sentiment and many of the socio-cultural values of the majority of the patrons of Queen Street architecture remained relatively unwavering during the first fifteen years of the twentieth century.

Moreover, during the Edwardian period, Beaux-Arts influences and the general British appreciation of the classical ideal in architecture reached New Zealand through publications, education abroad, overseas experiences, and migration. Aligning with the legacy of Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723) and English Palladianism, the Renaissance interpretation of the ‘ancients’ formed the basis for late nineteenth-century architectural theory and practice in Britain. The classical ideal was a lasting inspiration for the British architects. The very model of the Edwardian architect, Sir Reginald Blomfield (1856-1942), was one of the most famous protagonists of the early twentieth-century traditionalist architecture in the U.K. Deeply rooted in the classical tradition, The Mistress Art, a collection of Blomfield’s essays derived from his lectures at the Royal Academy and Exeter College, was a widely recognised publication that defined ‘the aims and province of architecture,’ and established ‘a standpoint from which it should be studied by those who hope to practice this art.’

The title by Geoffrey Scott (1884–1929), The Architecture of Humanism (1914), typifies the early twentieth-century British classical position. Another publication that had first appeared in 1914, Sir Albert Richardson’s Monumental Classic Architecture, has been described as ‘a landmark not only in the historiography of British architectural history, but in the attitude towards the inspiration of the past for contemporary designers.’ Primarily an exercise in history, focused on researching the lives and work of selected architects – not written as a practical guidebook – the book is a testimony to the high position held by classical architecture in the minds of the early twentieth-century British architects. In addition, as shown in Chapter 4, a systematised design methodology based on the teaching of the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, was by the early twentieth century firmly established in the

648 Albert Richardson, Monumental Classic Architecture in Great Britain and Ireland during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (London: B.T. Batsford, 1914).
university teaching of architecture in the U.K. and the U.S. Formally rooted in the classical ideal, the Beaux-Arts tradition offered methodical solutions for even the most complex of building programmes. Chapter 3 illustrated the general discontent with hectic formal experiments of the 1800s, which peaked as the century was coming to an end. Developing firmly established standards and a coherent design methodology, the Beaux-Arts tradition offered a way out of the stylistic wandering and played a significant role in the professionalisation of architecture.

As Mark Crinson notes, discussing architectural and urban interventions in London during the first decades of the twentieth century, Beaux Arts planning ‘married’ classical form with ‘modern construction and the best of modern conveniences.’ According to Crinson, ‘architectural classicism was regarded as both authoritative and modern and there was little contradiction between these terms in an age when plutocracy and imperial expansion could be taken as two of the defining conditions of the modern.’ Employed throughout the British Empire, Edwardian Baroque developed along the lines of the classical ideal in the tradition of the Beaux-Arts. According to Crinson, the style helped create a sense of collective identity: ‘a necessary sense of unity, spatial order and destiny.’ It ‘seemed to have the capacity to span the world… by suggesting continuities of vision between London, New Delhi, and Hong Kong.’

In sum, it might be argued that, amongst other things, three wide sets of factors influenced the expressive homogeneity of Queen Street architecture before the First World War. First, the general historical conditions resulted in an intellectual climate that contributed to relatively static social values of the governing and financial structures of New Zealand society in the early twentieth century. Next, the popularity of systematic Beaux-Arts design methodology based upon the classical tradition was far-reaching, and especially relevant for the professionalisation of architecture. Finally, the popularity of the classical formal repertoire across the English Empire contributed to its status. During the relatively stable period of the early twentieth century in New Zealand, the classical ideal was the standard means for the expression of the dominant societal values in the public and commercial architecture of Queen Street, and, as such, it was widely accepted and undisputed. However, it should be noted that this choice of style was rooted in the deeply set racism and other discriminating forms of the period’s social practices, utterly oblivious to the native built environment and essentially unconcerned with the non-British members of New Zealand society.

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652 Crinson, Modern Architecture and the End of Empire, 8.
653 Crinson, Modern Architecture and the End of Empire, 10.
654 Crinson, Modern Architecture and the End of Empire, 10.
5.3.1 Civic Pride Carved into Solid Materials: Edwardian Baroque in the Treatment of the Town Hall, the Chief Post Office, and the Ferry Building

Queen Street acquired three prominent public buildings between the years 1909 and 1912. The Town Hall, the Chief Post Office and the Ferry Building to this day remain historic landmarks of the city centre and can be seen as examples of broader early twentieth-century construction practices. These large-scale construction projects attracted extensive press coverage in the first decades of the twentieth century. The Town Hall and the Ferry Building were celebrated as symbols of civic pride, and the Chief Post Office as a testimony to New Zealand progress.655 Henry L. Wade, the president of the Auckland district branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, noted the significance of the three buildings and of reinforced concrete, in an interview in 1911:

It is pleasing to note that the Government and the municipal authorities are waking up to the fact that it is high time more importance and character were attached to design, and the materials used in the construction of our public buildings… Of such structures, three buildings now nearing completion in Auckland might be mentioned, the new Chief Post Office, the Town Hall, and the Harbour Board’s new Ferry buildings, all of which are constructed of stone, brick, and reinforced concrete. The latter material will doubtless play an important part in our building programme of the future…656

Popular throughout the British Empire and based on the long line of culturally legitimised precedents, Edwardian Baroque was considered as the most appropriate style for important public buildings at that time. Furthermore, prominent overseas architectural solutions were used as a source of formal inspiration. The New Zealand Governor himself, the Right Honourable Lord Islington (1866-1936), noted at the opening ceremony of the Auckland’s Town Hall (Figure 11) in 1911 that ‘an adequate and appropriate building should be provided for those who are selected by their fellow citizens to control and administer that service.’657 The Governor’s opinion was that such a building should be central in situation, spacious in dimensions, and dignified in appearance. John and Edward Clark, the Melbourne architects who won the design competition for the new Auckland Town Hall, aspired to those architectural qualities.658 Though their solution was not unanimously welcomed by the Auckland public and a few loud voices rose against it,659 it was generally agreed that the building was a ‘true sign and symbol of Auckland’s arrival at full municipal maturity.’660

655 For example, one amongst many, the article announcing the future Chief Post Office, Ferry, and Town Hall buildings as splendid symbols of the city’s prosperity: “Review of the Year,” New Zealand Herald 45, no. 13946, December 31, 1908, 7.
659 The design solution and the chosen location were heavily critiqued in a 1907 article: P. A. Vaile, “The Auckland Flat Iron,” Auckland Star 38, no. 121, May 22, 1907, 8.
On the other hand, a connection to Britain was made obvious by the similarity to the Lambeth Town Hall, built in London in 1908 (Figure 12). The relations between the two structures, and the criticism of the Lambeth Hall solution by the famous British Edwardian architect Beresford Pite (1861-1934), were reported in the local press. In spite of this criticism, the Town Hall design was executed according to the original plans. Both buildings were constructed on triangular sites, in the style of the Edwardian Baroque. Facades of the Auckland Town Hall were modelled unpretentiously, with a moderate application of architectural ornament. Slender Ionic pilasters and columns create the rhythm of the long horizontal facades. The building’s corner is accentuated with an elliptical apex. Radiating the institutional significance of the structure, the apex is surmounted by a tall clock tower – a traditional symbol of civic prosperity, capped with a cupola. Combining council administration and public entertainment, the building’s interior was divided between offices at the front, and two large public halls at the rear.

![Figure 12. Lambeth Town Hall (Also Known as Brixton Town Hall). Constructed 1906-1908. Architects: Septimus Warwick and H. Austen Hall. Photograph by Reading Tom.](image)

661 “Auckland’s Town Hall,” *Auckland Star* 39, no. 262, November 2, 1908, 7; “Anglo-Colonial Notes. Auckland’s Town Hall,” *New Zealand Times* 30, no. 6667, November 14, 1908, 11.
Another landmark of civic pride and Auckland’s self-confidence, the Ferry Building was the first major historic structure a visitor would notice approaching Auckland by sea (Figure 13). One of the most imposing port buildings in New Zealand, it was designed by the architect Alexander Wiseman, and built between 1909 and 1912. Celebrating Auckland’s status as the country’s biggest and busiest port, the ornate Imperial Baroque structure was erected by the city’s Harbour Board, as a part of the costly reorganisation of the docks. Highlighting that ‘at no point is the progress of Auckland more in evidence than along the waterfront,’ an article published in 1911 maintained that the Ferry Building was one of its ‘most striking improvements.’ The monumental design was a testimony to the city’s aspirations to become one of the leading Southern Hemisphere ports. The warm colour palette of red brick and yellowish Sydney sandstone remains an appealing design feature, uncharacteristic of other Edwardian buildings of the period constructed in Auckland.

![Figure 13. Proposed Ferry Building for the Auckland Harbour Board. Elevation to Quay Street. Constructed 1912. Architect: Alexander Wiseman.](image)

662 Extensive and, so far, unsurpassed study of the Ferry Building: Johnson, *The Auckland Ferry Building*.
Contributing to the hub of the city’s transport and communication systems, the Auckland Chief Post Office was built in close proximity to the Ferry Building, at the foot of Queen Street (Figure 14). Designed by the Government architect John Campbell, and Claude Paton, it was constructed in 1909-1912. The imposing Edwardian Baroque edifice reflected the significance of the postal service as a Government network for public welfare. Described as ‘a milestone in the progress of the city,’ the Chief Post Office was a sister building with the one constructed concurrently in Wellington. Both buildings were stylistically, as well as structurally, related to Sir Henry Tanner’s General Post Office in London. The similarities with the London example were proudly acknowledged at the opening ceremony of the Auckland Post Office.

Figure 14. Auckland General Post Office. Constructed 1912. Architects: John Campbell and Claude Paton.

For more information see: Richardson, “An Architecture of Empire,” 165-169.


5.3.2 ‘Getting Nearer the Sky’: Business Blocks in the Fourth Age of Queen Street

Louis Sullivan wrote his pioneer essay on the artistic treatment of the tall office building in the last decade of the nineteenth century. When exactly Aucklanders became aware of Sullivan’s writings is uncertain. However, the problem became a reality for architectural practice and the construction industry in the early twentieth century. Indeed, the architects of that generation in New Zealand were ‘brought face to face with something new under the sun, namely, that evolution and integration of social conditions, that special grouping of them, that results in a demand for the erection of tall office buildings.’ In contrast to the dominant horizontality of the public structures, the three commercial buildings of this period in Queen Street were marked by a prominent verticality. In fact, during their construction period, the Security, the AMP and the NZI buildings were the tallest structures in Queen Street – comprising six, seven, and eight storeys, respectively. The increased building height was considered a necessity in the circumstances of the real estate market in Auckland’s business district in the first decades of the twentieth century. Press reports demonstrate that the transformation of Queen Street as a consequence of increased building height became an ongoing topic since 1911. Economic conditions were singled out as the most significant factor contributing to the construction of taller buildings in the heart of the city’s business district:

The advance in land values in Queen Street is having the effect of gradually increasing the height of the buildings in the main thoroughfares. Two and three storey buildings are now scarcely in consonance with the value of the sites, and as a result most of the new buildings erected are of a greater height, whilst the owners of existing buildings are finding it profitable to increase the accommodation by the addition of one or more storeys.

In the early 1910s, the general attitude was that the significant number of one- and two-storey buildings were not suitable for the context of the city’s principal commercial artery. The period press welcomed the large office blocks built in reinforced concrete that were gradually replacing the older structures ‘not worthy of the city’s main thoroughfare.’ The low frontages, backed by ‘rambling and dimly-lit interiors,’ were being torn down, and ‘some day not far off there will be all along the street a succession of tall buildings that will enable the thoroughfare to carry its name with all the dignity a well-balanced appearance can add to that solid business worth.’

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was described as one of the ‘healthiest’ signs of the prosperity of Auckland, and Queen Street’s ‘metamorphosis’ was an expression of the city’s ‘wonderful progress.’

The completion of the Security Buildings (Figures 15a and 15b) caused an anonymous author of an article published in the Auckland Star in 1909 to remark that ‘verily “the old order changeth” as regards the appearance of the architecture of Auckland’s main street.’ An old Queen Street landmark was replaced with a six-storeyed structure, almost a skyscraper by period Auckland standards which excited a great deal of comment. Designed by the architect John Mitchell, who settled in Auckland in 1888 from his home in Ramelton, Northern Ireland, the structure was erected by the Ferro-Concrete Company of Australasia for a local businessman, H. L. Dudley. The employment of reinforced concrete influenced the building’s treatment, earning the Security the title of a ‘unique example of modern street architecture.’ As discussed in the previous chapter, the steel reinforcements enabled substantial reduction in the usual thickness of the walls, and allowed larger apertures.

Figure 15a. Looking North from Victoria Street Intersection Along the East Side of Queen Street, Showing the Premises (from the Right) John Court Limited, Partridge and Co, Security Buildings, Durham Buildings, Premier Buildings and Other Buildings to Shortland Street. Photograph, 1912. Created by James D. Richardson.

Figure 15b. Front View of the Security Buildings from Queen Street. Constructed 1907. Architect: John Mitchell. Photograph by Milica Madanović.

The treatment of windows caught the public’s attention, becoming the main architectural feature of the facade. The period press excitedly notes that, at first glance, the front wall of the five upper storeys appeared to be supported by the window glass alone, as the usual ‘inconvenient’ supporting pillars were entirely eliminated. Instead, a hardly observable system of cantilevers had been introduced, springing from pillars concealed behind the deep window space. Instead of the usual flat walling, all spaces between the pilasters were relieved by a series of bay windows, carried up through four tiers, and surmounted on the top storey by arced openings. Ornament was minimal, and the aperture was used as a break from the usual two-dimensionality of facades, resulting in a dynamic geometric volume. Characterised as a contributing factor in ‘the triumph of modern’ in architecture of Queen Street, the Security was included in every overview of the most important structures built in Auckland’s business centre at the end of the 1900s.\(^{678}\)

The increased building height, made possible by the use of new construction technologies, remained a major point of interest in writings about Queen Street architecture throughout the pre-First World War period. ‘Getting nearer the sky,’\(^{679}\) seven new structures ‘worthy’ of Queen Street were erected in the first half of the second decade of the twentieth century. The least ambitious of these projects was the four-storeyed Bank of Australasia (1913), ‘built with strength and endurance as its two main qualities.’\(^{680}\) A five-storeyed building later known as the Warwick (1914), by the prominent New Zealand firm of Wade & Wade, was praised for its reinforced-concrete structure, and described as ‘a very pleasing and dignified appearance.’\(^{681}\) Smeeton’s new premises contained six storeys and was constructed in 1910 after designs by the prominent New Zealand architect William A. Holman (1864-1949). The new ‘handsome’ six-storeyed block for the Hallenstein Brothers Company (1912) by Edward Mahoney and Son was designed ‘on the latest principle,’ and the various departments were ‘well classified and so arranged as to ensure a maximum of convenience.’\(^{682}\) Constructed simultaneously with the Warwick, the six-storeyed Brunswick was designed by the same architects.


Constructed at the south corner of Queen Street and Victoria Street East after the designs by Wilson and Moodie, the AMP Building (Figure 16) was the tallest and most famous of the structures ‘reaching the sky.’\textsuperscript{683} Described as further ‘striking evidence’ of the confidence manifested by the business investors in the future of the City of Auckland,\textsuperscript{684} the AMP Building was not even finished when it was identified as one of Queen Street’s principal structures in 1913.\textsuperscript{685} Ann McEwan notes that, seeking to develop a recognisable and coherent architectural image, New Zealand companies followed the example of the American precedents, employing architecture as a means of advertising since the late nineteenth century.

Rivalry between companies prompted the development of business architectural imagery: ‘architectural style, and the construction methods required to embody that style, thus became the medium by which commercial enterprises were visually distinguished from one another within the urban streetscape.’\textsuperscript{686} According to McEwan, in New Zealand between the world wars, insurance companies led the way in using architecture to develop a unique, easily distinguishable public image.\textsuperscript{687} The examples of the new AMP Society and NZI Queen Street premises indicate that the process could be traced to an earlier date. At the summit of the slender corner tower of the AMP building, a symbolical sculptural group was placed. Including figures representing Peace, Plenty, and Labour, and sculptures of a widow and an orphan, followed by the inscription ‘Amicus ecrus in ro ineorta’ [‘A certain friend in time of need’], the group clearly communicated the values of the AMP Society.

Apart from architectural sculpture, materiality was the most important topic in the discussion of the AMP exterior. Clad with real stone (Coromandel granite up to the first floor, and Mount Somers limestone above) – as opposed to all-prevailing stucco – the building was praised for its architectural ‘honesty’.\textsuperscript{688} The facades were especially appreciated for the large window openings, a direct indicator of the building’s cutting-edge structure.\textsuperscript{689} Conveying the lasting traditionalist admiration for architectural ornament, and its communicative potential, the new AMP Building was described as one of the most arresting business blocks in Queen Street: ‘its dignified setting in granite and Mount Somers stone, with elaborate and ornate carving, at once rendered it a conspicuous and leading landmark among the many fine structures that have of late years been erected in the city’s main thoroughfare.’\textsuperscript{690}

\textsuperscript{687} McEwan, “An ‘American Dream,’” 132.
\textsuperscript{689} “Auckland’s Architecture. £25.000 Building Completed. The New AMP Offices,” \textit{Auckland Star} 45, no. 149, June 24, 1914, 6.
\textsuperscript{690} “Land and Buildings. Improving Queen Street. AMP Offices Completed. An Ornate Structure,” 5.
Figure 17a. NZI Building, Queen Street Façade. Photograph, 1918. Photograph by Henry Winkelmann.
The last significant step forward that Queen Street architecture took before the First World War, after the introduction of reinforced concrete in the construction of Security Buildings, was the erection of the new NZI premises (Figure 17a). Designs were by Hoggard, Prouse, & Gummer, who ‘adopted the best principles of commercial structures and the most modern methods of construction.’\(^{691}\) The building was, by far, the most famous of the commercial structures constructed during this period. A true architectural ‘celebrity’, the amount of attention the new NZI premises attracted could only be compared with the fascination achieved by the Chief Post Office, Town Hall, and Ferry buildings. The decision by the board of directors to erect a new building on the site of an old city landmark, a newspaper article stressed that ‘one of the best evidences of the faith of business men in the future prosperity of Auckland is the splendid type of buildings that are replacing the structures of earlier days in Queen Street.’\(^{692}\) The march of progress was unstoppable, and new times had novel demands.

Hodgson described the NZI Building as one of the landmark steel-frame buildings with an elegantly presented appearance, and a strong verticality created by piers rising uninterrupted from the second floor thanks to the dark recessed spandrels and wide, steel-framed windows between.\(^{693}\) Bruce Petry maintains that the desire to project strong architectural statements was an important mechanism in establishing status among companies, and, indeed, no expenses were spared for the new NZI premises.\(^{694}\) The exterior of the building was faced with marble from Kairuru near Nelson, which was, according to the period press, ‘equal, if not in some ways superior, to the marble which is imported from Italy.’\(^{695}\) The same kind of marble was being employed in facing the new Parliament Building in Wellington. Proudly proclaimed use of local material and references to another important New Zealand building could be an indication that the New Zealanders were gradually starting to look inwardly, rather than towards foreign achievements.

The design of the NZI Building was dependent on the structural use of up-to-date technologies. An analysis of the structure’s Queen Street facade conveys the traditionalist understanding of architectural development and honesty. The building’s frontage ‘has arisen naturally out of the steel frame construction.’\(^{696}\) The use of a steel frame allowed the large windows, which, alternating with the bands of bronze panels, dominated the centre of the facade. In addition, the marble was used to ‘clothe’ the structure ‘without endeavouring to give the false effect of thick walls.’\(^{697}\) The result was a composition of vertical, rather than horizontal lines. The bronze panels between the windows

accentuated ‘these vertical lines, at once suggesting the steel uprights – the ‘bones’ of the frame.’ In comparison, the long, almost modernising, Mills Lane facade is marked by the dominant horizontality of bands of windows, completely devoid of ornamentation save for subtle circular medallions under the roof cornice (Figure 17b).

The New Zealand Insurance Company paved the way for future Queen Street transformations with a building that, at the time, ‘made Aucklanders think of the skyscrapers of New York.’ Years after it was constructed, the public recognised it as a structure that ‘set a new standard.’

As Hodgson notes, its tripartite composition, with roots in classical architecture, was to provide a compositional basis for many subsequent tall New Zealand buildings. A 1922 article notes that it was a common sight to see pedestrians pause outside the new building and gaze skywards, ‘admiring a façade which, with its fine columns and suggestion of extra height, is still one of the best in Queen Street.’

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702 Hodgson, Looking at the Architecture of New Zealand, 48.
Stacpoole and Beaven, buildings such as this ‘confirmed the hard-won freedom architects had now gained from the 19th-century stylistic dilemma – the historical styles were still thought to provide the best solutions to particular problems, but architects were no longer bound by them.’

Conclusion: Holism, Individuality and Development Reconciled

The early twentieth century architectural writings praised the buildings discussed in this chapter as genuine landmarks of ‘to-day’. As far as the functionality, architectural language, and materials used were concerned, the new Queen Street buildings were indisputably expressive of the unique period conditions and society in the eyes of the specific New Zealand social stratum in the early twentieth century. The buildings’ patrons – the City, the Government, and private investors – as well as the architects, were determined to create lasting architectural pieces of high communicative potential. Developed on the lessons from Western architectural history, the Queen Street buildings were deemed expressive of dominant societal values of the period, drawing from the tradition of Western civilisation, and believed to be suitable for generations to come. On one hand, innovative technologies were associated with the progressiveness of the period and contemplated in relation to the future. On the other, rooted in the historically legitimised values, the classical tradition served as a source of architectural inspiration.

In the eyes of period commentators, history was not copied, but reinterpreted to fit the needs of the modern period. In contrast to the later accusations by proponents of Modernism, the period sources show that the interest in innovation and invention, exemplified by novel technologies, increased height, and functional designs, eclipsed that in the aesthetics of symmetrical planning and the aesthetic potential of the facade compositions. Traditionalist historicist architects continued to use historical styles in the treatment of the buildings’ exteriors because of their semiotic communicative capacities. They perceived elements and forms from the architectural past as communicators of dominant societal values par excellence, and carriers of meaning. However, traditionalist historicist architects did not subordinate the overall quality and functionality of their designs to aesthetic compositional values. Ultimately, they eagerly employed novel technologies in responding to the period’s needs to erect taller, naturally lit and well-ventilated structures, with easy circulation routes, equipped with modern inventions.

The public reception of the buildings as tangible expressions of the society that created them, and the use of innovative technologies combined with historical architectural languages, clearly align the Queen Street structures with the historicist tradition. Combining science with art, and modernity with tradition, the structures from the first wave of Queen Street transformations exemplify the dual essence of architecture reconciling the principles of holism, individuality and development, consistent with the broader movement of traditionalist historicist architecture. At the turn of the century, reinforced

concrete and steel framing were innovative – some even warned experimental – technologies developed only recently.

Considered the prime feat of this period, the new inventions and application of the technologies in New Zealand architectural practice were noted and widely debated. The use of the innovative materials fitted perfectly into the period notion of progressiveness and modernity. Perceived as products of their time par excellence, they served as an incentive for architects to try and develop new architectural forms. At this stage, these ‘novel’ forms were reflected in increased height and larger aperture size, and a tendency toward reduction or a more strategic employment of ornament. On the other hand, conveying the historically legitimised values of Western society, the classical tradition continued to serve as the dominant source of inspiration in pre-First World War Queen Street architecture. This would change during the interwar period, characterised by a stylistic pluralism and an increased eagerness to experiment with architectural forms.
Chapter 6. The Second Wave: Queen Street 1918-1930

Chapter 5 focused on the twentieth-century Queen Street transformation prior to the First World War. The chapter explored the historicist principles of holism, individuality and development through the examples of three public and three commercial structures. The interests in the up-to-date features – most notably, increased height, novel materials, modern equipment and ‘hygienic’ planning – eclipsed the practice of stylistic experiments before the First World War. Expressive homogeneity rooted in the Classical tradition marked the commercial and public architecture of Queen Street in the first two decades of the twentieth century. In contrast to the formal uniformity of the years before the First World War, Queen Street architecture of the 1920s is characterised by multiple stylistic investigations.

The second wave of the twentieth-century Queen Street transformation gained momentum from the mid-1920s. Recovering from a post-war slump characterised by less ambitious construction projects, 1925 marked the start of a building boom. ‘Somebody in facetious vein once said that the nearest thing to perpetual motion was Queen Street in Auckland,’ noted an anonymous author, looking back at the building activities in Auckland’s main commercial and business artery at the end of the decade. A merry tune of progress’ resounded as the erection of the new Queen Street premises transformed central Auckland into a large construction site once again. Continuing the earlier historicist practice, new Queen Street buildings were constructed with the use of the latest technologies clad in communicative, highly associative architectural forms. Similarly, the most notable features of the novel 1920s Queen Street premises, ‘worthy’ of the city, were an upward tendency and functionality of planning, tailored to suit modern needs. ‘Decrepit and unfit structures are weeded out of Queen Street and its environs,’ as a new wave of high-rise buildings, dubbed the ‘modern semi-sky scraper,’ replaced the older outdated buildings.

Four modes of architectural language were present in Queen Street architecture of the 1920s – Classical, Gothic, Neo-Georgian and Art Deco. Examining each of these architectural languages, this chapter is focused on one Queen Street public project of the period – the unrealised competition-winning design for – Civic Square, and four private structures, each being the most prominent examples within

705 The only larger structure erected before 1925 was the Milne and Choyce building (1921), designed by Llewellyn Piper. The other two Queen Street projects of the early 1920s were building alterations – extensions to the Smith and Caughey building (1921), and to the Watsons’ Buildings, at the corner of Queen and Wellesley Streets, for the Pacific Club (1923): “Queen Street Improvements,” New Zealand Herald 58, no. 17965, December 15, 1921, 5; “Queen Street Improvement. The Impressions of a Former Resident. S. and C. Extensions,” Auckland Star 52, no. 298, December 15, 1921, 15; “City Property Deal,” New Zealand Herald 60, no. 18394, May 9, 1923, 8; “Queen Street Property Sale,” Auckland Star 54, no. 109, May 9, 1923, 9.


their stylistic groups: the Dilworth Building (Classical tradition), the Lewis Eady Building (Neo-Georgian), the new Auckland Electric Power Board (AEPB) premises (Gothic), and the Civic Theatre (Art Deco). This chapter explores the pluralism of formal expression in the context of the historicist architectural tradition.

6.1 Holism, Individuality, Development, and Crisis: Pluralism of Styles in Queen Street Architecture of the 1920s

In contrast to buoyant Edwardian optimism of the early twentieth century, New Zealand historiography tends to paint the interwar period in darker hues. As noted earlier in the thesis, Keith Sinclair writes that life in New Zealand during the 1920s was marked by evident loss of confidence, hesitancy and disillusionment: ‘These were years of loud talk and little faith.’ Comparing the 1920s with the early years of the twentieth century, P. J. Gibbons notes a ‘decline in cultural and intellectual vigour… there was the cinema or the spurious vitality of febrile nightlife.’ Similar attitudes appear in the scholarship on architectural history. Peter Shaw remarks that New Zealand architecture of the whole inter-war period was ‘characterised by a conservativeness which had its origins in the prevailing climate of economic uncertainty.’ In his MArch thesis, Christopher Orsman described the 1920s as the ‘Decade of the Void’.

However, as Erik Olssen showed, the insecurities of the post-war reality were contrasted by urbanisation, technological progress and a quicker pace of modernisation. During this period, the cities in New Zealand developed more rapidly and began to acquire many of the features associated with modern-day living. In their early effort to create a concise survey of architectural history in New Zealand, Stacpoole and Beaven note that increased capital investment in primary industries, new roads, and new land development resulted in rapid growth of the main urban centres. By 1926, 63% of the population were living in urban areas. New means of transport and the growth of the urban population facilitated the spread of suburban development radially out from the major cities that, as a result, required new high-rise structures in central areas. Road networks expanded to support increased numbers of motor vehicles; cinemas – the places of the twentieth-century amusement – proliferated; and high-rise structures dominated the central skyline: the 1920s was the decade of the city.

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710 Sinclair, History of New Zealand, 245.
712 Shaw, A history of New Zealand Architecture, 102.
715 Stacpoole and Beaven, New Zealand Art: Architecture 1820-1970, 73.
Olssen notes that though the impact of the First World War on society was multifaceted and not entirely clear, certain main trends might be observed. The demands of war – rationality, stability, predictability – strengthened the position of organised groups, and the power of the state grew. The same can be said about the municipal authorities. Civic pride and faith in the progress of Auckland, despite the dire circumstances of the horrific 1918 influenza pandemic and economic crisis, inspired thoughts of a grand Civic Centre scheme in the early 1920s. The second half of the decade witnessed a construction revival in the sphere of private investments. The more stable economy reignited the optimism of the pre-war period, and high-rise structures continued the transformation of Auckland’s Central Business District. Rapidly rising land values necessitated, whenever possible, erecting the new premises to the maximum height allowed by the building legislation. A period commentator notes that the New Zealanders had become so accustomed to the idea that a farm in England could be bought for less than one of similar size and heart in New Zealand, ‘that the absurdity of the whole thing has lost its significance for us.’ Similarly, land values in Auckland’s business centre were extraordinarily high – the prices in Queen Street being on par with those in London. Novel technologies made the elevated height of architecture possible, and Aucklanders watched in awe as their city reached towards the skies.

The recipe for successful architectural design remained essentially identical to the pre-war solutions. The use of innovative building technologies combined with the historical styles of architecture was considered the expression of the period’s unique conditions, ‘worthy’ of the city and the future:

In architectural circles the opinion is held that the passing year [1927] definitely marked a very progressive phase in Auckland’s development, the tendency in connection with large premises to build to the skyline limit allowed by the city building regulations, the use of modern fire-resisting material, and as far as exteriors are concerned, a laudable leaning towards ornamentation consistent with utility! The result is that Auckland has now samples of the best class of modern building, edifices that will compare favourably with the best designs for moderate height seen in any other city of the world.

Historical styles continued to dominate the urban scenery of the central cityscape. The general attitude was that the ‘classic architecture of the age’ will not appear ‘out-of-date in a decade or two but will gain dignity with age.’ Ornament remained the communicative vehicle of the ‘art of architecture’

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717 Olssen, “Towards a New Society,” 278.
719 “Auckland’s Rating Values,” 2.
par excellence. However, a tendency towards the reduction of ornament became apparent. The role of the new building technologies – the possibilities of steel frame and reinforced concrete – and the advantages they offered was continuously discussed in the context of architectural forms. Maturation of the city culture in New Zealand brought upon a broader awareness of the importance of a building’s placement within the urban context. No longer were structures considered as isolated objects, praised for their individual qualities. At least in theory, consideration of the urban environment became a topic of more relevance:

There is no doubt that the architecture of the future is destined to be largely devoid of ornamentation. It will be courted to a large extent for its aesthetic value on the relative placing, not only of the parts of the particular building considered, but also in the placing of the particular building in relation to other components of a Queen Street scheme. Today the tensional strength of steel monolithic construction has banished the possibility of lateral thrust, and there has arisen in the building world a scheme to fulfil the dreams of a ‘tensional’ aesthetic.\footnote{723 “Building Barometer. Period of Steady Progress. Figures for 1927,” 8.}

Rooted in cutting-edge technologies, the ‘tensional aesthetic’ was expressed in increased building height and larger size of apertures. As shown in the previous chapters, New Zealand architects had contemplated the importance of construction technologies for the development of architectural forms since the early 1900s. Additionally, in the 1920s the profession got familiar with the new tendencies in architecture through overseas experiences and professional publications, such as the \textit{Pencil Points}, \textit{Architectural Review}, \textit{Architectural Forum}, etc. However, in the historicist tradition of development, New Zealand architects continued to insist that a new style of architecture could not simply be invented:

The most delightful buildings are wholly self-conscious; they almost seem to have grown of themselves. Their special features are there because they are wanted, not because the designer wanted to introduce them. One of the greatest foes of art is affectation; and affectation is the off-spring of conscious effort. In the present day it is not difficult for novelties, even indefensible novelties, to obtain a vogue. But such success is never long-lived, and least of all is it likely to endure in architecture, for that subject is far too grave and solid in its nature to admit of tricks.\footnote{724 “Notes and Comments. Novelties in Architecture,” \textit{New Zealand Herald} 61, no. 18670, March 28, 1924, 8.}

In accordance to the notion of holism, architecture, the ‘printing-press of all the ages,’ that ‘records the history of the state of society in which it was erected, from the cromlech of the Druids to the modern skyscraper,’ was considered inextricable from society – and society was founded upon tradition.\footnote{725 E. Mowbray-Finniss, “Choice of a Career. Building and Engineering,” \textit{New Zealand Herald} 66, no. 20384, October 12, 1929, 1.} As elsewhere in the world, the traditionalist architects took the centuries-long legacy of their profession seriously, discarding the early Modernist ideas as whims of fashion.
The principle of individuality also manifested itself in appreciation of the unique conditions of the local context. As Ann McEwan shows, though interests in architecture of the United States can be traced well before this period, a connectedness with the American achievements became more prominent after the First World War. However, influential New Zealand architect Joseph F. Munnings (1879-1937) cautioned against slavish use of America as a source:

In what we do, however, let us, above all, retain our birthright ‘to be New Zealanders’ and British. Admire America as much as you like and all her great works, but do remember that America has done great and beautiful things because she has retained her own character and remained American. So if we are to reproduce works full of the spirit of New Zealand, we must retain in all we do our own particular character and work out our own destiny, and not slavishly adopt the methods and expressions of another people.

Echoing the ideas of Samuel Hurst Seager, discussed in Chapter 4, Roy K. Binney (1886-1957), a prominent New Zealand Arts and Crafts architect, proposed local history and the unique conditions as the means of creating a distinctive New Zealand architecture. Binney discussed the employment of colonising traditions and compared them with practices in different environments: ‘People in these countries, realising the beauty of the architecture left by the early colonists and their associations have developed a style of architecture that has all the traditions of the country where the colonists come from adapted to the climate of other conditions.’

Brought up in the historicist intellectual climate and appreciative of the importance of ‘the quality of fitness in architecture’, explained in Chapter 4, others stressed the relevance of the uniqueness of the physical context – more precisely, climate, topography and living habits. An article published in the New Zealand Herald maintained the importance of climate for designers: ‘in our climate, with its bright sunshine and strong light, it seems out of place to follow very closely the purely English traditional style, but the development of this Georgian work gives us the opportunity of keeping to a style sufficiently English, and, at the same time, capable of the necessary variation to suit our climatic needs.’ Upon his arrival to New Zealand, Professor Cyril Knight ‘laughingly denied’ having any particular plans for teaching a ‘new architecture’ to New Zealand: ‘every town, he pointed out, had to

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728 Seager, “Architectural Art in New Zealand,” 481.
be judged from an architectural point of view by its local conditions... Location, trade, and layout all had their influences on building.  

The later years of the 1920s saw New Zealand architects increasingly looking inwards – into the local architectural tradition – for sources of inspiration, praising the beauty of Māori art, and, most notably, carving.Important public buildings such as the Parliament Buildings in Wellington (1914-1922, by John Campbell and Claude Paton) or the Auckland War Memorial Museum (1929, by Grierson, Aimer & Draffin) introduced motives from traditional Māori art in varying degrees of elaboration on capitals, friezes, and mouldings. However, the issue was not considered lightly in the professional circles of New Zealand. The most vocal arguments against the employment of Māori art in modern design rested upon the notion of honesty in architecture. Māori art, it was stressed, was ‘one of wood carving and the forms which had been evolved were a result of using wood, and it is considered architecturally wrong to reproduce in one material the forms which were evolved in another.’

However, Māori art was also rejected as a potential source for a New Zealand style due to the deeply set racism that informed period social practices and thinking about architecture. The same article described Māori art as ‘barbaric’, while the New Zealanders were ‘after all… civilised people… It is quite true that New Zealand is a country inhabited by Māoris, but the whole of the civilisation is British and all our art has arisen from the arts of Greece and Rome, as all western arts have.’

Holism, individuality and development continued to serve as guiding ideas behind architectural design during the 1920s, however, a relativism of values cast a shadow over the selection of architectural language. It might be claimed that the full-blown historicist crisis reached Queen Street architecture in the 1920s. The question ‘in what style should we build’ was never asked openly, yet, the architects increasingly experimented. As Hodgson notes, the quicker pace of architectural theory, design, and detailing brought with it notable stylistic investigations. Discussing the pluralist architectural language of the period, Stacpoole and Beaven characterised the twenty years between 1920 and 1940 as a transitional period in New Zealand architecture: ‘In this period of uncertain aesthetics, stormy politics and doubtful economics, four main lines of architectural development were apparent: traditional, transitional, early modern, and original.’

What were the causes of pluralist architectural expression in the interwar period? Chapters 2 and 3 have traced the shift in the way Western culture perceives of history and its consequences for architecture. The fervour of the nineteenth-century historicist Battle of the Styles bypassed New Zealand...
Zealand architecture, though its echoes reached the shore of the Shaky Isles in the form of Neo-Gothic and classicising buildings. As discussed in Chapter 4, in contrast to a state of crisis that marked historical self-identity of European architecture of the period, New Zealand architects were not questioning the forms from the Western architectural tradition in the process of developing a sense of place during the nineteenth century. Similarly, during the first fifteen years of the twentieth century, the relatively stable historical conditions and fixed social values of the Queen Street investors resulted in homogenous architectural expression. In contrast, to use the words of Olssen, the war had ‘weakened the consensus on values and even behaviour… the flouting of the old moral values confirmed in many the belief that the world was disordered.’737 Unlike the European interwar avant-gardes filled with contempt for the institutions of old, which brought upon the world the cataclysm of war, New Zealanders were still not completely ready to forego the lessons from history and the associative powers of architectural ornament. However, Queen Street architecture of the 1920s confirms that the grasp of architectural tradition started to loosen, allowing space for freer formal interpretation.

6.2 ‘Dignified Simplicity’ and the Architectural Tradition of the Western World: the Classical Mode

Chapters 4 and 5 have illustrated the position of the classical tradition in the history of New Zealand architecture during the first decades of the twentieth century. Chapter 4 explored the multifaceted influences of the Beaux-Arts lessons on the twentieth-century traditionalist architecture of historicism in New Zealand. The Beaux-Arts methodology resulted from the nineteenth-century French rational thinking.738 The typological studies of Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, which rendered classical forms as basic modular elements, informed the Beaux-Arts design methodology.739 This position established the relevance of the study of principles from architectural history for the development of modern design solutions.

Henri Labrouste was another influential figure, and the first to distinguish between structural principle and decorative form in architecture.740 Labrouste stressed that architectural forms need to be rationally developed from construction technologies, materials, and programme. Accordingly, though most commonly associated with axial planning and symmetric composition, Beaux-Arts teaching encouraged the knowledge of building technologies and development of practical planning skills. Writing about the ‘quality of fitness in architecture’, discussed in Chapter 4, J. F. Ward criticised the practices of eighteenth-century architects who sacrificed functionality of planning to symmetry of the composition.741

738 Egbert and Van Zanten, The Beaux-Arts Tradition in French Architecture.
Functional planning and durable structure were then elevated to the realm of art with the application of tastefully developed simplified classical facades. Employing the established elements from the Western architectural tradition, the frontages acted as communicators of the specific meanings of the building. Caractère, connecting a building to place and function, facilitated the transformation and appropriation of the existing symbol-systems, legitimised by the long-standing traditions of Western civilisation. Hence, historicist architecture was the prime vehicle of communication. It was considered inextricable from society as its ultimate expression, and a tool that should inspire certain ideas and behaviours among the growing urban populations.

According to Michael Findlay, Beaux-Arts classicism was the basis for many of New Zealand’s key buildings and public spaces until the Second World War. Focused on the development of functional planning solutions, actively respondent towards the urban environment, and clothed in the historical forms deeply rooted in the tradition of Western civilisation, the Beaux-Arts was an ideal design system for New Zealand circumstances in the 1920s. New Zealand architects were most often operating under the influence of the Anglicised version of Beaux-Arts, typified by a number of early twentieth-century architectural texts described by Colin Rowe as ‘an American and British attempt to provide an English equivalent to the Beaux-Arts theorist Julien Gaudet’s Elements (1901-1904).’

The most influential amongst the various treatises and books, which prompted the investigation into composition, were by American architects – J. V. van Pelt, Discussion of Composition (1908), and Nathaniel Curtis, Architectural Composition (1923). By the mid-twenties, they became established architectural treatises, being quoted and read as texts in schools of architecture throughout the world, including New Zealand.

William Lethaby was another figure of authority, who severely criticised the Revivalist movement and the various attempts to copy historical architectural forms. Attempting to distill and preserve a building ‘logic’, Lethaby put forward a demand for an architecture that would transform the chaos into another order. This call to true ‘classical’ order became the guiding principle of the generation of architects that began to emerge at the turn of the century, under the influence of R. Phene Spiers (1838-1916), a Master of the Royal Academy of School, who was Lethaby’s mentor. Influential at the Royal Academy, he founded much of his scholarship, teaching of history and design at the École. Bruce Petry stresses that ‘it was at this milieu that students of the Royal Academy such as William Gummer came to see the more rigorous classicism of the late Beaux-Arts as an alternative to the revivalism which had so repulsed Lethaby.’ Similar to the practices in other socio-cultural

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environments claiming the right to the architectural legacy of the Western world, some New Zealand architects felt compelled to employ Beaux-Arts principles to establish a New Zealand architectural tradition during the 1920s.

6.2.1 Architecture by Society and for Society: The Auckland Civic Square

Auckland stands to-day on the threshold of a great future… The city must either move forward or backward – there is no standing still. And it’s not in keeping with the spirit of Auckland to make a retrograde move. One has to call to mind the remarkable growth of Auckland since the foundation of the city 85 years ago to realize something of the spirit of progress that imbues the citizens.747

The way to move forward – and to flaunt it – was to build. The beginnings of the ‘saga of the Auckland Civic Centre,’ as Caroline Miller put it, can be traced back to the enthusiastic Edwardian ambitions of the years preceding the First World War.748 Though originally heavily debated, the location of the Town Hall anchored Auckland’s civic hub, and perpetuated the status of Queen Street as the city’s most important thoroughway. The earliest attempt at urban planning that would have created open spaces and a cultural centre orbiting around the Town Hall, with all the major civic buildings facing Queen Street, was proposed by Charles Reade (1880-1933) in 1911. Five years later, in 1916, City Engineer Walter E. Bush (1875-1950) reopened the topic.749 Bush suggested the gradual transformation of the city market site ‘into a beauty spot, with the Town Hall as the central feature of a noble city square.’750 According to Bush the scheme would ultimately have ‘a dignifying influence not only on the architecture of the city, but on the whole thought and ideals of its citizens.’751 The First World War halted further development of the proposal.

The stabilisation of post-war circumstances, the growth of the city, and the general atmosphere of prosperity re-awakened the idea to develop a ‘great’ civic centre ‘worthy’ of Auckland’s ambitions to establish itself as the premier city in New Zealand – and claim its place amongst the progressive metropolises of the world. Rapid expansion of the suburbs, the city’s increasing prosperity and a developing urban self-identity encouraged calls for a new civic centre that would symbolize the city’s new status. Increased Council revenue from rates provided the funds for a complex that would reflect the entrepreneurial spirit of Auckland. Municipal Record, the Auckland City Council’s promotional...
magazine, devoted a whole issue to the winning scheme from a competition for designs of Auckland Civic Centre (1924-1927) in Queen Street, the first substantial project the partnership of Gummer & Ford worked on together.\textsuperscript{752}

![Proposed Civic Centre Site Plan. C1924.](image)

Peter Shaw describes Gummer & Ford as New Zealand’s most prominent architectural practice of the 1920s.\textsuperscript{753} The work of the renowned Auckland partnership has been widely discussed in New Zealand architectural historiography.\textsuperscript{754} One of the most detailed accounts of the bureau’s contributions to New Zealand’s interwar architecture is Bruce Petry’s MArch thesis, ‘Public Architecture of Gummer and Ford’. William Henry Gummer (1884-1966) served articles with W. A. Holman in Auckland. He spent the years 1908-1913 overseas. Living in London, Gummer qualified as an associate of the RIBA, and worked in Lutyens’ office. Coming back to New Zealand via the United States, Gummer worked in the office of the Chicago firm of D. H. Burnham and Company during 1912 and 1913. Upon his

\textsuperscript{752} \textit{Municipal Record: Official Organ of the Auckland City Council} 2, no. 4 (April 1925).

\textsuperscript{753} Shaw, \textit{A History of New Zealand Architecture}, 111.

return to New Zealand in 1913, Gummer settled in Auckland joining the Auckland and Wellington firm of Hoggard & Prouse. He worked for Hoggard & Prouse until he set up practice with Ford in 1923.755

Charles Reginald Ford (1880-1972) was born in England. Ford served in the Royal Navy and was the youngest member of the first official British exploration of the Antarctic regions (1901-1904) since the voyage of James Clark Ross in the nineteenth century. At its conclusion, Ford accompanied Robert Falcon Scott on lecture tours around the United Kingdom. He returned to New Zealand through Canada and Australia. By 1914, he had moved to Wanganui where he established a practice, going into partnership with Robert Talboys in 1919. Ford was installed as president of the New Zealand Institute of Architects at its annual meeting in Wanganui in 1921. He travelled the West Coast of the USA in 1922, before finally settling in Auckland in 1923.756 As shown in articles written by Gummer and Ford, discussed in Chapter 4, both architects were influenced by the Beaux-Arts design approach.

Drawing upon the compositional logic from the Beaux-Arts tradition – simple, harmonic planning that most often required symmetry, instilling gravity and dignity in architecture – identified as a classical ideal – Gummer & Ford created the winning design for the Auckland Civic Centre Competition (1924). It included a new Municipal Building, Art Gallery, and public space (Figure 18a). Acknowledging Queen Street by the buildings’ placement, the scheme demonstrates a careful attention to civic structuring. The building complex is carefully composed into a hierarchy of forms corresponding to functions by means of axes, massing, ornamentation and urban relationship. The Town Hall was treated as the symbolic core of the civic centre. The widening of Queen Street, the width of the open space in front of the new buildings, and the slight modification of levels subtly directed the architectural journey toward the Town Hall. The administration block is placed nearer to the Town Hall and addresses the street directly by using the intersection of Queen and Grey Streets to form a square that relies on the Town Hall to mark the boundary. A major axis divided the composition into its two functions emphasised by a fountain that is the focus of the garden square, which mediates between the gallery and Queen Street. This corresponds with the closed restrained facade of the Art Gallery, which contrasts the open ‘dignified’ colonnade of the Municipal Building (Figure 18b).

The neoclassic vocabulary of fasces (Roman symbols of the authority of the state) and the coat-of-arms of the city in combination with giant order Ionic columns act to imbue the Municipal Building with the symbols of civic authority. Petry interprets the colonnade as an implication of an openness of government:

In contrast, the Art Gallery is a closed form, protective of the city’s art treasures; the simple title above the main entrance gives a straightforward introduction to the building’s purpose. In addition, above this is a statue of Michelangelo’s Dying Slave and to either

side added authority is given by facing panels carved with the names of noted Renaissance artists along the main façade.757

Commenting on the building technologies and ‘the classic spirit’ of the design, a period source echoed the dominant traditionalist understanding of architectural duality:

The design of the new buildings, which it is intended should be of reinforced concrete frame construction, with brick backing and stone facing, may be said to conform to a free classic style, and if it should be maintained that there is no such style, escape may be made

by saying that while they resemble no buildings of antiquity, they embody the classic spirit.  

The dominant horizontal motif was contrasted only in the municipal building with vertical accents of columns. But, the author of the article insisted, ‘this general adherence to tradition in the external has had no influence upon the internal, where utility has been the aim.’ The municipal building was designed to meet all requirements, and offer elasticity in the arrangement of accommodation and in making modifications. The interior design catered for ‘a dignified ceremony on great occasions,’ in response to ‘a revival of civic ceremony, not of the picturesque character of earlier days, but still expressive of the added breadth of the public life consequent upon the growth of a wider and nobler conception of civilisation.’ The planning of the main staircase, the placing of the committee and councillors’ rooms, and their axial relation to the council chamber, aided in the orderly reception and placing of an assemblage of people and making possible a stately parade to and from the council chamber or reception rooms on such occasions. The Art Gallery was described as simple and direct, with the design largely controlled by the system of lighting adopted. According to the period’s commentator, the lighting of the Art Gallery embodied the principles enunciated by Seager whose research, it was believed, would influence the design of art galleries throughout the world. Commenting on the overall design, the architects explained that the choice of dominant horizontality and scale were influenced by three main factors. First, they intended to make a clear distinction of the Civic Centre from the prevalent verticality of the surrounding commercial structures. Furthermore, to harmonize with – not copy! – the strength and repose of the older Town Hall. Finally, they did not adopt a more monumental scale because it would contradict the building’s main purpose:

The municipal building while being the centre of the city government and therefore calling for a treatment restrained, dignified and to an extent monumental, was yet not a memorial to the past but a building housing the activities of the present.

Ford’s writing helps further clarify the ideas behind the grandiose design (Figure 18c). The primary goal was to create a dignified civic core, a place of assembly for Auckland citizens demarcated by important public buildings, communicators of dominant social values. Expressing society, and building for it, the architects aimed at the development of an urban syntax that would concretize the democratic ideal:

The towns and cities of the new democracies, if these democracies are to be sound and noble, must themselves be rich and beautiful, and the buildings therein – both public and

private – whilst being the expression of the national life, must also in themselves add in making that life more beautiful and satisfying.\textsuperscript{763}

Peter Wood suggests insightfully that Ford launched an advocacy of architects as spiritual campaigners.\textsuperscript{764} Accepting Lethaby’s definition of architecture, and showcasing the historicist idea of the dual nature of architecture created by society, for society, Ford distinguishes between a building,


which makes provision for physical needs, and architecture – which serves the activity of the spirit. An urban cathedral for the secular masses, the Civic Centre scheme catered to the spiritual needs of Aucklanders, elevating them to the higher realm of beauty and dignity, and inspiring sentiments of civic pride:

The craving for beauty as a spiritual activity cannot be denied. That beauty in building can evoke the spiritual emotions and minister to the spiritual side of life, many glorious temples and cathedrals have testified throughout the centuries. But temples and cathedrals no longer form the main building activities of whole peoples. To-day schools, libraries, hospitals, post-offices, factories, and other utilitarian or altruistic buildings are taking their place in common life... All these buildings touch the common life of people at every point – surely they should be made to minister to their spiritual and not alone to satisfy their physical needs.  

6.2.2 The Dilworth Building

Construction of the Dilworth Trust Building (1924-1927), the first major realised project by Gummer & Ford, marked the start of a truly prosperous phase of the second wave of Queen Street transformations. ‘A noteworthy block, and one that would become a pride to the citizens of Auckland,’ the new Dilworth Building attracted a great deal of media attention. The building was erected on a prime inner-city location, in close proximity to another civic hub along the Queen Street axis, stimulated by the Chief Post Office – on the south-east corner of the intersection with Customs Street.

The historicist traits of the period – appreciation of tradition and technological progress, the connections between society (i.e. the public-spirited businesspeople and the community) and architecture – were most eloquently conveyed by an episode from the history of the Dilworth Building’s construction. The ancient custom of ‘raising the roof’ was celebrated in 1927, when 120 construction workers were ‘entertained at luncheon’ organised by the Trust Board. Reginald Ford, of the architect duo, gave a speech, explaining that the event perpetuated a historical custom, dating back to the medieval period, when the completion of the new building’s roof was marked by a communal feast. Ford stressed that the final success of the Dilworth Building would be dependent upon the mutual assistance of every man connected with the work, and he expressed his thanks for the hearty cooperation displayed in the completion of a strenuous task. The event concluded with the singing of the national anthem.

Ford is known for having produced one of the earliest texts on seismic design, published in 1926 under the title *Earthquake and Building Construction*. Construction of the Dilworth translated this theoretical exploration into a practical example. Difficulties were first encountered at the start of the construction because the building was one of the first few structures over 100 ft. high erected on reclaimed ground in Auckland. A detailed newspaper report explained the situation to the ‘thousands of people who… must often be curious to know what is going on within the high fence enclosing what is to be the eight-storey Dilworth Trust Building.’

The press assured the public that, thanks to the ‘notable engineering’, the building would rest on foundations of remarkable strength, fully complying with modern requirements. To carry the structure, no fewer than 306 reinforced concrete piles and some 24 concrete piers were used. The piers used at one end of the site were like inverted mushrooms. They were made by sinking a shaft 15ft to 25ft. deep, then widening it to 9ft. at the bottom, inserting steel reinforcement, and filling the whole cavity up with liquid concrete. Structural employment of the ferroconcrete was stressed to render the building fireproof. Planning was carefully developed, with special attention given to the functionality of the overall design, and the instalment of latest equipment: ‘for light, both natural and artificial, for comfort, and for easy access the new building represents an exceptionally high standard.’

The issues discussed with regards to the planning of the Civic Centre Scheme are equally relevant for understanding Gummer & Ford’s individual structures designed to fit into the pre-existing urban fabric. The Dilworth Building was originally imagined as a part of the Urbis Porta, the Gateway of Auckland, by being replicated on the south-west corner of the Queen and Customs Streets intersection (Figure 19a). The ambitious urban ensemble in the grand Beaux-Arts tradition would demarcate the entrance to the central stretch of the city’s most important commercial throughway. However, the west part of the Gateway remained but an idea popularised by the press in 1925. The Waitemata Hotel, built in the nineteenth-century on the south-west corner of the intersection, stood intact for decades to come. Though it never truly became a part of the Gateway, the Dilworth Building was much admired during the 1920s. Among a number of public structures, the Dilworth was the only private commission amongst the ‘prominent’ points of the Auckland city centre indicated in the aerial photo taken by a *New Zealand Herald* photographer in 1928. The structure stands to the present day,

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760 Ford, *Earthquakes and Building Construction*.
773 “Building in the City,” *New Zealand Herald* 62, no. 19122, September 14, 1925, 10.
774 The other prominent points were: the Civic Square with the Town Hall; Albert Park with the University College building; Prince’s Wharf; Head of Queen’s Wharf and the Ferry Building; Western Wharf and part of the Freeman’s Bay reclamation: “Spread Out Like a Map: The Business Centre and Waterfront of Auckland City,” *New Zealand Herald* 65, no. 19896, March 15, 1928, 6.
listed as a Category 1 Historic Place by Heritage New Zealand, and is well known in New Zealand architectural historiography.\textsuperscript{775}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Figure_19a_Urbis_Porta_the_Dilworth_Trust_Building_Drawing_1925.jpg}
\caption{"Urbis Porta", the Dilworth Trust Building. Drawing, 1925.}
\end{figure}

Depicted on the cover of a special edition of the \textit{Municipal Record} with trams in the foreground, the Dilworth Building was a picture of architectural dignity, a clear statement of the connections between technological progress, municipal advance, and architecture. The treatment of the Dilworth building was in the classical tradition, with clear compositional rules of the Beaux-Arts design methodology. A precedent for the Dilworth Building might be a symmetrically massed block with a prominent corner tower, the now demolished State Fire Insurance Building (1918-1919) in Wellington, designed while Gummer was working at the practice of Hoggard & Prouse.\textsuperscript{776} With symmetry as the governing factor and inherently stable massing, Gummer & Ford’s design echoed with the influences by the contemporary approach to architecture as set out in the compositional texts of Van Palt, Robertson and Curtis. Curtis wrote that ‘the most stable mass is one that tends toward a pyramid or whose subordinate masses are balanced on either side of a central axis.’\textsuperscript{777} The Dilworth resonates these principles with a strong base, and symmetrical lateral wings projecting symmetrically from the central axis.


\textsuperscript{776} Sheppard Collection File G974W, Special Collections, University of Auckland.

\textsuperscript{777} Nathaniel Curtis, \textit{Architectural Composition} (Cleveland: J. H. Jansen, 1923), 7-8.
vertical accent – a tall corner tower. Petry notes that symmetry was the most frequently used element to establish this stability in the work of Gummer and Ford, ‘though secondary elements such as surface articulation of the façade were always used to support the massing.’

Shaw remarks that the architects employed the stripped classical style favoured by the period’s American architects, and followed Sullivan’s three-part ordering of high-rise buildings.


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779 Shaw, A History of New Zealand Architecture, 111.
Stacpoole and Beaven describe the building as ‘pure Lutyens, and splendid,’ while avoiding ‘the worst pomposities of the Lutyens manner.’ What does it mean that the building could be considered ‘pure Lutyens’? Mordaunt Crook quotes Lutyens’ comments on his Heathcote design: ‘To get domination I had to get a scale greater than the height of my rooms allowed, so unconsciously the Sanmichele invention repeated itself. That time-worn Doric order – a lovely thing – I had the cheek to adopt… You can’t copy it. To be right you have to take it and design it… It means hard thought all through – if it is laboured it fails.’ Obviously, in terms of typology, Lutyens’ country house project was completely different to Gummer’s business high-rise. However, the rules of the ‘High Game’, as Crook named Lutyens’ approach to the classical tradition, were similar. Gummer followed Lutyens in breaking down the principles of classical architectural tradition to its constituents and reinterpreted them with renewed vigour, constructing a new scale of massive, freely disposed shapes (Figure 19b).

Reflecting the period’s moralising ideas, illustrated in Chapter 4, which criticised overt ornamentation, ornament is reduced to a minimum. The Dilworth was marked by dignity and simplicity,

781 Quoted in Crook, *The Dilemma of Style*, 221.
the lasting traditionalist qualities associated with the ‘classic architecture of the age’ that, according to period commentators would not appear ‘out-of-date in a decade or two,’ and deemed the keynote of modern business architecture of the 1920s:

The dignified simplicity of the modern business block is... in contrast to the more ornate style popular years ago, when the Victoria Arcade... was erected. No longer is an office building a bare cliff of concrete or a mass of fantastic ornament, but a structure of true architectural distinction and graceful proportion.

The style of the Dilworth building was described by the period press as a successful modern treatment of the classical style, with the ‘effective Corinthian colonnade (Figure 19c), and distinctive corner tower.’ The perspective of the whole building was ‘very fine, presenting solidity with graceful architectural lines.’ The Dilworth Trust Board and the architects were congratulated for not sparing any effort to provide a building worthy of an exceptional site and an attractive city. Raising the bar set by Gummer’s design for the New Zealand Insurance Company premises erected before the First World War, the structure is proof that classical tradition was still life-bearing in the traditionalist historicist architecture of the late 1920s. To date, the Dilworth Building remains one of Queen Street’s most admired commercial structures.


In the years following the First World War, New Zealand could be described as a proud and self-conscious political entity that honoured its British traditions yet cherished its individuality. David McIntyre notes that, without a doubt, New Zealand emerged from the Great War with an enhanced self-identity and a new status – it signed the peace treaty and joined the League of Nations in 1920. However, in the spirit of the ‘imperialist’ nature of New Zealand’s ‘nationalism’ at that time, it remained a loyal outpost of the British Empire throughout the interwar period. To employ the words of Gibbons, ‘in the period from the end of the war to the end of the 1920s immigrant vitality had largely been replaced by a narrow, stern, relatively barren colonial version of the old values, especially those of race and empire.’ Perhaps Gibbons’ statement was too harsh. However, potentially as a response to the rapidly changing world, shifting morals, and transforming value systems in the aftermath of the war, an interest in the Georgian style of architecture left its mark on Queen Street’s urban scenery. Influenced by the historicist notion of architecture as inseparable from society and the uniqueness of

782 "Growth of the City. Progress Maintained. Large Building Outlay,” 11.
786 McIntyre, “Imperialism and Nationalism,” 345.
787 McIntyre, “Imperialism and Nationalism,” 346.
the local context, Jack King, a young Wellington architect, based his argument for the Georgian mode on similarities between England and New Zealand:

The climate conditions of New Zealand and England do not differ to any appreciable extent… the constitutional and domestic codes are identical in both countries … the life blood of New Zealand’s welfare is contained in the traditions and the future of the Motherland.  

As outlined in Chapter 3, the climate was considered an essential factor in the formation of a race or nation and, consequently, an important issue in the period thinking about architecture. An 1890 article published in the Sydney weekly The Australasian Builder and Contractors’ News opens by saying that ‘climatic influences affect the character of a people, and the character of a people is reflected in their architecture.’  

Interestingly, while the Australians employed the discourse of climate as a point of difference from the U.K., New Zealanders used it to illustrate the similarities. King also saw an analogy between Georgian England and New Zealand’s circumstances of the interwar period: ‘We do not suggest that this country is two hundred years behind the Mother country, but, viewed from the point of respective commercial growth and expansion, we notice a marked similarity.’

Though the Georgian mode proved to be more popular for New Zealand domestic architecture, it found its way into the treatment of office blocks as the part of the interwar stylistic experimentation. The Georgian architectural language was undergoing a renaissance in the British construction of the period.

Julia Gatley notes that ‘Georgian architecture and the heritage movement were closely linked in 1920s and 1930s Britain.’ According to Hodgson, New Zealand architects with whom it found most favour had either studied the style in the offices of well-known English practitioners like Edwin Lutyens, or were familiar with it through trade magazine articles. The Georgian mode reflected the moralising ideas of William Lethaby, which gained traction in the first decades of the twentieth century, especially in the Arts and Crafts circle. Developed on the essential historicist premises explained in Chapters 3 and 4, their reach was wider. Lethaby made a distinction between the ‘soft’ architecture, which turns to ‘imitation, style ‘effects’, paper designs and exhibition,’ and ‘hard’ architecture, founded on ‘building, on materials and ways of workmanship, and proceeds by experiment.’ Lethaby searched for a method that would remove architecture from the arena of fashion, insisting that building science

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791 King, An essay on ‘Georgian Domestic Architecture’,” 66
795 Hodgson, Looking at the Architecture of New Zealand, 50.
could inform the forms of modern architecture. In 1896, he proposed that design should hinge entirely around the proper use of materials, with a radical reduction of architectural embellishment: ‘imagery of any kind, be it ancient or modern, must be avoided and eliminated, until a new coalescence of society imposed it unconsciously from within.’ 797

The Georgian style was a very understated form of classicism. Its aesthetic qualities included motifs such as hipped roofs, facade symmetry, the use of round-headed windows, fanlights, dormer windows, and the like. They were, without a doubt, appealing to New Zealand architects. However, its primary qualities were the use of exposed brick and tendency toward the discussion of ornamentation, quite clearly responsive to the increasingly vocal period’s demands for architectural honesty. In 1917, Cyril H. Mitchell (1892-1949), a prominent Wellington architect, wrote a series of articles about the aesthetic potential of brickwork and the lines of its possible development in New Zealand. 798 In the atmosphere of the intensifying debates about materiality and the consequences it ought to have for architectural form, the Georgian formula was practical for the traditionally inclined architects. The Georgian mode did not conceal the building’s structure completely, thus responding to the period’s demands for honesty, while plastically expressing its connections with architectural tradition. Continuing the line of architectural development, while at the same time exposing the materials and reducing ornamentation, the Georgian ‘was associated with modernity, its undecorated approach seen as progressive.’ 799

The decision to finish the Queen Street elevation of the Civic House (1928, designed by Sinclair O’Connor) in stucco rather than in brick illustrates the period’s debate on architectural materiality. The City Council was accused of vetoing brick as a facing material for the facades of buildings erected in the civic square. 800 Allegedly, the architect had previously been approached about facing the facade with the honest material of brick – and O’Connor agreed happily. However, the rumours appeared that the Works Committee of the City Council was strong-arming the decision to finish the structure in an ‘ordinary’ plaster job.’ The defenders of the brick-facing option stressed that the amount of stucco used in Auckland architecture of the ‘Anzac Avenue type’ should be condemned. Professor Cyril Knight of the University of Auckland had also criticised many of the Anzac Avenue buildings as being like a lot of packing-cases laid one on top of another and painted white. 801 Though the epilogue of the discussion

was that the use of brick would be permitted, the facade was finished in cream cement – most likely for financial reasons.

Three structures were erected with the employment of the exposed brick in Queen Street during the second half of the 1920s – the Vulcan Buildings (originally known as the Somervell Block), the Queen’s Arcade, and the Lewis Eady Building. All three structures survive to this day. The Vulcan and Lewis Eady buildings are listed by Heritage New Zealand as Category 1 and 2 Historic Places, respectively. It is interesting that the Eady building, a true celebrity structure of the period, extensively reported on and heavily praised for its architectural qualities, is ranked lower. Recognised for their historical significance, the two buildings have not suffered any major changes to the exterior. In contrast, the Queen Street front of the Queen’s Arcade has been altered beyond recognition, while the Customs Street facade remains intact. The three structures have rarely been mentioned by scholars, and never considered thoroughly.\(^\text{802}\)

The Vulcan Buildings, designed by the Auckland practice of Holman, Moses & Watkin, was described as one of the two ‘important steps in the progress of the city’ taken in 1927 (the other step was the widening of Vulcan Lane).\(^\text{803}\) The main feature of the design was a well-proportioned copper-covered tower, surmounting the south-east corner at the intersection of Queen Street and Vulcan Lane (Figure 20a). Unlike the other two structures considered in this section, the Vulcan, a ‘thoroughly modern building,’\(^\text{804}\) was executed in Renaissance Revival style, with a ‘certain freedom of treatment.’\(^\text{805}\) It was stressed that the elevation of the building struck a new note in Queen Street, owing to the decision to employ brick. The brick relieved the ‘drab colour’ of the plaster, which dominated Auckland architecture of the period. A period source noted that the structure would do for this part of Queen Street what ‘the splendid Dilworth building did for the front door of the city.’\(^\text{806}\)

\(^{802}\) About the Vulcan Buildings: Haarhoff, Guide to the Architecture of Central Auckland, 41.
\(^{803}\) “1000 Per Foot. Queen Street Block. The Somervell Property. Vulcan Lane Corner,” New Zealand Herald 61, no. 18672, March 31, 1924, 8; “Another Big Deal. City Property Sold for 50.000. Corner of Vulcan Lane,” Auckland Star 55, no. 76, March 29, 1924, 6.
Figure 20a. View of the Vulcan Buildings from Queen Street. Constructed 1929. Architects: Holman, Moses & Watkins. Photograph by Milica Madanović.
Figure 21. 

*Front View of the Queen’s Arcade from Customs Street.* Constructed 1929. Architects: Blomfield & Hunt. Photograph by Milica Mađanović.
Designed by the partnership of Bloomfield & Hunt, Queen’s Arcade (1928-29) was another plastic expression of society, described as symbolic of the Georgian period and the progress of Auckland.\textsuperscript{807} However, it was only the Customs Street frontage of the L-shaped structure, designed to connect two major city’s throughways, that was executed in this austere manner (Figure 21). The lower portion of the Customs Street facade was in stone, and the upper portion in brick, with stone cornice and architraves to three heavy circular windows. In contrast, the Queen Street frontage was more lavish, with classical ornaments done in plaster. It appears that the period did not mind this disconnected treatment of the exterior. When completed in 1929, Queen’s Arcade was praised as without an equal in the dominion and no superior in the whole of Australasia. As far as the period commentators were concerned, the building was a success, another indication of Auckland’s march of progress: ‘just as Sydney shoppers point to their arcade from George Street to Castlereagh Street, with equal pride Aucklanders will point to Queen’s Arcade.’\textsuperscript{808}

The new Lewis Eady building was amongst the most famous Queen Street projects of the 1920s. The newspapers closely monitored the construction progress, and eagerly praised its ‘artistic’ qualities. Designs for the new seven-storeyed building were prepared by July 1927.\textsuperscript{809} Designed by the architect D. J. G. Plumley (Figure 22a), the structure was said to embody ‘the science of aesthetic appeal in business buildings.’\textsuperscript{810} The planning of the building was said to be a result of collaboration between the architect and representatives for the Lewis Eady Company.\textsuperscript{811} The active input by the client, and their knowledge of the specific requirements of a music store, probably contributed to a famously functional design solution. In the words of a period commentator, ‘there are many fine buildings in the city which might serve a variety of purposes, but one can only imagine the new Eady building as a music store. It is pre-eminently suited for its purpose.’\textsuperscript{812}

\textsuperscript{808} "The Boulevard. Auckland Further Advances. New Shopping Centre. Completion of Queen’s Arcade," *Auckland Star* 60, no. 257, October 30, 1929, 8.
\textsuperscript{811} "New Musical Centre," *Auckland Star* 59, no. 99, April 28, 1928, 7.
Various aspects of the Lewis Eady premises enticed the contemporary press. Associated with Auckland’s progress, it was characterised as ‘the finest and most up-to-date music building in the Southern Hemisphere.’ For example, the store was the only commercial building in Queen Street that had a mezzanine floor. While it did not detract from the height or the ‘dignity’ of the showroom, the mezzanine provided extra space for offices and a further piano showroom, ‘in a most artistic form.’

The atmosphere of music was sustained by the unique form of balustrading, intensified by the bronze sprayed finish. The names of illustrious musicians, such as Handel, Wagner, Schumann and Sullivan, were inscribed upon the richly decorated supports to the gallery floor. The atmosphere or the effect of the various rooms was said to be carefully considered. The concert hall was described as a ‘happy

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815 “Lewis Eady Section. Metal Spraying was Described as One of the Wonders of Modern Science,” *Auckland Star* 59, no. 99, April 28, 1928, 4.
chamber,’ ‘for it will hold the laughter, the seriousness, and the idealisms of all who come into it.’ As such, its design ‘refused’ to be conservative and cold, with a curved barrel vault ceiling, and bathed in natural sunlight pouring into the room through tall windows.

The exceptional size of the inverted ferro-concrete ‘T’ beams, extending the full width of the site to carry the super-structure, designed to eventually carry two additional storeys, attracted a lot of interest. Supporting the whole of the frontage on cantilevers, a maximum amount of window display was made possible. The Queen Street frontage on the ground floor was occupied by barless glazed display windows, framing the central island window of the entrance. Above the entrance, the otherwise solemn facade, framed by two wide bands of exposed brick, was enlivened with carefully placed ornament (Figure 22b). The Eady Building was said to contribute with ‘a touch of dignity and true architectural beauty’ to the central portion of the city’s principal thoroughfare. Described as imposing yet not over-ornate, it was perceived as an example of modern Georgian style par excellence. According to a period source, the Georgian style harmonised with the building’s purpose: ‘its atmosphere blends with the thought of music.’

A valuable period article shows in great detail that the reasoning behind the architectural forms and selection of the Georgian style for the Lewis Eady Building was deeply rooted in the historicist tradition:

From the building of the first palaces of the Pharaohs, architecture has endeavoured to express the period in which it found itself. The natural acceptance of such expressions as the Tudor Period, the Georgian, the Victorian, are indicative of this. Architects put into structure what the minds, habits, speech, dress, fashion, morals, and governing of the country was at the time.

According to the author, architects kept strictly to convention for generations, until a ‘pure’ expression of the present structure was introduced to the history of architecture with the American invention of skyscrapers. Hence, made possible by novel building technologies, increased building height was a true expression of the society that created them and the period’s unique conditions – with its seven storeys, and provisions for two additional ones – the Lewis Eady Building stood as a proud landmark of Auckland’s achievements.

817 “Lewis Eady Section,” 1-4.
818 “New Musical Centre,” 7.
820 “New Musical Centre,” 7.
821 “Lewis Eady Section,” 1.
Figure 22b. Front View of the Lewis Eady Building from Queen Street. Constructed 1927-1928. Architect: D. G. J. Plumley. Photograph by Milica Madanović.
The anonymous author also stressed the importance of honesty in architecture, equating it with reduction of ornament. Much in the Victorian Period was hideous, for ‘the ornate is never truthful.’ Excessive ornamentation suggested vulgarity. Unless building a private dwelling, patrons and architects needed to be aware of their wider responsibilities – they were not building for the individual, but for society:

After all a building is like a body. It should be fine and strong and beautiful. But it is the soul inside—the honest and consistent carrying on of the business, which matters most. To raise a pile to the skies to stand as a suitable covering for what it contains admits one thing of paramount importance, the necessity of clothing the business in suitable raiment. To express in cold stone what a business is—is certainly a business! To infuse dignity, meaning and poise and at the same time frighten nobody by a sense of awe and self-consciousness is frequently difficult.

Finally, the author insisted that the Georgian mode, ‘to which the new musical House of Lewis Eady belongs,’ cradled great minds – people such as Pitt, Walpole, Chippendale, Hipplewaite, Wesley and Burke. The clear straight lines of Georgian buildings were modelled more upon the minds of the thinkers and political leaders of the time, rather than dress, speech, or manner: ‘There is something indicative of forceful still power in Georgian architecture. Something which bends to nobody and stands serenely distinctive before the world.’ Translated into the New Zealand context, the Georgian style was suitable because it originated from an intellectually prolific period of British history, which was part of New Zealand heritage. And yet, the style expressed strong individuality, cherished in the period following the First World War, at the time of enhanced New Zealand national sentiment.

6.4 The Modern Ornate and the Search for a New Zealand Architecture: The Gothic Mode

The only Queen Street structure of this period designed with the employment of Gothic elements was the new office block for the Auckland Electric Power Board (AEPB). The former AEPB premises are a well-known Queen Street landmark (Figure 23a). The prominence of the structure is communicated by its modern-day name – Landmark House – which is sometimes used by scholars and is employed by the Heritage New Zealand website, where the building is listed as a Category 1 Historic Place. However, though well known, the building is yet to be subjected to a more comprehensive scholarly analysis.

822 “Lewis Eady Section,” 1.
823 “Lewis Eady Section,” 1.
824 “Lewis Eady Section,” 1.
The construction of the new AEPB Building stirred the public, and the period’s newspapers watched closely. The initial intention of the AEPB was to call for a design competition for its new eight-storeyed building, with a jury that would include representatives from the architects’ and builders’ associations.826 The idea was abandoned in 1927, and, instead, it was decided to engage a local architectural firm.827 The collaboration with the Auckland Branch of the NZIA continued – they were invited to supply a list of registered architects practicing in the city. From this list, six were chosen and reduced by ballot to three. Finally, it was decided to hire the Auckland architectural practice of Alva Bartley and Norman Wade.828 Wade & Bartley were a prominent Auckland architectural firm, practising together from 1919 to circa 1935. Their major works include the Public Library and Borough Council offices, Dargaville (1923) and in Auckland, the Commercial Hotel (now DeBretts, 1927), and the IYA Studio Building (now the Kenneth Myers Centre, 1934).829

Much like its distant cousin, the University of Auckland’s Old Arts Building (completed in 1926), designed by Roy Lippincott and Edward Billson in the Gothic mode, the new AEPB premises were controversial.830 However, unlike the University building – and perhaps because of it, as will be discussed shortly – the new AEPB building was not contentious for its architecture, but for its costliness.831 The contract price for the AEPB Queen Street premises caused a public uproar. Citizens found the cost of the ‘eight-storey scraper in Queen Street’ to be scandalous and an unnecessary expenditure.832

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826 “New City Building. Power Board’s Intentions. Designs by Competition,” New Zealand Herald 63, no. 19408, August 17, 1926, 8;
829 Sheppard Collection File W121, Special Collections, University of Auckland.
The scheme was defended as forward-looking as it was said that it catered for the future needs of the city. The architects and the patrons took into the account the phenomenal growth of Auckland’s consumption of electricity, which necessitated the continual expansion of the electrical supply business, rendering imperative the establishment of central offices in the business portion of the city, conveniently situated in relation to the banks and other financial institutions, Government offices and the Power Board’s consumers. Aligned with civic sentiments and responsibilities to build for the future, the Board described the expenditure as necessary:

As to the style of the building, we could certainly have put up an exceedingly plain affair without an ornament, but by paying a little extra we have something which, from an architectural standpoint, will be a prominent feature of the city… In such matters local bodies should give a lead, and that is why we decided to erect a building which would be an ornament to the city.834

So what did the building constructed for a public-spirited, forward-looking ‘local body’ look like? Erected on a corner site, the eight-storeyed structure exceeded the maximum limit allowed by the Auckland city bylaws.835 The tall corner tower was 23ft. above the limit of 102ft. allowed for Queen Street buildings. Application for special permission had to be submitted and was granted by the City Council.836 The building was described as embracing ‘all the latest ideas in building construction,’ with large windows, allowing for an abundance of fresh air and natural light, as the main design features.837 The design of the facade was dictated by a cult of the vertical. Not a single harsh line or feature of the building destroyed its strict perpendicular massing. The numerous perpendicular columns were finished with terminals in the form of Gothic pinnacles. Tapered pinnacles surmount the parapet and the top of the tower. Minarets crown the main pylons at the seventh-floor level, where the outer walls were set back 2ft, while two others are placed at the corners in Queen Street and Durham Street, creating a dialogue with the main tower.

The architects’ inspiration in the American vogue of perpendicular lines was acknowledged by the local press.838 According to the critique, combined with ‘classical’ ornamentation, it gave the building an appearance of solidity, robust beauty and distinction. Colour played a significant part in the exterior. It was finished in pastel tints, shading from cream near the base to delicate pink and an almost chocolate tint at the top, while the ornamental tower was in plain cream. The interplay of colour remained present after dark. The structure was suited for the carrying out of novel lighting effects, and

it appears that the architects had this feature in mind when preparing the designs. A battery of floodlights situated above the veranda cast a glow over the main features of the facade.\textsuperscript{839} The tower was thrown into strong detail by lights concealed behind the lower minarets. As a result, the building was as conspicuous by night as it is by day.

Shaw suggests that, formally, the AEPB building drew inspiration from the vertical tradition of the American skyscrapers, with the clearly observable tripartite division.\textsuperscript{840} Indeed, the most obvious precedents for the new AEPB premises could be searched for amongst the period examples of the Gothic-inspired skyscrapers in the cities of the US.\textsuperscript{841} Seemingly logically transposable into the world of the modern high-rise, Gothic structural principles and accentuated verticality informed a number of the American skyscrapers during the first decades of the twentieth century, such as the Woolworth Building in New York (1910), Chicago Tribune Tower (1923-1925), American Radiator Building in New York (1924), etc.\textsuperscript{842} According to Katherine Solomonson, the winning entry’s Gothic style for the Chicago Tribune Tower Competition of 1922, designed by Raymond Hood, became a tool for the fabrication of meaning, constructing corporate, civic, and, even, national identity. ‘According to the Tribune, the Gothic style, as adapted to a modern American skyscraper, situated its building in a historical continuum, presented an image of a unified democratic society, and reinforced the newspaper’s claims for the US heroic role in World War I and the ‘new world’ emerging in its aftermath.’\textsuperscript{843} The American Radiator Building, a black-and-gold Gothic-inspired creation by the same architect, was described by Harvey Wiley Corbett as a superb, self-advertising, expression of the period’s ‘spirit of commercialism.’\textsuperscript{844}

All of the topics associated with the American gothic skyscrapers apply to the Queen Street AEPB. Built as the headquarters for the AEPB, a public body and the sole provider of electricity in the region, the structure was a true expression of the unique socio-cultural and politic conditions of interwar New Zealand – it merged tradition (Gothic) and modernity (commercialism, electricity and the cutting-edge technologies), and reflected a national sentiment, drawing inspiration from the local context (New Zealand flora used for ornamentation). However, the combination of Gothic with local floral elements might be understood as a clear expression of the dominant period’s historicist attitude, quoted earlier in the chapter:

\textsuperscript{839} “Power Board Affairs,” \textit{New Zealand Herald} 66, no. 20374, October 1, 1929, 12.
\textsuperscript{840} Shaw, \textit{A History of New Zealand Architecture}, 108.
\textsuperscript{843} Katherine Solomonson, \textit{The Chicago Tribune Competition}, 150.
\textsuperscript{844} Harvey Wiley Corbett, “The American Radiator Building,” \textit{The Architectural Record} 55, no. 5 (May 1924): 473.
In what we do, however, let us, above all, retain our birthright ‘to be New Zealanders’ and British. Admire America as much as you like… but do remember that… if we are to reproduce works full of the spirit of New Zealand, we must retain in all we do our own particular character and work out our own destiny, and not slavishly adopt the methods and expressions of another people.845

Figure 23b. AEPB Building, Façade Detail. Photograph by Milica Madanović.

The employment of a New Zealand floral motif in the exterior and interior decoration was a novel feature in the architecture of Queen Street. The decorative theme made use of flax plants, pūriri leaves, the whorls of the punga and Māori paddles. These distinctive shapes were introduced into the panels between the fluted columns of the facade and repeated in the ceiling of the boardroom on the fifth floor (Figure 23b). Continuing the theoretical enquiries that Samuel Hurst Seager had formulated at the turn of the twentieth century, and resonating with the period discussion on the possibilities of the use of Māori art in modern architecture, the new AEPB Building can be defined as an attempt to instigate the development of a New Zealand architectural tradition. Furthermore, claimed in the name of British Christians by Pugin, and promoted by Ruskin, the Gothic mode was certainly an ideal expression of

845 Munnings, “The City Beautiful,” 162.
New Zealand society of the 1920s, as viewed by the building’s patrons. Similar to the buildings constructed in the Georgian mode discussed above, the AEPB was communicating lasting social values, adding some stability to the rapidly changing world.

The Gothic mode, as interpreted by Pugin, gained currency in the nineteenth-century debate about architectural honesty. Pugin’s *Contrasts* (first published in 1836) and *True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (1841) emphasised building function and the rationality of structure. Pugin also formulated the idea of direct causal relationships between society and its artefacts. As Robert Macleod notes, Pugin’s first fundamental rule was that there should be no features of a building that were not necessary for convenience, construction, and propriety. Furthermore, according to Pugin, the planning was to become the basis for massing and general form, with visible external articulation mirroring the disposition of the internal spaces, and ‘all ornament should consist of enrichment of the essential construction of the building.’ But the main theme of *True Principles* is construction. Gothic architecture is systematically analysed to demonstrate the constructional necessities that gave rise to its characteristic forms. Mordaunt Crook summed Pugin’s architectural theory in the Keatsian syllogism: Beauty is truth, truth beauty.

Pugin’s ideas were relevant for the interwar contemplations of the relationship between form and construction, but their influence on the traditionalist architecture was perhaps strongest in the moralising tendencies behind the architecture built for society. As discussed in the previous chapters, for traditionalist historicist architects, architecture was dual – combining technology with art, and transcending the issues of structure. Ruskin’s interpretations were, hence, more relevant for understanding the ideas behind the form of the AEPB Building. Ruskin claimed that ‘the essential thing in a building, its First virtue – is that it be strongly built and fit for its uses.’ But, ‘the noblest thing in a building, and its Highest virtue, is that it be nobly sculpted or painted.’ Ruskin insisted that no connection should be made between the delight that is a consequence of ornament and the one that stems from construction or functionality: ‘they have no connection… Remember that the most beautiful things in the world are the most useless; peacocks and lilies for instance.’ As Crook notes, Ruskin equated architectural beauty with decorative expression of textures, symbols, and associations. He asserted that ‘the architect is not bound to exhibit structure.’

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849 Crook, *The Dilemma of Style*, 70.
852 Crook, *The Dilemma of Style*, 72.
Wade & Bartley did not attempt to do so, though they did imply the potential of modern technologies with their Gothic celebration of verticality.

Figure 24. *Old Arts Building, Auckland University, Tower*. Constructed 1923-1926. Architect: Roy Lippincott. Photograph by Milica Madanović.

Though no explicit account of it has been found, it seems likely that the AEPB tower reacted to the Auckland University College Arts Building, which was completed the year it was designed (Figure 24). Both drew upon the Gothic formal repertoire for inspiration, and both employed local
decorative motives. However, one was contested, while the other one was praised. The architecture of the AEPB building was described as unique in Auckland. Another period source noted that ‘from the foundations to the topmost finial the new building is the latest word in twentieth-century architecture and one of the most welcome additions to the city’s miniature skyscrapers.’ Perhaps the ‘Māori Gothic’ of the Auckland University Tower paved the way for the elevation of the AEPB. Or the delicate, filigree forms of the Arts Building were too unconventional for the University environment still immersed in British (Oxbridge) tradition. Perhaps the more obvious reminiscence of the Gothic, obvious in the stricter lines of the AEPB, felt more at home within a practically oriented commercial community, set to develop itself and prepare for the future. Whatever the reasons behind its success, ‘an example of the modern style of ornate architecture,’ the AEPB Building was praised as innovative, up-to-date, and worthy of the progress of Auckland.

6.5 The Unique Conditions of the Present Time: Palaces of Modern Entertainment and the Art Deco Mode

As discussed above, the complex set of socio-economic, cultural, and political circumstances resulted in greater freedom of architectural expression in interwar New Zealand architecture. The previous chapters have shown that the poles of tradition and modernity were equally important for New Zealand society, and plastically communicated through notable period buildings. Another mode of historicist architecture, Art Deco, found its way into New Zealand architecture of the interwar period, blooming after the 1931 Napier earthquake. Launched at the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris in 1925, Art Deco was widely popularised by American designers in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Ross Thorne stresses that the French organizers employed the term ‘moderne’ in its correct sense of ‘being characteristic of present or recent times’. Breaking free from the conventional forms of the Western tradition, Art Deco architects cast a wider net to express the modern times – from geometric patterns to nature-inspired motives and the elements of other cultures.

However, it should be noted that Art Deco was a response to the dilemma that had haunted historicist architecture since the second half of the eighteenth century. It sought a new style that would differentiate the twentieth century from the nineteenth, tangibly communicating the unique conditions of its own period. In the words by Richard Striner, Art Deco ‘sought to express the vibrant temper of

854 “New City Premises. Offices for Power Board. Building of Eight Storeys. Estimated Cost of 80,000,” 12
856 Sinclair O’Connor. Quoted in Meyers and Gatley, “Who has Written What on the University of Auckland’s Clock-Tower Building (1920-26)?” 425.
858 Peter Shaw, Art Deco Napier: Styles of the Thirties (Napier: Art Deco Trust, 2002).
its times; it sought to capture the haunting savour of life in the jazz age, and later it sought to express the upbeat, modish, "streamlined" rhythms of life in the age of "swing." It frequently exuded joie de vivre and celebrated progress through technology.\textsuperscript{861} Writing in 1928, Ralph Walker, a prominent New York architect who designed numerous Art Deco buildings,\textsuperscript{862} echoed the long-established historicist maxim that architecture needed to respond to novel construction technologies: ‘For the first time in the history of architecture we have at our disposal means and methods of building that are uninhibited in their possibilities. Our ways of construction are the most flexible in the long struggle to span space, and new forms are coming into existence.’\textsuperscript{863} It can be argued that Art Deco employed a modern aesthetic, while remaining loyal to the traditionalist dual defining of architecture. Especially in the earlier years, planning of commercial and public structures exhibited a tendency towards symmetry, relying on the associative potential of ornament. ‘This allowed architects to carry on building movie theatres in their accustomed way and dress them up with details which would make the building instantly recognizable as new, as fashionable and as cinema.’\textsuperscript{864} Ann McEwan notes that, celebrating the achievements of the modern age, Art Deco was innovative yet not radical, which is what made it appealing to New Zealand architects.\textsuperscript{865}

Queen Street got its most lavish example of Art Deco that ‘embraced the excitement of the modern living’ with the erection of the Civic Theatre (Figure 25a).\textsuperscript{866} The Civic was New Zealand’s first atmospheric theatre – an American invention first realised in Houston, Texas, constructed seven years before the Civic – and the largest surviving of its type in Australasia.\textsuperscript{867} The Civic is a valued New Zealand landmark, listed by the Heritage New Zealand as a Category 1 Historic Place. The building was converted into a lyric theatre with cinema facilities in 1996, when it was seismically reinforced and meticulously restored to conserve its atmospheric qualities. The project was executed in collaboration between JASMAX and Salmond Reed Architects. ‘A highly successful major restoration – of one of Auckland’s best landmarks, featuring well-researched details and sympathetic finishes, in keeping with one of Auckland’s most beloved public buildings,’ it was awarded the 2000 NZIA-Resene Colour Award and Local Branch Award.\textsuperscript{868} Recognised for its various qualities, the structure has been, as a rule, included in surveys of New Zealand architectural history.\textsuperscript{869} This thesis is the first to classify

the Civic as an historicist building, and explicitly aligned with the search for the style of the modern times.


Thomas O’Brien (1888-1948), a prominent New Zealand entrepreneur, was the driving force behind the Civic Theatre project. Plans were prepared by Charles Bohringer from Sydney who, as the New Zealand Herald reported, possessed considerable experience in theatre design, having designed the new State Theatre in Melbourne, ‘the largest [one] in the Empire.’ ‘New Zealand’s most spectacular theatre building,’ to quote Peter Shaw, the Civic was closely monitored by the period press, which covered every detail of its construction. At the cost of £180,000, the Civic Theatre was one of the most expensive building projects in the Auckland city centre.

872 Shaw, A History of New Zealand Architecture, 106.
of the new theatre was said to be ‘the solidity of the construction.’ It was a mass of brick and concrete, interlaced by huge steel girders, which had to be specially imported from England. The press noted that the construction apparently attracted crowds of people at almost any hour of the day.

Commenting on the value of carving for architecture, Professor Cyril Knight stressed that the ‘modern architects were developing a new style of architecture, representative of the present age,’ based on a close collaboration between architecture and fine arts. Relying on the lavishly executed products of the fine arts to enliven architectural spaces, as well as the cutting-edge technologies, to add to the experience of the period cinema-goer – another legacy of the twentieth century – the Civic was considered a true monument to the unique conditions of the present. It also relied on history, though it was a history of distant cultures, in a way novel to the built environment of the West. According to Edwin Heathcote, employing a rich repertoire of exotic forms, the cinema became ‘a dream palace’, an elaborate structure of exoticism, which allowed audiences a temporary relief from the mundane and repetitive world of work, immersing them in fantastic luxury to which they were not usually accustomed.

The Civic was enclosed on two sides by blocks of shops with frontages to Queen Street and Wellesley Street West, symmetrically projecting from the entrance vestibule. Passing through the entrance, patrons were confronted with a mural painting, depicting a genre scene from ancient Indian life. The surrounding walls of the foyer featured huge niches containing seated Buddhas in contemplation. The architects gave full rein to their imagination and presented numerous other examples of Indian works of art from other temples grouped together to form one harmonious whole. Designed by the architects to harmonise with the interior design, elaborately carved and richly upholstered furniture was placed in the secluded parts of the foyer. An artificially illuminated, lavish winter garden – tantamount to the stalls in an ordinary theatre – was situated below street level. High above the audience stood the ‘atmospheric ceiling’, a wide vault of sky-coiling with openings behind which electric lights flickered, creating an image of a starry sky. Hidden floodlights played over the ceiling to the effect of drifting clouds. A period source described the Civic’s interior as a

Revelation of the extent to which the arts of the decorator have been commandeered to please the eye of the modern theatregoer. The psychological effect of such unaccustomed surroundings on the patrons of a theatre must be very great, and the same keynote of

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877 Heathcote, Cinema Builders, 15-20.
transporting the spectator to realms that are always associated in the mind with pleasures and delights, has been struck in every department of this palace of entertainment. 879

Peter Shaw notes the building’s exterior, modelled after the fashionable stripped ‘skyscraper’ styling often shown in architectural periodicals of the 1920s, added to the Civic’s public appeal. 880 The dominant feature of the exterior was the tower, a popular choice for corner buildings in Auckland during the late 1920s, with the total height at this corner exceeding the city limits, at 130ft (Figure 25b). 881 Large fretwork screens, symmetrically flanking the central tower, add to its vertical thrust. Though ample decoration – panels of sun bursts, dancing maidens, floral spirals, volutes and swags – is applied to the surface, its simplified forms were used to highlight the horizontal and vertical lines of the structure, not to steal attention from them. Despite the abundance of stylised ornamental motifs, the Art Deco treatment echoed the reductivist principles of modern architecture, prevalent in the period’s Queen Street architecture.

Aucklanders were swept away by the new theatre building, described as the most striking feature of that part of the city: ‘Auckland has never imagined anything quite so ornate, or done on quite such a grand scale.’ 882 The Thomas A. O’Brien management was praised for showing courage and confidence in the future of Auckland. Novelty was said to be the main feature of the building’s architecture: ‘on the outside the Civic strikes the note of novelty that reigns from foundation to the top of the lofty tower that rises at the corner of the two streets.’ 883 The colour palette of yellow-brown walls was complimented for harmonising with the Auckland subtropical climate, and the windows hidden behind fretted stone-work caught the eye as being something entirely new in this part of the world. The lavish building sounded a high note ‘in lavish decoration and modernised surroundings for theatre patrons.’ 884 Merging the unique conditions of the modern time with the employment of the conventional communicative potential of architectural ornament, in the eyes of the citizens of Auckland the Civic was an utter success – it was no ordinary building, nor was it something to excite merely passing admiration. 885 Aucklanders enthusiastically described the Civic Theatre as the greatest theatre in the world. 886

886 “Civic Theatre Opening. Outstanding Film Chosen,” *New Zealand Herald* 66, no. 20436, December 12, 1929, 16.
Conclusion: ‘Efficiently-Designed, Hygienic and Aesthetic Buildings’

Efficiently-designed, hygienic, and aesthetic buildings adorn the main throughways of the present-day city. The advancement [of architecture] kept step with the march of modern development based on the needs of a growing and progressive community. 887

Looking back at the ‘ninety years’ of Auckland’s progress, an article written in 1930 resonated with the historicist principle of holism. The article presented architecture of the 1920s as inextricable from the period and society. Pinpointing architectural qualities that were valued the most at the turn of the decade, the anonymous author noted that most important changes in building construction centred on functionality of planning:

Very few of the older type of buildings reveal full appreciation of the principles of planning, which is a paramount feature of architecture of the present generation although those principles have been evolved through the centuries to enable buildings to be developed in usefulness, to the limit of their functions. 888

Featuring photographs of the Dilworth and the AEPB buildings analysed in this chapter, the article complimented the increased height of Auckland’s buildings, architectural ‘honesty’ and reduction of ornament in the exterior treatment of the edifices:

There is to-day better expression of structure; commodious, well-lighted offices readily conveying to one their purpose – and a more skilful and truthful handling of the elements composing the design. To amplify the latter aspect of development, it might be pointed out that a better ‘line’ is apparent, and there is a more restful relation between voids and solids, which emphasize the beauty of the proportions of the whole. In earlier days this was not so common, and the layman’s appreciation of a structure depended largely on the amount of applied features or decoration that a building possessed. 889

The article identified functionality of planning and aesthetic treatment as the two qualities of Auckland architecture that flourished during the 1920s. This corresponds with the two main claims made in the previous chapters, and reconfirmed in this chapter through the analysis of the unrealised Civic Centre Scheme, the Dilworth Building, the Lewis Eady Building, the AEPB Building, and the Civic Theatre. The traditionalist historicist architecture constructed before the Second World War reflects a unique balance between modernity and tradition – two main topics that had increasingly gained traction in New Zealand society since the 1900s. Period writing reveals that the minds of the architects, and the laypeople alike, were preoccupied by innovative building technologies; issues of functional planning such as circulation, light, and ventilation; and locality and context. Functionality

887 “Ninety Years Growth. Auckland’s Progress from Whare to Skyscrapers,” *Auckland Star* 61, no. 301, December 20, 1930, 4.
888 “Ninety Years Growth. Auckland’s Progress from Whare to Skyscrapers,” 4.
889 “Ninety Years Growth. Auckland’s Progress from Whare to Skyscrapers,” 4.
was imperative, and traditionalist architects criticised subjection of a building’s utility to the compositional principles of symmetry. The chapter has also shown that the traditionalist reluctance to forego reliance on historical forms and ornament was, in its essence, an issue of architectural function. Perceiving of architecture dually, as union of science and art, traditionalist architects designed to satisfy both the material and spiritual needs of humans.

However, unstable socio-economic conditions and increased fluidity of social values in the aftermath of the First World War cast a shadow over the enthusiasm for building innovation and novel construction technologies. Under the circumstances, stylistic investigations proliferated. Regardless of the style employed in the exterior treatment of the individual structures, writings about Queen Street architecture of the 1920s continued to showcase the historicist principles of holism, individuality, and development. On one hand, the understanding of architecture as inextricable from society informed the selection of styles popular and widely associated with Britain. On the other, this choice was increasingly affected by contemplation about the specific needs and unique conditions of a modern New Zealand. Beaux-Arts, Georgian, and Gothic structures analysed in this chapter clearly show that design inspiration was still found in history. And yet, during the 1920s the previously undisputed position of the architectural past started to shake. Modernising Art Deco forms emerged, and two other trends developed during this period – reduction of ornament and an upward tendency – paving the way for the later modernist and more recent architectural transformations of Queen Street.
Chapter 7. The Third Wave: Queen Street in the 1930s

Chapters 5 and 6 focused on the first two waves of the twentieth-century architectural transformation of Queen Street. Chapter 5 showed that greater interest in technologies (indicators of modern-day progress) and the period’s relatively stable historical conditions contributed to a homogenous architectural expression rooted in the classical tradition, which characterised pre-First World War Queen Street architecture. In contrast, the general crisis conditions of the post-war period led to a pluralism of stylistic expression. The 1920s were the years during which the previously unquestioned position of historical styles started to shake. History still served as the primary source for design, but its influence gradually diluted as the societal values became more fluid. Stylistic experimentation thrived, and Classical, Georgian, Gothic, and, finally, modernising Art Deco modes imprinted themselves on Queen Street architecture. Following a series of lavish projects from the 1920s, Queen Street architecture suffered heavily under the circumstances of the Great Depression, felt in New Zealand from 1929 to 1935. As the economic conditions improved, more ambitious projects emerged, marking a new phase in the transformation of Queen Street. Though most of the buildings discussed in this chapter were designed by the older generation of architects, educated in Beaux-Arts settings – with the sole exception of Browne’s Building – the second half of the decade saw more formally modernising architecture, either Art Deco or Modernist.

Weakened during the 1920s, the influence of history lost its grip by the end of the 1930s. This chapter illustrates this process. It opens with the discussion of the last two of the twentieth-century traditionalist designs for Queen Street – plans for alterations and extensions of the old Commercial Bank of Australia and Victoria Arcade premises, constructed in the nineteenth century. The rest of the chapter explores the formal modernisation of Queen Street architecture during the second half of the 1930s. Setting the stage, the chapter concisely introduces modernising tendencies in New Zealand architecture of the period. Next, discussing modernising texts about architecture and traditionalist responses published in New Zealand’s periodicals, the chapter analyses similarities and differences between the opposing sides. Finally, exploring the period designs for new Queen Street buildings, the chapter shows that, maintaining a critical approach in theory, during the second half of the 1930s the older generation of architects was gradually opening up to Modernist ideas – in practice.

7.1 The Beginning of the Decade and the End of the Traditionalist Historicist Architecture in Queen Street

The 1930s were a challenging period in New Zealand history, marked by the grip of the Great Depression early in the decade, and the Second World War at the end of it. The first half of the decade witnessed a serious slump in the construction industry. The situation for the profession was so grave
that, in 1932, the *Auckland Star* featured an article titled ‘Architect’s Plea.’ It was a report about the address to the Auckland Creditmen’s Club delivered by Roy Lippincott, the Auckland-based American architect mentioned in Chapter 6, who was chairman of the Auckland Branch of NZIA at that time. Attempting to inspire private investors to ‘build for the future,’ Lippincott highlighted that ‘although we are at present suffering from a financial cataclysm, we must shortly begin to live again.’ Similarly, the public accountant G. W. Hutchinson condemned ‘fear factor’ as the main reason behind the slump of the construction industry. Hutchinson reminded readers that the period’s conditions were only temporary: ‘Auckland has been going on for more than 70 years, and it will go on for many times 70 years yet… If we only take the long view we will find many avenues opening up that will be very helpful to us.’

As New Zealand descended into an economic crisis in the early 1930s, building projects became scarcer, and less ambitious. Resembling the situation in the first years of the 1920s, alterations to the business district premises were the most common form of investment. One of the rare Queen Street projects from the beginning of the decade was the alterations to the Commercial Bank of Australia building (1930). Built in the nineteenth century, by the 1930s the structure was one of the oldest in Queen Street. The reconstruction plans were prepared by the architect Arthur Sinclair O’Connor (c.1884-1943). Born in Australia, O’Connor came to New Zealand about 1908; the first record of his work in New Zealand was a joint competition entry with Alva Bartley in 1911 for the new Parliament Building in Wellington. In Auckland, O’Connor designed many inner-city buildings, including the Keans Building (1927), Civic House (1929) and the Fergusson Building (1929) in Queen Street.

The design for the Commercial Bank was said to ‘provide for a banking chamber which will stand comparison with any in the city.’ Attempting to introduce an optimistic note into the daily conversations about the construction industry struck by the economic crisis, the article somewhat forcibly described the work as one of the largest of its kind ever undertaken in Auckland. In reality, the structure was, compared to the ambitious high-rise projects of the 1920s, a humble four-storey stripped classical building, with double-height windows on the ground floor and slender classical columns and pilasters in the upper sections.

According to plans, the office suites on the upper floors were to be rebuilt in reinforced concrete, and certain exterior alterations were supposed to be made. Originally, the entrance to the bank

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was at the north corner of the building facing Queen Street, while at the south corner a passage ran the full length of the building, giving access to the upper floors. Allowing for a simpler circulation, O’Connor proposed removing the old bank entrance and the long passage. Instead, the plans provided for a single access point from a spacious vestibule, finished in terrazzo. All the partition walls were to be removed from the banking chamber, creating a modern open space floor. O’Connor proposed using a mezzanine floor and double-height ceiling to additionally increase the space and amplify the feeling of openness.\(^{895}\) The old arched windows were to be replaced with larger, rectangular ones, to allow significantly more light in, and give the facade a cleaner, more ‘up-to-date’ look. Maximum sunlight, functional circulation, open-space floors, and large windows at ground floor level – elements of modern planning were all considered in this traditionalist solution from the early 1930s.

Three years after the Commercial Bank proposed alteration, it was decided that Victoria Arcade, another landmark from the nineteenth century (Figure 26), demanded intervention – modernisation of the interior and demolition of the outdated structures, which had gone beyond the possibility of repair. Unfortunately, the building no longer stands, as it was demolished in 1978 by the Bank of New Zealand for corporate headquarters. Testimony to its importance in the urbanscape of central Auckland, as well as in the minds of its citizens during the interwar period, was the fact that the scheme for the building’s modernising was described as one of the first duties of the newly elected City Council.\(^{896}\) The project immediately attracted the public, and the press turned its attention towards it, stressing the importance of the building’s historic status.\(^{897}\) Plans for modernising were approved by the Council in July 1933.\(^{898}\) The project involved the demolition of the tower, the iconic feature of the old city landmark. Additionally, two major questions were the rearrangement of the entrance to the building, including a stairway and lift, and the tenure of the ground-floor block on the Queen Street/Fort Street corner of the building. Presenting the report by the Council’s Property Committee, T. Bloodworth, the chairman, stated that the Shortland Street corner should no longer be used for the lift and stairway. The alterations would involve the demolition of the tower, for pragmatic reasons of economic feasibility. Having examined the tower personally, Bloodsworth was convinced that it required serious investment unless it were removed.\(^{899}\)

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895 “City Bank Building,” 8.
896 “Victoria Arcade. City Council’s Intentions,” *Auckland Star* 64, no. 100, May 1, 1933, 5.
Four reinforced concrete pillars were constructed to support the weight of the upper floors, and allow merging of the three separate shops on Queen Street. The door on the corner of Queen and Fort Streets was closed and replaced by a large show window, while a wide new entrance was opened at the centre of the Queen Street frontage. The main entrance to the Arcade was moved to Shortland Street, causing a protest by the building tenants who were convinced that this would affect their business ‘very materially.’ A wide entrance was opened through one of the Shortland Street shops, giving direct access to the new stairway and lift, which now rose through the building centre. The construction of modern show corner windows and the replacement of the old post-supported veranda, ‘with its old-fashioned filigree iron decorative work,’ by a suspended one, which allowed an extra amount of light, was characterised as an outstanding improvement.

900 “Modern Shop Premises. Victoria Arcade. Alterations to be Made,” *New Zealand Herald* 70, no. 21558, July 1, 1933, 10.
901 “Victoria Arcade. Location of Entrance,” *New Zealand Herald* 70, no. 21615, October 6, 1933, 10.
The demolition of the tower came last. The tower rested on a cylinder of brickwork, enclosing the old circular concrete stairway and an inner cylinder, which contained the original hydraulic passenger lift, one of the oldest in Auckland. The tower superstructure consisted of a lead-covered wooden dome with porthole windows and a glazed lantern topped by a flagstaff. After the superstructure had been removed, the staircase and lift shaft, which stood detached from the other walls of the building, were taken down after the manner of a chimney stack. Wooden floors were laid across the vacant space at each storey on steel beams encased in concrete. Notably, the passing of the old city landmark was not received sentimentally, as was the case with the old tower of the New Zealand Insurance building. It was considered outdated, and in contrast with the progress of the modern society. Therefore, it needed to go.

The period’s efforts to bring the Commercial Bank and the Victoria Arcade up-to-date with modern standards did not entail questions of architectural language. At the beginning of the 1930s, historical forms of Victorian Gothic and the Beaux-Arts classical tradition were not yet perceived as problematic by Auckland architects, nor the wider public. Similar to the practice of the previous decades, the quality of structure and functionality of planning were the issues that demanded closer attention. Employing the language of historical styles, the two structures were the last of the traditionalist designs for Queen Street buildings. In the course of only few years, modernising aesthetics of abstract geometries and reduced ornament took over the Queen Street built environment. The second half of the 1930s saw only projects in the modernising Art Deco or Modernist modes.

7.2 Ambiguous Years of 1935-1940: Modernising Tendencies and Traditionalist Challenges

Historians have often been critical about New Zealand architecture of the 1930s. According to Peter Shaw, ‘despite the use of a diversity of styles during this period, most architects met the challenges unimaginatively, retreating behind a range of conservative solutions which may have pleased clients but which produced few major buildings.’ Similarly, Bruce Petry notes that, in general, New Zealand architects tended toward ‘conservative’ British and American practices, which were not aligned with the radical experiments of Continental Europe. However, marked by Art Deco and Modernism as the two dominant modes of architectural expression, the third wave of Queen Street transformation shows that the members of the older generation of interwar architects, largely trained in the Beaux-Arts tradition, started to open up to modernising ideas since the middle of the 1930s. This corresponds with the positions articulated in New Zealand architectural historiography. Ian Lochhead notes the

904 “City Landmark to Go. Victoria Arcade Tower,” *New Zealand Herald* 71, no. 21746, March 10, 1934, 10.
905 Shaw, *A History of New Zealand Architecture*, 118
modernising years between 1935 and 1940 prepared the ground for the acceptance of the aesthetics of Modernism in post-Second World War New Zealand architecture.\footnote{Ian Lochhead, “New Zealand Architecture in the Thirties,” 466–481.}

The New Zealanders were informed about the new tendencies in architecture during the 1930s. As Julia Gatley notes – in addition to the information available in international journals such as the British Architectural Review or American Pencil Points – by the end of the 1920s, articles on European Modernism were also published in local periodicals.\footnote{Gatley, “Introduction,” in \textit{Long Live the Modern}, 3.} For example, the \textit{Journal of the NZIA} published extracts from Le Corbusier’s 1925 book \textit{Urbanisme} in 1929. The same year professional periodicals started publishing Le Corbusier’s work, extracts from his texts started to appear in the daily newspapers.\footnote{“Cities of the Future. French Architect’s Idea,” \textit{New Zealand Herald} \textit{66}, no. 20305, July 12, 1929; Le Corbusier, “City Architecture. Problems in Paris,” \textit{Auckland Star} \textit{60}, no. 284, November 30, 1929, 3.} Chapter 4 has explained the reasons behind the active efforts to keep the wider public up-to-date with architectural topics. Daily newspapers such as the \textit{Auckland Star} and the \textit{New Zealand Herald} published numerous articles about architecture – written by local authors as well as reprints of British, American, and Australian texts – throughout the period. The year 1936 saw the establishment of a new architectural magazine, \textit{Home and Building}, in New Zealand, which became an important vehicle of expression for the new movement. Edited by Ronald Beatson and C. Irwin Crooks, it replaced the \textit{New Zealand Architectural and Building News}, an anonymously edited monthly journal, which ceased publication in 1928 and had prevalently supported the traditional notions of architecture. Recognition of the values of Modernism was officially expressed in 1936, when the NZIA awarded a Gold Medal to Horace Massey (1895-1979) for his design for the Cintra Apartments (1935), still containing hints of the Streamlined Moderne, in central Auckland. In addition to periodicals, Gatley also lists imported books and overseas experience as important sources for the dissemination of Modernist ideas in interwar New Zealand.\footnote{Gatley, \textit{Long Live the Modern}, 3.}

Scholars agree that another major factor contributing to the acceptance of Modernism in New Zealand between the world wars was the series of catastrophic events in Napier. Shaw notes that the Napier earthquake and subsequent fire of February 1931 destroyed the Victorian colonial seaside town in a couple of days and, in doing so, ‘sent more than a tremor in New Zealand architectural circles.’\footnote{Shaw, \textit{A History of New Zealand Architecture}, 127.} The need for a radical reappraisal of building practices and codes became an urgent matter. Additionally, though the use of steel-reinforced concrete buildings had increased spontaneously since the beginning of the twentieth century, the Government now took the lead in introducing a uniform building code for the first time. Paul Walker notes that a new interest in construction and structural...
methods, proposals for uniform building codes and the establishment of systematic building research were significant outcomes of the Napier earthquake for New Zealand architecture.\(^{912}\)

Though architects started to take interest in Modernism during the 1930s, architectural historians widely agree that in New Zealand architecture, it was mostly a matter of the post-Second World War period.\(^{913}\) In addition to the international contributions to New Zealand’s reception of Modernist innovations,\(^{914}\) some architects recognised the potential of Modernism to express a local identity. In the early years following the war, Christchurch born Paul Pascoe (1908-1976) and Vernon Brown (1905-1965), a New Zealand architect of English birth, were the first who vocally encouraged the employment of Modernist ideas for the development of a specifically New Zealand architecture.\(^{915}\) This line of thinking was accepted and further investigated in the work of Group Architects.\(^{916}\) But those were the achievements of a younger generation, brought up in the conditions of a different intellectual climate.

Members of the older generation of architects, who peaked professionally between the world wars, were slower to fully accept the radical experiments coming from Continental Europe during the 1930s. To employ a distinction proposed by Walker, theirs – the older New Zealand practitioners – was mostly a legacy of a modernity under which architecture became a matter of abstract expertise and technique – not a stylistic Modernism.\(^{917}\) According to Lochhead, it was the ‘hard-headed practicality’ that informed the attitudes of the older generation of New Zealand architects towards the radical design exercises, which disregarded the uniqueness of local conditions.\(^{918}\) They questioned Modernism as the imposition of an alien solution, which, promoted as universality, remained utterly insensitive towards the specific qualities of the local context. The majority of the questions they had raised were echoed decades later, in the postmodern criticism of the Modern Movement. However, under the circumstances of economic constraint, the same ‘hard-headed practicality’ cleared the way for the gradual acceptance of the cost-efficient solutions of Modernism amongst the circles of the traditionally inclined architects.

916 Julia Gatley, Group Architects.
Interestingly, designs for Queen Street structures from the second half of the 1930s indicate that the older generation was quicker to accept the novel ideas in practice than in theory.

The texts printed in New Zealand periodicals during the 1930s confirm the ambiguity of the traditionalist attitudes towards the ideas of the Modern Movement. According to Mark Crinson, who has explored the complexity of often contradictory attitudes towards Modernism, its reception ranged extremely in the environments of various British colonies – some welcomed it ‘as a promise of development, happiness borne by functionalism and new aesthetic possibilities,’ while others resisted it ‘as the imposition of an alien and culturally specific set of values as if they were universals.’\textsuperscript{919} Crinson focuses on cultural and socio-political implications of Modernism within a specific context. However, his remarks about ambiguous attitudes to Modernism in the societies undergoing change could be observed within various Western settings between the world wars – including New Zealand. As discussed in Chapter 2, a relativist crisis of meaning flourished under the circumstances of increasingly fluid social values, political insecurities and economic strains of the interwar period.\textsuperscript{920} Responding to the broader historical conditions, Western architecture found itself in a state of transition between the world wars. Similarly, caught between incentives to uphold tradition and demands for modernising forms expressive of the Machine Age, ambiguous attitudes marked New Zealand architectural writing of the period.

Featuring traditionalist and modernising positions, texts about architecture popularised by New Zealand periodicals during the 1930s illustrate the similarities and differences between the two poles. The notion of ‘building for the age’ was accepted by the proponents of Modernism and traditionalists alike. Arguments of both sides were clearly rooted in the idea that haunted the architects of the West for more than a century – to plastically express the unique conditions of their own time. Similarly, discussed in Western architectural circles since the nineteenth century, novel building technologies remained an important point of Modernist and traditionalist contemplations of forms expressive of the age. The historicist principles of holism, individuality and development served as the conceptual basis for the arguments of the two opposing camps.

As early as 1931, the \textit{Auckland Star} published views by Dunedin architect Eric Miller (1896-1948), who maintained that other times demanded different modes: ‘in this age of machines and money and speed, new forms in architecture and furnishings were being developed in sympathy with the spirit of the epoch.’\textsuperscript{921} In his paper read at the NZIA annual conference, held in Auckland in 1936, Miller insisted that social, economic and political changes, as well as technological progress determine the needs, which the architect had to meet in building for a ‘New Age, and the media with which he is to work. It

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\item[921] “Modern Outlook,” \textit{Auckland Star} 62, no. 264, November 7, 1931, 26.
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is left to him to use those media, unhampered by tradition and remaining true to his vow to design in truth and build in beauty."  

Victor Hean (1907-1979), an architect working for the Christchurch City Council, echoed these attitudes, demanding an architectural style of ‘to-day’ in his paper delivered to the Society of Imperial Culture. Summarising its achievements, Hean asserted that Modernism started as:

An investigation of the problem of the century, a realisation that the concrete buildings were dressed up in traditional styles; that the buildings did not express the honesty of their structural system… Human consciousness had broadened, the rhythm of life quickened… architecture could not retain the same traditional style. It must be an expression of the age.

Writing under the pseudonym Kotare, an author stressed that modern art – architecture included – sought to express the unique characteristics of its age: ‘the spirit of our times, our scale of values as the circumstances of our own special problems have developed them. We see things from our own angle.’

The author went on to explain that their period was not merely the heir of the past, for it was shaped by the special conditions of its own time:

If our art is to be sincere it must be much more than an imitation of the triumphs of a previous age. It can build on these or it can take new lines of its own. But it cannot under any circumstances be the same. It may not be better, but it must be different.

Kotare concluded that revolt and radical change were central features of modern life, meaning there was perhaps never an age so determined to cut with tradition: ‘we have definitely something that is worth expressing, and we shall find our own forms of expressing it.’

Sydney Ancher (1904-1979), a well-known Sydney architect, contributed to the introduction of Modernist ideas in Australia, and his views were published in New Zealand during the 1930s. Having spent five years studying in London and Europe, Ancher expressed enthusiasm for the Modern Movement upon his return to Australia. He was clear about the changes that he thought ought to happen in the architecture of his period: ‘Modern architecture should be expressive of the times, and, to do this, should employ the three modern mediums — glass, concrete and steel. We should have much larger windows, thin concrete walls and slender steel supports.’

Praising the high achievements of the Germans, Ancher maintained that there were no good British architects at that time, while the

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Americans, impressed by the Beaux-Arts, were slowly opening to more innovative ideas. Calling on his Australian peers to step up to the needs of their own time, Ancher stressed: ‘above all, we must be modern and strive to express in our building the spirit of the age in which we live.’

Like the supporters of modernising architecture, traditionally inclined architects embraced the idea of building for the age. Writing about Modernism in architecture, Cyril Knight maintained that ‘architecture will truthfully express the age, no matter how we try to camouflage it.’ Therefore, Knight argued, Modernist architecture was an expression of the period, ‘and the present need of many buildings was that they should not cost much money.’ Though historians most commonly perceive Knight as having a reserved attitude towards Modernism, a re-reading of his writings about architecture casts a different light on his attitudes. Describing his approach as ‘one of considered gradualism,’ Julia Gatley shows that Knight was, indeed, interested in international Modernism and in the modernisation of architectural education. Future research might show that the same applies to more of his contemporaries.

Reginald Ford, of Gummer & Ford, also asserted that, fulfilling practical needs of a society, architecture ‘must of necessity be a reflection of the life and needs of that time.’ It must always be modern, because it is a living art. However, for Ford architecture was still intrinsically of dual essence. Architecture belonged to both the world of science, and the one of art; its functionality was governed by practical necessities, yet, at the same time, it was idealistic, as it was controlled by the spirit. Writing about Modernism, Ford was clear: ‘There is a definite break with the past in every department of our social life and architecture could not remain apart from such a general movement.’ New needs demanded new programme solutions, and new sensibility demanded new architectural expression.

However, the aesthetics of the modernist ‘unadorned cubes of masonry or glass’ were not too dear to Ford during the 1930s. He stressed that it was the dire economic conditions that caused the severe abstraction of modern forms: ‘but to enrich with beautiful materials and appropriate ornament, buildings housing the greater activities of the people, seemed entirely right and it might be taken for granted that the future would see the revival of ornament, although in perhaps new and more restrained forms.’ Though he supported the need for a change, Ford still opposed the radical break with tradition in 1936, when he noted that architects should have access to the past achievements to ‘give warmth and life to their own.’ He stressed that humankind communicates through symbols that have been gradually developed – if new ones are introduced forcefully, they bare no meaning, and, therefore, serve no

purpose. Ford warned that if architects were to impose abstract geometrical forms deprived of conventional meanings to their ‘living art,’ stifling its communication potentials, they might end up speaking to themselves. He concluded that ‘humility does not seem to be a bad grace to cultivate even in a modernist architect.’

Though the traditionalist architects accepted the rhetoric of building for the age, and – as shown in previous chapters – embraced modern technologies and functional planning, they challenged the Modernist rejection of tradition. The traditionalist position towards architectural history was fundamentally influenced by the idea of the dual essence of architecture, rooted in the rational Beaux-Arts distinction between the problem of structure and function on one side, and form on the other. For traditionalist architects, form was the vehicle of artistic expression par excellence, a reflection of the highest social values – different from (and, therefore, unhindered by) the demands of everyday needs that structure and programme catered for. Employing associative devices from the repertoire of historical styles, they created semiotic ensembles meant to contribute to society by conveying, and inspiring, desirable social values. In the words of Reginald Ford, ‘beauty in building can evoke the spiritual emotions and minister to the spiritual side of life.’

To reflect societal values and ‘minister to the spiritual side of life’, it was crucial to speak in a clearly understandable architectural language – one that had been developed through centuries of Western socio-political and cultural practices. Thus, the traditionalist reluctance to forego tradition could be explained by essentially different understanding of the other fundamental principle of historicist architecture – the notion of development.

An article by Lange Powell (1886–1938), a noted Brisbane architect, published in the New Zealand Herald after he was elected president of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in 1932, clearly illustrates the duality of the traditionalist position. On one hand, stressing that architecture needs to keep up with technological advancement, Powell insisted that, in the Age of the Machine, it was crucial for architects to work with engineers. For Powell, as for most of the traditionalist architects, modernity had already triumphed in the period’s architecture through the employment of cutting-edge building technologies. However, Powell found the complete rejection of tradition in architecture to be destructive. He used the example of the Russian October Revolution (1917) to illustrate the connections between socio-political circumstances and architectural expression. The implied question was: since there were no radical socio-political and cultural changes in Australia, was there really a need for radical formal changes in architecture?

Similarly, an article published in the Auckland Star reported on the ‘Battle of Styles in Modern Architecture,’ noting the arguments of the well-established British architects voiced at the Conference of British architects in Glasgow (1936). Thomas Harold Hughes (1887-1949), Professor of Architecture

at Glasgow University, stressed that ‘no one wishes to hark back in the 20th century to a literal transcript of a merely revised version of the forms of the 13th, 16th or 18th… We must accept our own age.’

However, Hughes cautioned against complete rejection of tradition and tendency to produce a new style of architecture solely to be different from that which had been done before:

If we accept every reasonable requirement given by a client and endeavour to produce a plan eminently adapted to the practical requirements of the building; if we have a full knowledge of the qualities, possibilities and limitations of modern materials and of methods of construction of proved reliability and economy, and if we apply with knowledge the latest developments of science, a truly modern architecture must slowly develop. Training should not be allowed to contemplate the creation of novel forms or the reproductions of Continental fancies until a man has mastered the constructional possibilities of his material.

Sir Giles Gilbert Scott (1880-1960), after ridiculing the eccentricity that strove to break away from tradition in things fundamental, declared that ‘modern developments have undoubtedly brought a breath of fresh air into what had become a stagnant architectural atmosphere.’ However, Scott agreed that a new style could not be forcefully developed:

Now that the modern expression has affected most architects, it is to be hoped that it will, by trial and error, and elimination of mere stunts, gradually develop into a tradition enabling all architects to work in the same style, as occurred before the break-up of tradition a century or so ago. The result of all architects in the country working in the same style cannot but be beneficial and tends to improve quality, for thus, and thus only, can we get the gradual development and evolution such as has characterised all the architectural history in the world.

Interestingly, the principle of development did not inform only traditionalist understandings of architecture. In the book *A Key to Modern Architecture* (1939), Francis Reginald Stevens Yorke (1906–1962), a noted British architect and a vocal supporter of Modernist architecture, explained that Modernism ‘does not result from a clean break with tradition, but from that continuous development which has produced the great styles of the past.’ For Yorke, building in accordance with tradition was ‘to do as the architects of those periods did: to build for contemporary needs, getting the best out of the materials at hand.’ *A Key to Modern Architecture* was amongst of the earliest books about Modernism that were officially included in the reading lists for the history and theory courses during

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the modernisation of the curriculum of the Auckland University College School of Architecture. 945 Though, as Julia Gatley shows, this process took place in the years after the Second World War, 946 it might be assumed that Yorke’s title became known in New Zealand circles earlier, because a comparatively small number of books was being imported and those that were, were well used. 947

Historicist principles of holism, individuality and development informed the attitudes of the supporters of Modernism and traditionalists alike. Informed by the principle of holism, the understanding of architecture as inextricable from, and determined by, broader conditions of the epoch united them. However, their responses to the concepts of individuality and development differed. Determined to develop forms expressive of the unique conditions of their own time, Modernists embraced individuality. Approaching the concept from a universalist point, individuality, as perceived by the Modernists, was embodied in the notion of Zeitgeist – the spirit of the age, an invisible agent dominating the characteristics of the epoch. 948 Attitudes by the traditionalist architects show that, for them, the principle of individuality revolved around more pragmatic questions.

As Giorgio Pigafetta and Ilaria Abbondanolo explain, two major points of traditionalist criticism of the Modern Movement were based in the understanding of ‘race’ and ‘climate’ as guarantees of regional and national identities, and the conviction that Modernism was a foreign, most notably a German movement, and as such, not rooted in local and national culture. 949 The principle of individuality informed the traditionalist understanding of the uniqueness of their own age and societies in the stream of history. However, they focused on the more practical aspects behind said uniqueness. Issues of the ‘local,’ or the ‘context’ – namely, culture, way of life, customs, available materials, climate, landscape, etc. – influenced their thinking about architecture. These ideas championed by the traditionalists in the interwar period might be considered as the seeds that would reach their full bloom in the architectural philosophy of critical regionalism.

Traditionalists fostered development. Different responses to the second fundamental principle of historicist architecture informed the opposing attitudes towards architectural history. Modernists believed that they were continuing the development of architecture, interrupted some centuries ago, with the invention of new forms rooted in the building technologies and unique qualities of the Machine Age. In contrast, considering architecture inextricable from society, which, in itself was based on a lasting tradition, traditionalists insisted that architectural forms could not be invented nor break with

947 The University of Auckland Library still keeps a 1939 edition of Yorke and Penn’s book. A couple of years ago, the Library discarded a number of copies, which is how the author of this thesis came into a possession of one. It is plausible to assume that the Library purchased multiple versions of the book soon after it was published, in the early 1940s.
948 About the changing interpretations and varying definitions of the spirit of the age in the context of architectural history, see: Aleksandar Kadijević, Arhitektura i duh vremena [Architecture and the Spirit of the Age] (Belgrade: GK, 2010).
949 Pigafetta and Abbondanolo, Architecture Traditionaliste, 29.
the tradition completely – or deliberately. Gradually developed through history, architecture was perceived as a reflection of centuries of Western socio-political and cultural practices. Hence, for traditionalist architects, architectural forms could not be invented; they could only develop through time as a plastic expression of the society that produced it.

The main point of difference between the traditionalist and Modernist historicist architects was the way principles of individuality and development related to each other in their reasoning. As shown in the previous chapters, traditionalist architects reconciled the two principles in their dual understanding of architecture as art and science. In the context of traditionalist architectural theories, the principle of individuality relates to science (technology for structure; modern living habits, economy and ‘hygiene’ for programme and planning), while development ensures art (employing recognizable forms developed through centuries of Western socio-cultural practices, architectural art reflects and inspires the highest of ideals). Hence, for traditionalist historicist architects, the two principles were reconciled in their understanding of architecture – yet, distinct from each other. This distinction directly influenced the separate treatment of issues of structure and planning from the envelope. In contrast, Modernist reasoning merged the two principles, breaking free from the traditionalist understanding of a building’s exterior as independent from structure and interior spaces.

7.3 Queen Street and the Expression of the Machine Age

Contradicting cautious attitudes expressed in the period’s writings about architecture, all the Queen Street projects from the second half of the 1930s exhibited modernising influences. Out of six projects for high-rise structures, three were realised – the Dingwall Building (1934), the Arthur Eady Building (1938), and Browne’s Building (1939). The first two stand to this day, and both are listed by Heritage New Zealand. Erected on the site of old single-storeyed nineteenth-century structures, at the north corner of the intersection of Queen Street and Wellesley Street East, Browne’s Building was demolished and replaced with a more recent high-rise. The other three buildings were ambitious projects for banking and insurance houses – Australian Mutual Provident Society (AMP, 1936), Bank of New South Wales (NSW, 1937), and Bank of New Zealand (BNZ, 1937) – and were perhaps too exorbitant for the constrained years preceding the Second World War. Though a popular topic of discussion during the second half of the 1930s, none of these three structures was ever built.

Two structures were remodelled in the ‘up-to-date’ language of Art Deco – the Gladstone Building (1937), and Smith and Caughey’s Department Store (1939). The exterior of the Gladstone Building (Figure 27) was to be ‘cleaned down, the old-fashioned decorations are to be chipped off, and the frontages re-plastered and finished in such a manner that the building will rank in appearance with the newest structures in the city.’

However, the renovation project, after designs by the Auckland

City Engineer James Tyler (1877-1947), was not embraced. An article from the *New Zealand Herald* criticised the decision to perform a ‘face lifting’ to the structure positioned at such an important Auckland location – opposite the Ferry Building – without consulting any of the city’s architects. Listing the neighbouring buildings, such as the Ferry Building, the Harbour Board Building, Endean’s Buildings, and the Chief Post Office – inspired by the classical tradition and the Italian Renaissance – the author of the article, signed Christopher Wren, accused the ‘pseudo-modernistic’ building of not being sensitive to the immediate surroundings. The episode illustrates the broader trends of the period: tendency toward the modernising aesthetics of ornament-free architecture and demands for design sensitivity toward the (local) context.


In contrast, the ‘simple grace of modern architecture’ of the remodelled Smith and Caughey’s facade, was saluted (Figures 28a and 28b). Designs were made by Roy Lippincott, who was architect for the

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large seven-storey building completed for the firm in 1928 on the site of the old Opera House, fronting Wellesley Street West and Elliott Street.953

Following the failure of the Civic Scheme to be realised, a single public project was investigated in response to the serious lack of space experienced by the growing cohort of civil servants working for the Auckland City Council – the Town Hall Administrative Block (1937). Never constructed, or even taken to developed design, the project was another stillborn idea. Information available is vague – the administrative block, described as ‘four-storeyed and modern in design’, was supposed to be constructed opposite the Town Hall, at the foot of Grey’s Avenue.954 However, due to lack of funding and public support, the project for new civic offices was dismissed in 1938.955

The three realised buildings – the Dingwall, the Arthur Eady and Browne’s – were typical early modernising high-rise office blocks, which introduced the ornament-free language of abstract geometry, with alternating horizontal bands of large glass windows and spandrel panels, to the architecture of Queen Street. No mention of the Arthur Eady nor Browne’s Building has been found in New Zealand architectural historiography to date. By comparison, the oldest of the three – the Dingwall Building – is the best known, and mentioned by scholars.956 Designed by the practice of Gummer & Ford, the

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Dingwall Building opened a new chapter in the history of the Queen Street high-rise. The structure was consistent with Ford’s interest and research in seismic design, discussed in the previous chapter (29a). Gatley notes that it was in structures such as the Dingwall that the new earthquake-resistant measures developed after the Napier earthquake of 1931 were introduced to New Zealand construction practices.\(^{957}\) In fact, the Dingwall was the first Queen Street building proposed after the earthquake, designed completely under the new building code. According to Petry, urbanity, simplicity, and the financially constrained environment informed the architectural imagery used for the Dingwall Trust.\(^{958}\)

![Figure 29a. Building in Queen Street for the Dingwall Trust Board. Framing Plans and Floor Slab Detail. Plan, March 1935.](image)

In an interview with the *New Zealand Herald*, the architects said that the eight-storeyed structure was ‘an expression of what was best in the modern movement in architecture.’\(^{959}\) And what was the best of Modernism, according to Gummer and Ford? The building was earthquake resistant; ‘new sound-absorbing technologies were being used in the ceilings of the offices to deaden the noises of the street as much as possible’; the front and rear walls ‘would be practically all glass, providing an

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\(^{959}\) “Dingwall Building,” *New Zealand Herald* 72, no. 22184, August 10, 1935, 14.
unusual amount of light and air’; and the interior was planned ‘on the most modern lines.’ Columns in the front of the building were set back about four feet from the building line; beams were cantilevered out to carry the floors to this line. This allowed the ‘interesting feature’ of ground-floor planning, permitting full-width display windows without any obstructing columns. The volume of articles about the structure, published in the periodicals during and after its construction, indicates that the Dingwall Building was embraced by period commentators. It was praised as ‘thoroughly modern in all respects’ in 1934. However, perhaps the public was not fully prepared for its ornament-free facade (Figures 29b and 29c). Namely, shortly after it was constructed, the New Zealand Herald reported that the newly erected Dingwall Building was being painted ‘a pleasant apricot colour,’ as one of the many signs that building-owners and architects were trying to give the city a ‘more gay and varied appearance.’

Figure 29b. Building in Queen Street for the Dingwall Trust Board. East and North Elevation. Section Thru Entrance. Vestibule. Plan, March 1935.

961 Technical documentation Record ID 178584, AKC 339 Building Permit and Consents Aperture Cards 1908-1997, Auckland Council Archives
962 “Queen Street Block. New Building Planned,” New Zealand Herald 71, no. 21928 (11 October 1934), 12.
Figure 29c. Dingwall Building, Queen Street Elevation. Constructed 1934. Architects: Gummer & Ford.
As shown in the illustration published in the *New Zealand Herald* in July 1938, the new Arthur Eady Building was originally planned as another eight-storeyed structure with dominant horizontal bands of glass windows and spandrel panels (Figure 30a).

Designs were made by Chilwell & Trevithick, an Auckland-based architectural practice. English-born Benjamin Chilwell and Aucklander Cecil Trevithick entered into partnership in 1914. Designing a wide variety of domestic, commercial and industrial buildings, the firm was responsible for a number of other noted Queen Street projects, such as the Endean’s Building (1914), Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd. Building (1916), and Myer’s Kindergarten (1916), erected to the south of the Town Hall and main commercial precinct. However, probably due to economic stringency, the new Arthur Eady building was constructed as a five-storeyed structure (Figure 30b). Like Gummer & Ford’s Dingwall, the new Eady Building was meant to introduce colour to Queen Street. Chilwell & Trevithick contemplated colour from the early design phases. The entire facade – other than the window surfaces – was to be faced with coloured glass set in concrete: ‘several colours will be employed and the effect aimed at will be of fresh and gleaming surfaces.’ However, the plans for a coloured glass facade were never realised – most likely another consequence of the economic circumstances.

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Figure 30a. *Arthur Eady Building, ‘An Impression of the New Building’ by the Architects Chilwell & Trevithick.* Newspaper illustration, July 15, 1938.

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George Browne’s new premises, erected at the north corner of Queen Street and Wellesley Street East in 1939, replaced one of the oldest building blocks from the time when the Ligar Canal flowed across Queen Street in the 1860s. It was designed by J. O. Owen, probably the same architect who designed the Auckland Chinese Presbyterian Church as a member of the trio of Owen, McKenzie & Foote in 1957. Browne’s Building was designed as a modernising five-storeyed structure with long bands of glass windows flowing across the rounded corner, a device associated with streamlined moderne in the mid-late 1930s (Figure 31a). In 1940 two more storeys were added, as was planned for when the designs were originally made in 1939 (Figure 31b). Owen also experimented with colour – though admittedly to a considerably lesser extent – around the entrance vestibule, which was finished in birch veneer and decorated glass.

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968 Technical documentation Record ID 178587, AKC 339 Building Permit and Consents Aperture Cards 1908-1997, Auckland Council Archives.
971 “Two More Storeys, Queen Street Building,” *New Zealand Herald* 77, no. 23704, July 10, 1940, 8.
972 “New Building. Queen Street Premises,” *New Zealand Herald* 76, no. 23428, August 18, 1939, 10.
Figure 31a. *New Building for Browne Bros*. Sections and elevations, September 1939.

Rejection of ornament is perhaps the most recognizable quality of Modernist architecture. The new Dingwall and Arthur Eady premises were marked by the typical Modernist language of abstraction, with facades completely devoid of ornament. Though, as shown earlier in the chapter, the older generation of architects active during the interwar period still cherished the communicative potentials of traditional architectural forms, Queen Street high-rise office blocks by Gummer & Ford and Chilwell & Trevithick reveal that they were willing to let go of ornament for the sake of modern needs – and in accordance with the economic constraints of the period. However, the exterior treatment of the two structures imply that these traditionally inclined architects were not prepared to completely let go of conventional artistic tools they had the opportunity to work with during their training in the tradition of Beaux-Arts. Instead of ornament, they turned to colour as means to develop architectural ensembles of greater symbolic and communicative potentials when designing the earliest Modernist buildings in Queen Street.

Developed since the first decade of the twentieth century in abstract art, shape and colour were considered the essential artistic devices. Experimenting within the intrinsic domain of art, abstract artists employed lines, colours and shapes to break free from copying the already existing forms of the physical world, rendering art self-referential and truly creative. Manipulating strict geometries and experimenting with colour, New Zealand architects from the older generation were arguably doing something similar during the interwar period. Still insisting that architecture was an art, and that it had to cater to the spirit, as well as accommodate practical functions, they employed colour as a potent tool of communication. They might have created a unique form of truly functional three-dimensional abstract architectural art, had they been willing to develop these ideas further; had they not been interrupted by the war; and had the generations who inherited them recognised the potential of these early New Zealand modernising experiments.

The proposed AMP, Bank of NSW, and BNZ premises shared similar histories. The need for larger structures was influenced by growing business operations. However, the economic conditions of the period did not allow for the realisation of these projects. Construction was repeatedly postponed for all three structures, until, with time, the idea about these modern high-rise premises disappeared from


975 Almost no mention of the three structures has been found in New Zealand architectural historiography to date. The sole exception was Bruce Petry’s who notes – but does not offer any further information about – Gummer & Ford’s unbuilt BNZ project; Bruce Petry, “A Break with Tradition: The State Fire Insurance Building,” in Zeal and Crusade. The Modern Movement in Wellington, ed. John Wilson (Christchurch: Te Waihora Press, 1996), 47.
public sight. The plans for the three edifices remained silent witnesses of modernising tendencies of Queen Street’s architectural transformation between the world wars, which never took place physically. The three projects were not the focus on scholarly research to date.

The AMP hired the bureau of Gummer & Ford to design their new Queen Street building sometime around the mid-1930s. The eight-storeyed high-rise was to replace the older structure, discussed in Chapter 5, and extend over the neighbouring Queen Street and Victoria Street sites previously purchased by the Society. Described as handsome and solidly built, it seems that the older structure was not considered outdated in terms of construction technologies or architectural forms in 1936. The decision to construct a new office building, ‘designed on earthquake-resisting principles,’ was based on the practical need for more space reflecting the growing volume of business. Details of the scheme were not published. However, a vague description notes that it was to be a modern structure that would compare with any Auckland building in ‘size and importance.’ Ample provision for window space was described as the most notable feature of the structure’s elevation.

Though the new Bank of NSW was discussed from 1937, preparations for its construction were not advanced further by 1940. It was designed by the bank’s architects in Sydney, L. L. Robertson and Son, in association with Malcolm K. Draffin (1890-1964) from Auckland. The architectural apprenticeship of Auckland-born Draffin began in 1906, and in 1910 he joined the practice of Edward Bartley. Draffin became a full partner in 1914 when the firm became known as Edward Bartley and Son and M. K. Draffin. Having served with the N.Z. Field Engineers in World War One, he travelled in Europe and attended the Architectural Association School in London.

Upon his return to New Zealand, in 1922, Draffin formed a partnership with Hugh Cresswell Grierson (1886-1953) and Kenneth Walter Aimer (1891-1960). Grierson, Aimer & Draffin was an influential Auckland practice best known for their winning entries in the Wellington Citizen’s War Memorial (Cenotaph) and Auckland War Memorial Museum design competitions. The practice dissolved in 1932 and Draffin went on to design the Wellington branch of the South British Insurance Company (1936). He was president of the New Zealand Institute of Architects in 1951-2. The new Bank of NSW building was to have had nine floors and was designed after the principles embodied in

979 “City Land Sale. Queen Street Deal,” New Zealand Herald 73, no. 22492, August 8, 1936, 12.
982 “New City Block. AMP Development,” Auckland Star 70, no. 105, May 6, 1939, 10.
985 Glossary of Architects, Engineers and Designers (Wellington: NZHPT, 1990); Grierson, Aimer, and Draffin – Architectural Partnership, NZHPT Professional Biographies (c.2013)
the bank’s newly erected premises in Sydney and Melbourne – a slender high-rise without any trace of traditional ornamentation, executed in modernising Art Deco manner.\textsuperscript{986}

Out of the three unrealised Queen Street projects, the new BNZ Building gained most of the public attention and was developed the furthest (Figure 32). It was described as one of the largest building projects in the history of Queen Street.\textsuperscript{987} The building was to have been a seven-storeyed structure rising to the full height limit of 102ft permitted by the city bylaws. Two Auckland architects – R. Atkinson Abbott and William Gummer – were commissioned to design the building. Occupying a corner site, the building was described as ‘an imposing addition to the architecture of Queen Street, and worthy in every way of New Zealand’s largest city.’\textsuperscript{988}

The decision to construct the new building on the site of the nineteenth-century Renaissance Revival BNZ Buildings was challenged by admirers of architectural history. Professor Cyril Knight expressed his deepest regret about the decision to demolish the old structure. Knight offered the service of the School of Architecture staff and students to document the building, which ‘would be honoured in any European country as a work of architecture… New Zealand has not a large number of old

\textsuperscript{986} “City Land Deal. Queen Street Site,” \textit{New Zealand Herald} 74, no. 22710, April 23, 1937, 13.
\textsuperscript{987} “New Buildings. The Bank of NZ,” \textit{Auckland Star} 68, no. 239, October 8, 1937), n.p.
\textsuperscript{988} “Bank of NZ. New Building. Queen Street Scheme,” \textit{New Zealand Herald} 74, no. 22854, October 8, 1937, 10.
buildings of outstanding architectural merit, and the removal of the old building, which is unquestionably one of the finest of its type, will create a feeling of sadness in the hearts of all lovers of good architecture. Knight approached the topic as a history enthusiast – he did not challenge the need to build for the needs of the time, but expressed a sincere regret for a general disregard for the old.

Prior to the making of the designs for the new BNZ premises, the architects travelled to Sydney and Melbourne to examine some of the numerous large bank buildings that had been erected in Australia. Abbott and Gummer were impressed with the ambitiously designed structures they visited. According to them, it could not be said that Australian architecture had gone ‘wildly ultra-modernistic… It was efficient in design, with straight lines dominant and without the undue decorative orders common twenty years ago.’ Abbott and Gummer were especially interested in the noise reduction techniques, with the use of special sound-proof windows and acoustic materials in the interior. The architects adopted this approach in their design for the new BNZ premises.

Abbott and Gummer employed the period’s cutting-edge construction technologies and moderate modernistic architectural expression in their design for the BNZ premises. Though the height regulations were exceeded slightly, horizontal lines dominated the treatment of the exterior. Terminology used for architectural qualities of the classically inspired structures from the 1920s reappeared in the period’s descriptions of the BNZ. The strong piers and large wall surfaces on the ground floor, facing Queen Street, were said to give an impression of ‘strength and repose.’ Similarly, ‘a strong sense of dignity and importance’ was to be accomplished by the high bronze-framed and spandrilled windows to the banking chamber and the lofty entrance doorway and vestibule to Queen Street. The main Queen Street entrance was marked by vertical lines, carried through the horizontal bands that lead the eye upward to the seventh storey. The remainder of this storey was to be stepped back, leaving two flat roof promenades overlooking Queen Street. The two main street facades were to have had their bases faced with granite, with the upper sections clad with stone. Bronze was to have been largely used in the front windows and banking chamber grilles.

Once again omitting architectural ornament, the architects relied on massing and the natural colours of the materials to enhance the associational potentials of the structure. In comparison with the modernising high-rise office blocks constructed around the mid-1930s for the Dingwall Trust, Arthur

Eady, and Browne, the architecture of the BNZ bears a stronger mark of the traditionalist background of its designers. Discussed in Chapter 4, the quality of architectural fitness, instilled into the architects trained in the Beaux-Art tradition, provides a theoretical background for the different treatment of the two groups of buildings. Namely, to satisfy the requirement for fitness, it is not sufficient for a building to be ‘beautiful in form and design’ – it should also be structurally sound, respond to – and express – all of the relevant material and non-material factors that relate to it; above all, its purpose.\textsuperscript{996} Accordingly, as a true invention of the Machine Age, the high-rise office block allowed a clear break with tradition exemplified in abstract geometries of simple, ornament-free, and cost-efficient forms. In contrast, a banking institution claimed a legacy of a long-standing tradition. Therefore, it was appropriate that its design should be reminiscent of the classical qualities of solidity and dignity. Though historical forms were completely abandoned in the treatment of the BNZ, apertures, massing, and more conservative tripartite division resonate with the longevity of tradition behind the institution the proposed structure was supposed to house.

**Conclusion**

Economic constraint impeded the construction of the ambitious projects discussed above, but it was the Second World War that finally brought the construction industry to an almost complete halt. The middle of the 1930s were the fulcrum in the history of Queen Street transformation. Though New Zealand architects were aware of the two centuries-long search for a style expressive of the unique conditions of each period, up to that moment ‘building for the age’ was equated with ‘building for the modern needs’ and more closely related to the questions of functional planning and building technologies. Directly resultant from the cutting-edge construction technologies, novel features such as increased height, larger aperture size, and commodious open floor spaces, were, as a rule, clothed in the forms from the architectural past.

The third wave of Queen Street transformations has shown that, though still maintaining a critical distance towards the radical experiments of European Modernists in their writings, the older generation of New Zealand architects starts opening up to aesthetic Modernism, as Walker described it.\textsuperscript{997} Individual structures discussed in this chapter clearly trace this change. Since the mid-1930s, it was no longer enough to employ cutting-edge technologies, build high, design open floors, and create larger openings. Though the structures discussed in this chapter did not push forward height limit in the manner of the ‘miniature skyscrapers’ from the previous decades, they overtly showcased the unique qualities of the modern-day in the overall treatment of the exterior.

Though opening up to Modernism, architects of the older generation were still faithful to the traditionalist notions of architectural art, believing in a gradual development of architecture related to

\textsuperscript{996} Ward, “The Quality of Fitness in Architecture,” 891.
\textsuperscript{997} Walker, “Modern Architecture in New Zealand,” 43.
the society that was rooted in the tradition of the Western world. They were sensitive to the uniqueness of the context and did not fully embrace everything that came from the Old Continent. These architects selected what seemed most appropriate for the local context and contemporary needs and kept on experimenting with artistic potentials in architecture. Acknowledging that historical ornament was outdated in the conditions of the twentieth century, they dismissed it from their new designs. Instead, these architects turned to colour as a vehicle of developing more appealing and easily associative architectural ensembles. Unfortunately, for various reasons, this early intuition never developed into a fully conscious system of thinking about architectural problems. Queen Street structures discussed in this chapter set the stage for the further Modernist interventions in Auckland following the Second World War. They were the culmination of a decades-long story of progress and modernity, which marked the twentieth-century waves of Queen Street transformation. With the modernising forms of Queen Street high-rises, the commercial heart of Auckland stepped into the final stage of the historicist quest for the architectural expression of the unique conditions of the present time.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

‘There is the paradox: how to be modern and to continue the tradition; how to revive an old dormant civilisation as part of universal civilisation.’

Written in the mid-twentieth century, the formulation by Paul Ricoeur encapsulates the essence of the epoch of historicist architecture. This thesis has researched two closely related – yet, distinct – themes from the history of architecture. First, it explored historicism, a somewhat vague concept often used by architectural historians. Second, focused on the pre-Second World War architectural production inspired by history, and developed on historicist principles, it examined one of the many historicist modes – the traditionalist architecture of the twentieth century. Considered as a representative sample tracing broader architectural tendencies in New Zealand, the architecture of the main commercial throughway of New Zealand’s biggest city, Queen Street in Auckland, was selected as the case study. This chapter reflects on the main findings of each chapter, what they mean collectively, and the future direction of this research.

8.1 Chapter Findings

This thesis explored the topics of architectural historicism and traditionalist architecture of the twentieth century through seven chapters. Chapter 1 offered a historiographical overview. Reviewing the key texts, it identified the gap in knowledge that this thesis responded to. The chapter showed that historicism is a concept of great plasticity, and one that should be explored more thoroughly in the context of the history of architecture. Widely used by scholars, the concept needs to be adequately defined and incorporated into the terminology of architectural history. Similarly, the topic of traditionalist twentieth-century historicist architecture was widely under-researched, both internationally and in New Zealand. Finding only one monograph about the topic, the literature review clearly showed that traditionalist architecture was almost completely excluded from the scholarship on the twentieth-century history of architecture. The twentieth-century traditionalist architecture had previously not been discussed as a separate topic in New Zealand architectural historiography. Finally, though it was possible to find scattered information, the architectural transformation of Queen Street in Auckland had not been an exclusive focus of scholarly research.

Exploring the meaning of historicism in the context of the philosophy of history, Chapter 2 distilled three principles of the process of ‘historicisation of life,’ which marked the historicist approach to history – principles of holism, individuality and development. These three principles later served as the essential tool for deciphering the period’s architectural positions. According to holism, categories

999 Pigfetta and Abbondandolo, *Architecture traditionalista*.
such as society, state, culture or epoch are considered as an indivisible whole, which determines the very identity of its constituents. Replacing earlier notions of natural law with a genetic approach, individuality focuses on the attributes of the unique in history. The polar opposite of the historicist approach to history, related to the concept of individuality, is the notion of development. Development was described as the ‘historical process within which individuality manifests itself and is to be explained not by ‘laws’ (and hence is not predictable), but by innate tendencies, ‘spiritual spontaneity,’ and special or external factors.'

Chapter 2 also argued that the scope of historicism, perceived essentially as a way of thinking – a specific worldview that engulfed Western culture in the aftermath of the Enlightenment, rooted in the complexity of human historicity – was significantly broader than the German and academic contexts. The chapter showed that, understood as a worldview, historicism permeated everyday life and creativity, and, resultantly, could be applied in the research of architecture of the period.

Chapter 3 made a clear distinction between historicism in architecture and the traditionalist historicist architecture of the twentieth century, explaining the causes behind confusion between the two. Building upon the principles of holism, individuality and development, crystallised from the historicist positions in the philosophy of history, Chapter 3 offered a definition of historicism in the context of architecture. The chapter argued that architectural historicism is not a style, nor a specific design method rooted in the assemblage of forms, elements and principles from architectural history. Influenced by the altered comprehension of history, and perceived as a stream of individual epochs, architectural historicism essentially focuses on the present – not the past. Architectural historicism could be defined as a conscious aspiration to architecturally express the unique conditions of the (present) period.

Consequently, historicist architecture was marked by a historical (self-)consciousness, a heightened attitude towards the past, and the understanding of architecture as a socio-temporal and contextual construct defined by the unique qualities of the time and place of its creation. Chapter 3 showed that, serving as a creative incentive for generations of architects, the idea of ‘building for the age’ was a unifying thread that connected diverse formal and theoretical experiments of approximately two centuries from the history of Western architecture. The chapter proposed a timeline of historicism, distinguishing between Proto-Historicism of the eighteenth century (the scientific ‘discovery’ of architectural history – the focus on the architectural past); Relativist Historicism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (the heightened historical self-consciousness – the focus on the architectural present; a relativism of values manifested in stylistic pluralism); and Determinist Historicism of the twentieth century (the spirit of the age and the inventions by the Modern Movement).

Narrowing the focus to the last phase of Relativist Historicism – the traditionalist historicist architecture of the twentieth century – Chapter 4 moved the discussion to the specific New Zealand

context. Setting the stage for the second part of the thesis, the chapter explored broader historical circumstances, the history of Queen Street in the nineteenth century and the dominant features of period New Zealand architecture. Drawing from articles published by local periodicals during the first decades of the twentieth century, Chapter 4 showed that, continuing the line of theories developed in Europe since the eighteenth century, New Zealand architects conceived of architecture as dual in nature – a union of art and science. In practice, reconciling the historicist principles of holism, individuality and development, architecture was considered to be indivisible from – and determined by – the broader conditions of its creation, and created with the use of the latest building technologies in combination with historical styles. Perceived as the true expression of the unique conditions of the epoch, innovative construction technologies – tangible achievements of the Machine Age – were a major topic of historicist architecture. On the other hand, considering architecture inextricable from society, architects employed forms from the architectural past to communicate continuity with a specific tradition and convey dominant values of the modern epoch. Finally, the chapter argued that, for traditionalist historicists of the twentieth century, architecture was not a passive reflection – expressing traditionally acclaimed values, historical forms were intended to inspire the ever-growing urban population.

Focusing on the key Queen Street structures, Chapters 5, 6, and 7 explored the three waves of the pre-Second World War architectural transformation of Queen Street. Chapter 5 showed that in the eyes of the early twentieth-century New Zealanders, as far as the functionality, architectural language, and, materiality were concerned – the buildings from the first wave of Queen Street transformations (1900-1918) were truly expressive of the unique period conditions. Inspired by the lessons from the Classical tradition, Queen Street buildings were deemed to convey dominant societal values of the period. In the eyes of the period commentators, history was not copied in the treatment of the new Queen Street premises but reinterpreted to fit the needs of the modern times. Chapter 5 has shown that the questions of artistic treatment, symmetrical planning and compositional values were, in New Zealand architectural practice of the first two decades of the twentieth century, eclipsed by the interest in modern inventions, novel construction technologies and functional designing in response to modern needs. Though they continued to use historical forms on the exterior, Queen Street architects did not subordinate design functionality and structural qualities to aesthetics. They eagerly employed new technologies in response to the period’s requirements for taller, naturally lit and well-ventilated structures, with easy circulation routes, equipped with modern inventions.

Chapter 6 showed that the 1920s marked a formally diverse decade in Queen Street’s history of architecture. Innovative building technologies and issues of functional planning (i.e. circulation, light, ventilation, and context) continued to preoccupy the minds of the architects, and the laypeople alike. However, a greater interest in architectural languages became apparent. Chapter 6 argued that the previously unquestioned position of historical styles started to shake during the 1920s. History still served as the primary source for design inspiration, but its influence gradually diluted as the societal
values became more fluid, and, consequently, architects became increasingly uncertain as to which architectural language would express them best. Under the circumstances, stylistic experimentation thrived, and Classical, Georgian, Gothic, and, finally, modernising Art Deco modes imprinted themselves on Queen Street architectural scenery. Regardless of the stylistic treatment, two trends were apparent in most of the period’s buildings – reduction of ornament and an upward tendency – paving the way for the later modernist and more recent architectural transformations of Queen Street.

Chapter 7 argued that the middle of the 1930s marked the fulcrum in the history of Queen Street transformations. Though New Zealand architects were eager to accept new construction technologies and explore functional planning solutions, up to this moment, new building features such increased height, larger aperture size, and commodious open floor spaces were, as a rule, clothed in the forms from the architectural past. Chapter 7 showed that, though still cautious towards the new ideas about architecture in their writings, in practice the generation of New Zealand architects who peaked professionally during the interwar years – as well as their clientele and the broader public – accepted the modernising forms of Art Deco and the Modern Movement from the mid-1930s. The structures from the third wave of pre-Second World War twentieth-century transformation clearly show that it was no longer enough to employ cutting edge technologies, build high, design open floors, and create larger openings. The qualities of modern-day needed to be shown more explicitly in the overall treatment of the buildings’ exteriors. The chapter concludes that the final achievements of the centuries-long historicist search for architecture expressive of the present time reached the commercial heart of Auckland, New Zealand’s biggest city, with the modernising forms of Queen Street high-rise designed in the mid-1930s.

8.2 Thesis Findings

The original ambition of this thesis was to contribute to a more comprehensive image of the pre-Second World War architecture of the twentieth century in the context of Western culture. This was to be achieved by focusing on the ‘traditional’ architecture of the period, designed with the employment of forms, elements, and principles from architectural history, which, according to Henry-Russell Hitchcock, constituted ‘the majority of buildings designed before 1930 in most countries of the Western World and a considerable, if rapidly decreasing, proportion of those erected in succeeding decades.’\(^{1001}\) The adjective used to describe this particular architecture was ‘historicist,’ again, understood in the way Hitchcock – and numerous architectural historians after him – explained it. According to Hitchcock, historicism, ‘quite simply… means the re-use of forms borrowed from the architectural styles of the past, usually in more or less new combinations.’\(^{1002}\)

\(^{1001}\) Hitchcock, Architecture. 19th and 20th Centuries, 392.
\(^{1002}\) Hitchcock, Architecture. 19th and 20th Centuries, 474.
The first finding this thesis made is conceptual. The question it responds to is whether the concept of historicism, originating from the disciplines of philosophy and history, could be applied to the research of architecture. Mostly drawing from literature from philosophy of history, this thesis is aligned with the positions maintaining that historicism, as a way of thinking – a specific worldview that engulfed Western culture in the aftermath of the Enlightenment, rooted in the complexity of human historicity – was significantly broader than the German and academic contexts, from which it originated. Since the second half of the 18th century, a change in the way the Western world perceived of history – and, consequently, itself – has been clearly observable. Accepting the concepts of individuality – uniqueness of various historical periods and environments; and development – almost organic evolution of certain themes in the course of history, which was not governed by laws, but by intrinsic set of specific factors – historical self-identity of Western societies changed inevitably. As a worldview, historicism permeated everyday life and creativity. Consequently, the concept is applicable in the research of the architecture of the period.

Second, this thesis offered an expanded definition of the term historicism in the context of architectural history. The literature review helped crystalize three insufficiently robust accounts which largely inform the general understanding of historicism within recent architectural scholarship. Firstly, in the widest sense, historicism is most often associated with the architecture of the 19th century. Furthermore, architectural historians have postulated two general meanings of historicism. On one hand, architectural scholars widely equate historicism with a specific current of historicist thinkers (Hegel, Spengler, Popper), who asserted that human reasoning, decisions, and behaviours are historically determined. On the other, scholarship has contributed to the establishment of perhaps the most common use of the term historicism – to denote architecture created with the employment of historical forms and elements.

This thesis supports the views expressed by some historians that, though valuable and relevant for some understanding of the concept, the current accounts of historicism in architectural historiography are too narrow. This thesis argues that historicist ideas informed Western conceptions of architecture for a period longer than a single century, thus, it should not be considered as an exclusively 19th-century topic. Moreover, the deterministic interpretations should be broadened to take into consideration the full complexity and the wider implications of architectural historicism, especially


in the case of relativist crisis of meanings and values. Finally, interpretation of historicism as merely an inspiration by architectural history is vague and imprecise.

Directly related with the former claim is the assertion made by this thesis that the adjective ‘historicist’ should not be used to denote architecture designed with the use of historical forms and principles. Accordingly, the thesis favoured the term ‘traditionalist’ in relation to the 20th century pre-Second World architecture made with the eclectic use of elements from historical styles. This thesis has shown that the meaning of ‘historicism’ and ‘traditionalist’ architecture had been confusingly equated in the decades following the Second World War, unnecessarily encumbering terminological apparatus of architectural history. Though, indeed, closely related, historicism and traditionalist architecture, are, in fact, not the same. Historicism is a wider concept. This thesis argued that an historicist outlook marked the wider creative achievements of an epoch, and that architecture of the period ranging from approximately the 1750s to the 1950s did not evade its influence. In comparison, the topic of the traditionalist historicist architecture of the twentieth century is a narrower one. It is characterised by a clear scope, exclusively focused on the pre-Second World War architectural production inspired by history and developed on historicist principles. This thesis considered traditionalist architecture as but one of the many historicist modes.

Finally, this thesis offered a deeper reading of said historicist mode, exploring traditionalist 20th-century architecture in practice in the specific example of Queen Street architecture. In contrast to the wide belief established by architectural historians that, trained in the Beaux-Arts tradition, traditionalist architects focused mostly on compositional values of artistic designs, Queen Street buildings and texts about architecture published in New Zealand periodicals during the first four decades of the 20th century clearly show that they were equally – if not more – interested in the functionality of planning according to modern needs, and the potential of cutting edge technologies. Perceived as a tangible expression of modernity and the period’s unique conditions, building technologies were a major topic for historicist architects. Articles about new construction materials (reinforced concrete and steel framing), earthquake and fire-proof building, principles of ventilation, ‘hygiene’ of the house, flat roofs, lighting, and other practical issues dominated New Zealand architectural writing.

Traditionalist architects perceived architecture as both a ‘useful’ and a ‘fine’ art which needs to satisfy material and spiritual human needs. In other words, architecture – a union of science and art – relates to two distinct sets of problems: of structure and planning on one hand, and form, on the other. For traditionalist architects, form was the true carrier of artistic expression, a reflection of the highest social values, unhindered by the demands of everyday needs that structure and programme catered for. To reflect societal values and ‘minister to the spiritual side of life’, it was crucial to ‘speak’ in clearly understandable architectural language – one that had been developed through centuries of Western socio-political and cultural practices. Since Western societies gradually developed from certain
traditions – under the influence of specific factors – so must architecture, created by the societies, develop on the basis of history.

However, this thesis has shown that, directly influenced by the traditionalist understanding of the dual essence of architecture, the reliance on historical devices was predominantly focused on external surfaces. Facades conveyed centuries of Western history, while the spaces behind them, and the supporting structures, spoke of modern achievements. Subordination of functionality to appearance or the dictum of symmetry in commercial or residential structures was inexcusable for traditionalist architects. In the words of a period student of architecture ‘... the pranks of design committed by architects of the eighteenth century cannot be tolerated. With them, convenience... gave way to effect and symmetry; bedrooms went windowless so as to fit in with the grand fenestration schemes of the front, and to obtain symmetry of masses, kitchens were separated by the length of the house from the dining rooms.’

8.3 Future Direction of Research

As mentioned earlier, the original goal of this research was to contribute to the comprehensiveness of histories of the twentieth-century architecture. This was to be achieved by focusing on an extensive, yet neglected, topic of architecture designed with the eclectic use of historical styles in the period before the Second World War. The term used to denote this architecture was historicism. Research started with the exploration of the meaning of historicism in the context of the philosophy of history and its uses in twentieth-century architectural historiography. The conclusion reached was that historicism should be considered as a broad concept, and, as such, could not be used to designate pre-Second World War architecture created with the use of past forms and elements. Drawing from Hitchcock’s Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, the first book written after the Second World War, which featured a full chapter on this type of architecture, the term used to denote it was traditionalist.

The realisation that the two topics – historicism and traditionalist 20th-century architecture – were, in fact, not the same, though certainly related, marked a fulcrum of this thesis. At that point, a decision needed to be made: whether to focus solely on one of the two themes or to test the conclusions crystallised from theoretical exploration of historicism in practice, using the example of the twentieth-century traditionalist architecture? The latter was chosen, and a specific case study of Queen Street selected. The result was a wide position which glimpses into two sets of issues, offering some interpretation, yet failing to explore them thoroughly. The future direction of this research will be to expand the understanding of the two topics. In terms of the concept of historicism, a refined definition – especially in terms of the three principles of holism, individuality and development – is required.

1006 Ward, “The Quality of Fitness in Architecture,” 891
1007 Hitchcock, Architecture.
Next, does the periodisation proposed by this thesis hold? Could there be reference to architectural historicism in the second half of the 18th century, even in terms of a proto-, preparatory phase? Did the concept of Relativist Historicism truly connect various architectural experimentations of the 19th century, or should some restrictions be applied to the definition? Finally, the notion of the historicist essence of the Modern Movement needs to be developed further.

The same applies to the study of the twentieth century traditionalist architecture. This type of architecture marked a majority during the first three decades of the twentieth century in the various countries from the Western cultural sphere. Housing important public institutions, successful businesses, or high-end apartments to date, these structures are recognised for their heritage value across the world. It is high time they received appropriate scholarly attention and get included in histories of twentieth-century architecture. In the future, this research will attempt to popularize the wider recognition of traditionalist architecture internationally, and, among other issues, debunk the myth that traditionalist historicist architects sacrificed the functionality of their designs to conservative notions of beauty.

Finally, this research will explore the influences that the ideas championed by traditionalist historicist architects had on modern understandings of architecture – especially the consequences of their insistence of the importance of the local context. In fact, capturing the essence of traditionalist architecture – as explained by this thesis – Ricour’s quote that this chapter opens with has often been associated with critical regionalism. Critical regionalism is most commonly associated with Kenneth Frampton, credited with its wide popularisation during the 1980s. However, as noted by a number of scholars, since Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre created the term in 1981, the intellectual tradition of critical regionalism was of a significantly earlier date. According to them, its beginnings appeared as early as the first half of the 1930s. Tzonis and Lefaivre later recognised Lewis Mumford as the most important of Frampton’s predecessors. The two authors described Mumford’s position as profoundly original, being the first to infuse regionalism with a notion of relativity. Regionalism had previously been perceived in absolute opposition to the universal. In contrast, Mumford’s regionalism was developed as an engagement with the global, universalising world – not as an attitude of resistance. His radical rethinking of traditional definitions transformed regionalism into a constant process of negotiation between the local and the global. Having in mind the complex relations of modernity

1012 Lefaivre and Tzonis, Critical Regionalism, 34.
and tradition and of relativity and the universal in the ideas formulated by traditionalist historicist architects, could it be that the critical regionalism essentially owed to them?
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