

LYRICAL LIBRARY ON WAIHEKE ISLAND

Waiheke Library picks up top prize at the NZ Wood Resene Timber Design Awards

Designed with thoughtfulness for its surrounding environment, its users and community, the new library on Auckland's Waiheke Island received the Commercial Architectural Excellence Award, and the prestigious Resene Overall Supreme Award, at the NZ Wood Resene Timber Design Awards 2015. Designed by architect Phillip Howard and his team at Pacific Environments, it has been described as "a sensitive and clever structure full of wit and surprise" by Paul White (Director of Design, Instinct Furniture). Howard contributes the success of the building to the craftsmanship and passion from the team involved – the hand carved artwork, the selection of timbers and care during construction, which will enrich this community Library for years to come.

Judges were impressed with the Library, describing it as "a lyrical response to the idea of a timber library building, and a robust yet visually appealing statement...The variety of timber applications...became apparent as you delve into the details of this building...This is clear and subtle architecture enjoyable at many levels, from the spatial manipulation of the timber roof trusses, to the symbolism of the inclined roof support columns, fine detailing and craft work in the exterior timber screen."

At the heart of the library's design vocabulary is the suggestion of a canopy of pohutukawa, the evergreen tree seen growing throughout coastal New Zealand, expressed with ceiling panels with an intricate cut-away leaf pattern. Extending towards the canopy are tree trunks supporting an engineered timber truss system, which form the large roof canopy. Plywood panels perforated with the intricate leaf pattern become ceiling features, back lit with natural light, further enticing the readers with the feeling of reading under the trees.

Timber finishes are the soul of this building, brought to life with a façade of carved, sculptured battens that appear to move in the changing light. This rich textural element wraps around into the interior spaces, blurring the barrier between indoors and outdoors. Conceptually the timber battens are a reference to the hardcovers of books, with whitewashed vertical grooved plywood panels as a contrasting element bringing a reference to the pages of books.

Each batten is cut with a mirrored opposite to eliminate wastage from Vitex timber, selectively harvested by a small community village in the Soloman Islands. "Timber is a renewable resource providing whole-of-life credibility. There are now so many exciting ways its being used – its visually inspiring and can be incredibly strong and flexible at the same time" says Debbie Fergie, organizer of the NZ Wood Resene Timber Awards.

Beautifully hand carved into these battens is a tribute to Waiheke, *Forty-Nine Letters*, 'lots of rain, lots of sun, lots of wind, lots of day, lots of night'. "Extensive use of sculptured timber battens bathed in natural light gives the illusion of movement within the building, and close collaboration with resident artist Kazu Nakagawa ensured it as much 'art' and community resource" judges said.

Externally the Library, situated in a well-known arts precinct with theatre, gallery, cinema and restaurant, has helped to create a bustling community hub with its grassed courtyard and Amphitheatre. This invites the reader to venture out from under the Library's pohutukawa canopy and into the sunshine by day, and by night in the summer months welcomes viewers with the cinema to enjoy a film outside.



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ABOUT PACIFIC ENVIRONMENTS

Pacific Environments NZ Ltd is a bespoke architecture studio based in Auckland, NZ. They have over 50 years experience in the design of buildings for the places we live, work, learn and play. Be it an education facility, community centre, sport facility, retirement village, residential housing, or commercial fit-out. By introducing fresh ideas and developing innovative solutions to meet client requirements, they find their work challenging, interesting and enjoyable.

Initially formed in the 1960's after winning a design competition for the Otago University Library, the company has strengthened and evolved. Formerly Price Adams Dodd Architects, Dodd Paterson + Bukowski Rehm, and ADP Architects, after a merger with Peter Eising, former founding Director of Architects Patterson in 2006, the company became Pacific Environments NZ Ltd.

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AWARD WINNING ARCHITECTURAL FIRM RECEIVES ANOTHER ROUND OF ACCOLADES

Local architectural firm Pacific Environments NZ Ltd, together with Waiheke Island Library, are the honoured recipients of the Commercial Architectural Excellence Award and the Resene Overall Supreme Award, at the recent NZ Wood Resene Timber Design Awards.

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These accolades are proudly received by the team at Pacific Environments, who began winning awards for their Library designs, in particular for their Environmentally Sustainable Design features, more than thirty years ago.

Back in the early 1980s they led the charge in Environmentally Sustainable Design initiatives with the East Coast Bays Library picking up awards both in 1983 (Highly Commended AHI Environmental Award and the NZIA Auckland Branch Award) and in 1984 (NZIA National Award, and a Bronze Medal for Excellence in Architectural Design and Planning from RAIA and Australian Library Council). Following this, the design of the Massey Library and Leisure Centre took out more design awards in 2002 with the Enhancing the Built Environment Award, Ernst and Young Special Purposes Property Award, Energywise Commercial Building Award finalist, EECA Highly Commended Award and the New Zealand Premier Creative Spaces Award.

Environmentally Sustainable Design continues, in some form, throughout all Pacific Environment's projects, and Waiheke Island Library is no different. Director Phillip Howard and Associate Dr. Hugh Byrd are currently gathering data on the energy operation of the library, which has recently had photovoltaics installed on the roof designed to provide all energy requirements to operate the Library during the summer months. Other holistic integrated sustainable design features of the Library focus on simple, yet effective, principles; the orientation of the library was considered to provide maximum sunlight into the space during winter, with carefully proportioned roof overhangs to provide shade in summer, the height and depth of the Library has also been optimized to provide the best possible natural daylight and ventilation, rain water is collected from the roof and stored in large underground reservoirs for firefighting, all windows are double glazed, and roofs and walls are highly insulated.

The Library not only has sustainable design elements, but a likeness can be drawn to the Yellow Treehouse (Pacific Environments designed in 2008), which also picked up awards for its innovative use of timber and art form. Waiheke Library has continued a strong “craft” and natural material element, sourcing materials from local suppliers, and treating the materials with a careful craftsman's eye. The vertical silhouettes of the wood features that are iconic for both the Treehouse and the Library, were further explored on the Library by local Waiheke artist Kazu Nakagawa spending six months hand carving his *Forty Nine Letters*, “lots of rain, lots of sun, lots of wind, lots of day, lots of night”, transforming the façade of the Library into a tribute to the island and an artwork for the community. “Extensive use of sculptured timber battens bathed in natural light gives the illusion of movement within the building” said the judges of the NZ Wood Resene Timber Design Awards.

These wooden battens are carved from Vitex timber, each selectively harvested by small community villages in the Solomon Islands. Each batten has a mirrored opposite –designed to eliminate wastage.

Designed with empathy to its surrounding environment, its users and the community, the Waiheke Library is already a beloved feature on the island, described as “a sensitive and clever structure full of wit and surprise” by Paul White (Director of Design, Instinct Furniture).



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