

**WE SAY:**

The trade-off was undoubtedly the right one.



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Canterbury's dumbest criminal.

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"If we didn't have cats we'd be knee-deep in rats and mice, and rats aren't much good for birds either."

THE PRESS, Tuesday, October 22, 2013

A11

# Time to bring an empty city to life

It is time to engage with the "emptiness" of central Christchurch and make it live, writes Dr GEORGE PARKER. Festa returns this weekend.

Locality, the event that launched the inaugural Festival of Transitional Architecture (Festa) last year, saw thousands of people flock back to the inner city. For a significant number, it was their first time back since February 2011.

More recently, with the inner-city red zone disappearing, people are more familiar with the uneasy nature of the place. They know what is there, or rather what is not there, and it is fair to say that many are resistant to returning.

It can be depressing—a city full of emptiness. When the realisation of how long it will take to rebuild the city sinks in, there is a distinct kind of despondence.

If people feel they have to wait for years for the new city to arrive, they become passive. There is a danger of a growing lack of engagement with the making of a new place. And so the city planners, like their colonial forebears, map out a new city that is often generic and uninspired, and not growing out of the actual desires for a distinct identity of our place.

However, instead of waiting, now is the time to engage with this "emptiness", to make it alive, before we lose emotional connection with this place. Now is exactly the time to build a sense of kaitiaki or guardianship—that this is our place, and that we belong to it.

We have to try to inspire the interest of planners and developers to respond to what it is that the community wants. Nobody wants to build spaces and buildings that will be empty. This makes no sense, economically, socially, or culturally. If developers in particular, see that people are willing to try new things they might also be more courageous

and open to new ideas. If we consider the city as a performance, it requires actors that will think outside the square, engaging with the local context and at the same time embracing ideas from elsewhere.

This is the thinking behind Festa's main event for this year, *Canterbury Tales*. Conceived and led by Free Theatre Christchurch, this project builds on the idea of *Luxcity* to provide unique environments built within the city. These environments have been designed by architectural and design students from around Australasia in collaboration with local performance groups, artists and businesses.

To tie this all together, Free Theatre is providing a central procession of large puppets, masked performers and musicians that will move from site to site and instigate a diversity of *Canterbury Tales*. Taking Chaucer as a point of reference, in so far as it brings together the seemingly high and the low, the noble and ignoble, we are creating a carnivalesque mixing up of social roles and urban environments.

A city doesn't need to be uniform. In fact, interesting cities encourage the possibility of non-conformity—that there are different possibilities that can all live together and therefore create a far more interesting, alive and inclusive place to live. Rather than building buildings in the hope that people will one day inhabit them, this unique time affords us the opportunity to start with the activities, the rituals, that bring people together and through which an emotional sense of community is encouraged.

So certain sites become essential for *Canterbury Tales*. The Free Theatre procession starts beside the river. It is the predominant physical feature in



Cast of thousands: Last year's Festival of Transitional Architecture brought people back into the city centre.

Photo: DEANKOZANC/FAIRFAX NZ

relation to which diverse communities have established a sense of place. The overwhelming support for the Onakoro-Avon River Park also speaks to a contemporary preoccupation with place to re-engage with our physical surroundings in the face of significant environmental challenges.

The first gathering place of the procession will be in an environment that acknowledges where we actually live—the Pacific—but not in a way that denies our past.

With the former medieval gothic identity of the English settlers ruptured, there are many from different sides of the political spectrum that see this as a good thing. But to what ends? If we deny our history and try to impose

something completely "new", we will undermine the sense of place that exists here.

We need to re-imagine both the old and the new to find a way of living that is contemporary but also insists on the historical and geographical distinctiveness of our city.

With *Canterbury Tales*, we try to bring together the Pacific and the colonial, play with them in a search for something new and distinct to this place.

Performance group Pacific Underground return to Christchurch with performances inspired by the Samoan holiday Lutu Tamaiti, or White Sunday, a community celebration of the childhood, Pacific Underground are working with students from the Architecture Department at

Lincoln to create a false-inspired design that offers a different idea of gathering within the transitional neighbourhood of RedStart.

From this starting place, the procession will, like the river, move through the city—a city that has become an amalgam of destruction and construction—with the half destroyed cathedral as its destination.

On the way to the cathedral, members of the community procession will bring to life hybrid spaces, engaging with the different environments.

In this, lines between performers and audiences will be broken through, as we should all be active participants in the making of our city and need to take new ownership of our place.

Students from the School of

Landscape Architecture at Lincoln University will provide installations that engage with the river.

At the Worcester Bridge, students of the Interior and Spatial Design Studio at the University of Technology in Sydney inhabit an installation that provides a context to a performance by experimental Christchurch artists.

Responding to the current intersection at which we find ourselves, locally, globally, socially and economically, this performance serves as the turning point in the event.

Up Worcester Boulevard, on the way to the cathedral, the procession engages with environments that feature local businesses finding new ways to bring life to this city: The Darkroom, Smash Palace, Cassels

and Sons, Twisted Hop and Black Betty. As a destination, the cathedral provides the perfect symbol of where we are as a city.

It presents the big question mark that is hanging over us in terms of our identity. So it is fitting that we end there, not with a sense of returning, or with the idea of completely starting again but with a desire to seek out a new hybrid identity that acknowledges where it is that we live.

Artists of Ngāi Tahu will call the procession into the heart of the city, with a marae-inspired arrangement that will see the players of the CSD responding to the karanga of the tangata whenua.

The procession then dissolves into a night market created by Lost and Found. The market is designed to provide human connection rather than the corporate abstraction of internet banking that we have become used to. This kind of interaction has been at the heart of the collaborative process that will see this city within a city come to life.

People like Grant Close of Placemakers Riccarton, Allan Stephenson of Phillips and Kambrey Jupp and Lauren McKenzie of McConnell Dowell have not only come on board as sponsors but as creative collaborators.

It is this kind of exchange between business, architecture, design and performance that provides scope and possibility for the future of the city.

Now it is time to search in the heart of the city for what we need to make this place alive again.

George Parker is project coordinator of *Canterbury Tales for Free Theatre Christchurch* and the *Festival of Transitional Architecture (Festa)*. The *Canterbury Carnival* takes place from 6pm on October 26 to 27, this weekend. The *Canterbury Tales* procession starts at 8.30pm. Admission is free. canterburytales.org.nz

# Old ways in Maoridom more open to challenge

Winston Peters did not exist, Pakeha New Zealand would have to invent him.

Very few politicians are willing to risk the opinion that which inevitably accompanies serious criticism of things Maori. But as a Maori himself, Peters enjoys a sort of immunity from "sickly white liberal" prosecution. It's as well that he does. Otherwise, holding Maori individuals and institutions to account for the expenditure of public funds would be even more difficult than it is.

And Peters' willingness to point the finger at his own people's shortcomings would appear to be catching. Over the past month we have witnessed two important examples of Maori journalists exposing what they claim to be serious problems with the management of public money by Maori trusts.



Chris Trotter

The first of these exposes involved accusations of mismanagement against senior figures within the kohanga reo movement.

It was Maori Television's Mihingarangi Forbes who broke the story. In an item for the *Natve Affairs* programme, entitled *Feathering the Nest*, Forbes drew attention to unusual patterns of credit card expenditure and a number of large unreciprocated donations.

Considerable effort was devoted to thwarting the *Natve Affairs* investigation—not least an

unsuccessful attempt to secure a court injunction against the programme's broadcast.

As a result of *Natve Affairs'* courageous journalism, the ministers of Education and Maori Affairs have jointly demanded a full investigation of the alleged irregularities.

The second example involved what might be called a "whistle-blowing" broadcast alleging serious instances of mismanagement at Tokoroa's Maori radio station, Raukawa FM.

In an extraordinary sequence of events, the station manager, Rosina Hauiti, last month took to the airwaves with a long list of allegations against the station's trustees. When the latter attempted to evict her from the building, Hauiti barricaded herself against all-comers. Though charges and counter-charges continue to fly, Hauiti's

broadcast, like Forbes', has produced the desired outcome—an official investigation.

The Manganui Paho, the station's principal funder (to the tune of \$84,100 a year) has asked the accounting firm Deloitte to investigate Hauiti's allegations as part of their scheduled review of the trust board's activities.

Speaking at the NZ First Party's annual conference in Christchurch on Saturday, the NZ First leader recalled the late 1980s and early 90s when many businesses engaged in "the greatest deceit" until dragged into line by improved systems of accountability.

Peters said Maoridom had called for transparency. In the past, he now fended off legitimate investigation with accusations of "Maori hushing".

He claimed that "certain ones have gone back to that behaviour, where to challenge them was to

challenge their mana, their breeding, any concocted excuse to get out of their responsibility to their own people and the taxpayer.

It means that honest Maori, who are the great bulk of Maori, are imaged in the worst possible light, and it cheats them of a certain future.

This new found willingness to hold itself to account signals that a profound sociological shift is underway in Maoridom.

Max Weber, the 19th-century "father" of modern sociology, would have immediately recognised the processes at work. As Maori capitalism develops (most obviously in the form of the large iwi-based corporation) it is producing scores of tertiary-educated, highly skilled young graduates.

Increasingly, these young Maori professionals are unwilling to tolerate either the business

inefficiencies generated by traditional practices, or the injustices so often associated with charismatic leadership.

They are past making excuses for, or (even worse) covering up the behaviour of those who will not budge from the old ways.

Weber, himself, described the process as a progression from the pre-modern to the modern. The fate of our times is characterised by rationalisation and intellectualisation and, above all, by the "disenchantment of the world."

The Maori Party's co-leader, Tariana Turia, is emblematic of Maori who still dwell in the "enchanted" realms of Maoridom. Early on in her political career she spoke openly about having a constant invisible companion: A spirit guardian who protected her from harm and guided her through important decisions.

Suffice to say this is not the sort of leadership style, or decision-making process, the big iwi corporates' young professionals are being taught at the Auckland Business School.

Nor are they encouraged to regard the keeping of accurate records and being able to account for all items of expenditure as responsibilities only for lesser breeds. When dealing with shareholders—or taxpayers—neither inherited rank nor charismatic power is entitled to a free pass.

The transition from tribal traditionalism to the rational bureaucratic norms of secular society is one most Pakeha New Zealanders have already undertaken. It was not an easy or comfortable journey. Nor will it be for Maori. Transparency and disenchantment do not dwell in the same house.

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