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International working party for
documentation and conservation

of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

New International Selection

Full Documentation Fiche 2003

for office use only

composed by national/regional working party of:

0. Picture of building/ group of buildings/ urban scheme/ landscape/ garden



depicted item: International House, Grafton, Auckland, New Zealand.

source: Photograph by Lauren Speer.

date: January 13, 2016.

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1. Identity of building/ group of buildings/ group of buildings/ landscape/ garden

1.1 Data for identification

current name: Whitaker Hall

former/original/variant name: International House

number(s) and name(s) of street(s): 27 Whitaker Place, Grafton

town: Auckland

province/state: Auckland

post code: 1010

legal description:

LOTS 3-7 DP 44327 ALLOT 20 SEC 15 AUCKLAND SUBS

Certificate of title number: CT-1845/47

country: New Zealand

national topographical grid reference: -

current typology: University of Auckland student hall of residence

former/original/variant typology: University of Auckland student hall of residence

comments on typology: International House was purpose-built as a student hall of residence for the University of Auckland and continues to serve this purpose.

1.2 Status of protection

protected by: International House is not scheduled by Auckland Council in either the operative Auckland City District Plan – Central Area Section 2005, or the Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan 2013. The building is also not listed by Heritage New Zealand.

grade: n/a

date: n/a

valid for: n/a

remarks: n/a

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1.3 Visually or functionally related building(s)/site(s)

name(s) of surrounding area/building(s): Empire and Columbia student accommodation towers, Cintra Flats (designed by Horace Massey in 1936, historic place Category 2 by Heritage New Zealand), NMLA Building (“JASMaD office building” at 2 Whitaker Place, 1976), the University of Auckland Elam School of Fine Arts, University Hall (designed by Warren & Mahoney, 2012), State Highway 1 & 16 motorway on and off ramps, Grafton Gully cycleway, Grafton Cemetery (historic place Category 1 by Heritage New Zealand), Grafton Bridge (constructed 1907-1910, historic place Category 1 by Heritage New Zealand).

visual relations: International House comprises several residential L-shaped blocks that step down the steep slope of Grafton Gully “arranged to incorporate the surrounding native bush and form a series of courtyards”.¹ Today flanked by towering apartment and student accommodation blocks on its western and northern sides, International House’s south-east facing façades overlook the adjacent motorway and have views over Grafton Gully towards the Auckland Hospital, Parnell and the Waitemata Harbour. In this way, International House is clearly visible from vantage points on the opposite side of the gully and by motorway users.

functional relations: Located a short distance from the University of Auckland’s City and Grafton campuses as well as AUT’s City campus, the buildings of Whitaker Place are predominantly for student accommodation and apartment living. Collectively there are five University of Auckland halls of residence; two of these are located along Whitaker Place, namely, International House/Whitaker Hall and University Hall (2012).

2. History of building(s) etc.

2.1 Chronology

Note if the dates are exactly known (e) or approximately estimated = circa (c) or (±)

commission or competition date: 1965 (c)

design period(s): design stage: early 1965 (c)

contract drawings: May – August 1965 (e)

consent drawings approved by city engineer’s office: 4 November 1966 (e)

start of site work: late 1966 or early 1967 (c)

completion/inauguration: completed in August 1968 (e)

¹ Andrew Barrie and Julia Gatley, “Itinerary No. 11: JASMaD in Auckland”, *Block: The Newsletter of the Auckland Branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects*, 2008. Accessed January 12, 2016, <http://www.architecture-archive.auckland.ac.nz/docs/block-digital/2008-02BlockDigital-JASMaDGuide.pdf>

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2.2 Summary of development

commission brief: In c.1965, the University of Auckland commissioned JASMaD to design student accommodation at 21-27 Whitaker Place, Grafton. This project came at a time when the University was undertaking a large-scale building programme, in response to the rapidly increasing student enrolments that came with post-World War II expansion.² The new hall of residence was to accommodate 155 students, a warden, 3 sub-wardens, and a manageress.³ The project was partly funded by the Colombo Plan, a New Zealand Asian aid fund. This funding required 30 percent of students housed to be Asian.⁴

design brief: Integral to the design concept of International House by architects JASMaD was the relationship of the building to the steep sloping site and its native bush surrounds in Grafton Gully. The buildings were designed to be integrated amongst the existing and mature bush located on the site. "At the time the initial sketch plans were prepared the architects were confidently led to believe that the motorway would not abut the site, but that a bank of large trees would remain on the eastern boundary and preserve some of the character of the gully."⁵ However, the motorway development was constructed immediately adjacent to the site. This impacted upon the initial design concept for the landscaping around International House.

building/construction: L-shaped blocks of three-four storeys, concrete retaining walls, brick structural walls forming the internal partition walls as well the external cladding, prestressed concrete flooring planks, timber roof structure with corrugated iron roofing material (which recently replaced the original asbestos cement roofing).

completed situation: International House was completed in August 1968.

original situation or character of site: The Grafton Gully site was extensively covered with native trees and bush prior to the construction of International House.

2.3 Relevant persons/organisations

original owner(s)/patron(s): University of Auckland

architect(s): Ivan Mercep (architect, JASMaD)

landscape/garden designer(s): JASMaD

other designer(s): -

² The University of Auckland, *Our History*, Accessed January 18, 2016,

<https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/the-university/university-history/people/uoa-our-history.html>

³ "Silver Medal: International House, Auckland" in "JASMaD", File J39, Sheppard Collection, University of Auckland, Architecture and Planning Library.

⁴ Stephen Stratford, ed., *JASMAX*, (Auckland: New Zealand Architectural Publications Trust, 2007), p.274.

⁵ "Silver Medal: International House, Auckland".

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consulting engineer(s): MacDonald Barnett Partners

building contractor(s): Lawson Builders ⁶

Ivan Mercep (1930 – 2014) was born in Taumaranui, New Zealand. He graduated from the University of Auckland School of Architecture in 1954 and then spent six years travelling and working overseas. This international experience exposed Mercep to both contemporary and historic architecture and he was particularly influenced by public squares and places which could “realise their importance as generators of vitality and richness in the lives of their citizens and visitors”.⁷ Mercep was also largely influenced by his “viewing of early Selwyn churches and some of Alvar Aalto’s works [which] led him to recognise that human scale could be achieved, even in large spaces”.⁸ These design influences are clearly explored throughout his works and his architecture is often described as humanist.⁹

Mercep returned to New Zealand in the early 1960s and worked for the firm of Kingston, Reynolds, Thom & Allardice (KRTA). With Ian Reynolds he worked on several Victoria University of Wellington projects. During this time, he also joined the NZIA Auckland planning group where he worked on Auckland’s CBD development and the proposed motorway location. It was in this planning group that he worked alongside Steve Jelichich, Graham Smith and Rodney Davies, later to join together and found JASMaD in April 1963, together with John Austin; Mercep is the “M” in JASMaD.¹⁰ International House for the University of Auckland was Mercep’s first major building design following JASMaD’s formation. As a director of JASMaD, Mercep continued to develop his architectural body of work. The firm became JASMAX in 1989 and is New Zealand’s largest architectural practice today.

Mercep’s key architectural works include a collection of University of Auckland buildings – International House (1968), the Recreational Centre (1977), the Arts & Commerce Building (1984), Maori Studies and Marae (1988), and the Fale Pasifika (2004). Other key works include the Ford Motor Company in Manukau (1967), Birkenhead Trust Hotel (1970), Mother of Perpetual Help Catholic Church in Glendowie (1972), Terrace Houses Marine Parade (1974), Potters Wheel Pub in New Lynn (1975), Rarotongan Hotel in the Cook Islands (1975), JASMaD office building at 2 Whitaker Place (1976), Hoani Waititi Marae in West Auckland (1980), Samoa House on Karangahape Rd (1980), Waikato Museum of Art and History (1982), Te Papa Museum of New Zealand (1998), Mangere Pool and Leisure Centre (2001), and Te Tuhi – the Mark Art Gallery and Community Centre in Manukau (2001).

⁶ Stephen Stratford, ed., *JASMAX*, (Auckland: New Zealand Architectural Publications Trust, 2007), p.319.

⁷ Stratford, *JASMAX*, p. 303.

⁸ “Vale: Ivan Mercep”, *Architecture Now*, Accessed January 12, 2015,

<http://architecturenow.co.nz/articles/vale-ivan-mercep/>

⁹ “Vale: Ian Mercep”.

¹⁰ Stratford, *JASMAX*, p. 303.

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For his significant contribution and service to New Zealand architecture for more than 50 years, Ivan Mercep was awarded a New Zealand Institute of Architects' Gold Medal in 2008.¹¹ In recognition of his enduring architectural career, "Mercep was made an Officer of the Order of New Zealand in 1997; and in 2007 he received a Living Legend award from the Auckland City Council. In 2004 Auckland's Metro Magazine nominated him as Aucklander of the Year".¹²

2.4 Other persons or events associated with the building(s)/site

name(s): -

association: -

event(s): -

period: -

2.5 Summary of important changes after completion

type of change: renovation

date(s): November 2014 – February 2015.

circumstances/ reasons for change: This renovation was required to upgrade International House and its building facilities.

effects of changes: The works involved in this renovation included the repair and repainting of all external windows and doors with the application of new air-seals and all joinery cleaned; and the replacement of the original asbestos cement roofing material (Super 6) with a new corrugated iron roofing material (similar to the original roofing material profile), as well as new spouting.¹³

persons/organisations involved: Salmond Reed Architects (project architects), APS Ltd (contractors), and the University of Auckland Property Services.

¹¹ Chris Barton, "Enduring Legacy Award", *New Zealand Herald*, Accessed January 12, 2015, http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10521099

¹² "Vale: Ivan Mercep", *Architecture Now*, Accessed January 12, 2015, <http://architecturenow.co.nz/articles/vale-ivan-mercep/>

¹³ Salmond Reed Architects, *University of Auckland International House: Window Condition Assessment*, Accessed January 18, 2016, http://salmondreed.co.nz/uoa_internationalhouse/

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3. Description of building(s) etc.

3.1 Site/building character

The site's steep slope and access constraints greatly influenced the design, resulting in a stepped development of several blocks. The integration of the gully's native forest was also an integral part of this concept. This project was site specific and regionalist: "recognising the limitations of earlier modern movement paradigms, [New Zealand] architects of the 1960s re-energised modern architecture by being more responsive to social and physical contexts and more concerned with generating regional variations".¹⁴ The regionalist approach was strongly influenced by the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, particularly his Saynatsalo Town Hall, and in the design of International House includes the breaking down of the overall mass into smaller component parts, courtyards, strong horizontal forms and the use of fair-faced brick.¹⁵

International House consists of L-shaped accommodation blocks which frame the central courtyards. The orientation of the student accommodation around the courtyards is an example of the Oxbridge college model derived from "the cloistered courtyard, with its ability to create intimate social cohesion".¹⁶ The stepping courtyards utilise the change in levels across the site and the walls, banks and planting were designed to extend social outdoor spaces and to be used for student activities.¹⁷

Comprising six accommodation blocks, each at three or four storeys in height, and a central dining hall/facility block, the building is joined by common stairways, a central overbridge and social areas located in the corners of each L block. The glass enclosed overbridge elevated above the carpark provides weather-protected access for students to the central block from accommodation blocks G and F.

There is a clear hierarchy from the main point of arrival off Whitaker Place, to the communal social areas (including the dining hall/facility block and the open courtyards), the semi-private access corridors and social areas on each floor (consisting of a communal lounge and kitchenette), and then the privacy of each bedroom. This hierarchy in spaces avoids an institutional feeling and provides a sense of the domestic.¹⁸

Grounding the buildings into the steep site are several concrete retaining walls. Reinforced brick has been used to form the structural walls of the buildings whilst also serving "as partitions

¹⁴ Errol Haarhoff, "International House, University of Auckland", in Julia Gatley (ed.), *Long Live the Modern: New Zealand's New Architecture, 1904-1984* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008), p.180.

¹⁵ Stratford, *JASMAX*, p. 16.

¹⁶ Haarhoff, "International House, University of Auckland", p.180.

¹⁷ Haarhoff, "International House, University of Auckland", p.180.

¹⁸ Haarhoff, "International House, University of Auckland", p.180, and Stratford, *JASMAX*, p.303.

between the bedrooms ensuring reasonable sound attenuation”.¹⁹ Other construction materials include precast concrete for the stairs and prestressed concrete Stahlton flooring planks, a timber roof structure originally clad with Super 6 and now re-clad with corrugated iron roofing, timber window frames and doors, and mild steel balustrades.

International House employs simple rectilinear forms with mono-pitch roofs for each block. Each block has similar rhythmic and symmetrical horizontal bands of windows on each of their main long elevations with minimal ornamentation. The short elevations of each block are solid brick walls with doors inserted to provide access to the external stairwell attached to these walls, allowing access from each floor in the block to the courtyards below.

The courtyards have a hard concrete finish with several wooden table and chairs for students to use. In addition to the courtyards, a multi-purpose outdoor turf/court has been included on the lowest platform below all the blocks amongst the trees. An internal wooden gym/court has also been included at the bottom of Block A (the accommodation block closest to the motorway).

The hall comprises 152 individual rooms, 6 twin-share rooms and 4 twin-share deluxe rooms thereby providing accommodation for 170 students. Each room includes a built-in wooden desk, book case, and wardrobe as well as an unfixed single bed. The interior finishes of each room include carpeted floor, unpainted brick partition walls, and plastered ceilings.²⁰ Rooms located on the top floor of each block have a sloping ceiling with exposed timber joists and rafters, and wooden slat ceiling linings between. Each accommodation block has a central hallway with rooms located on either side which ensures each room receives good daylighting and natural ventilation.

3.2 Current use

of whole building/site: The building has maintained its original use as an Auckland University hall of residence for students.

of principal components (*if applicable*): -

comments: -

3.3 Present (physical) condition

of whole building/site: Overall, the building appears in good condition, reflecting its recent renovation completed in 2014-2015. The building has been adequately maintained and continues to fulfil its prescribed function as a hall of residence for the University of Auckland.

of principal components (*if applicable*): -

of other elements (*if applicable*): -

¹⁹ “International House Auckland University”, *Home & Building*, September 1, 1970, p. 45.

²⁰ The University of Auckland, *Whitaker Hall*, Accessed January 13, 2016,

<http://www.accommodation.auckland.ac.nz/en/our-halls-of-residence/int-house.html>

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of surrounding area (*if applicable*): -

comments: -

3.4 Note(s) on context, indicating potential developments

Indicate, if known, potential developments relevant for the conservation/threats of the building/site

The only known threat to the complex is the University of Auckland's desire to intensify the provision of student housing around the lower end of Whitaker Place.

4. Evaluation

Give the scientific reasons for selection for DOCOMOMO documentation

Intrinsic value

4.1 technical evaluation:

Consistent with the goals of regional modernism, this building demonstrates enthusiasm for the employment of locally available materials by New Zealand architects during the 1960s, discussed further in 4.3 below. Materials were selected for their texture and colour, and used in their natural state rather than painted or covered with other claddings or linings.

4.2. social evaluation:

International House has operated as a University of Auckland hall of residence for over 45 years providing the core components to its students' social, recreational and personal lives.

4.3. cultural and aesthetic evaluation:

In the 1950s and 1960s, many New Zealand architects reacted against the slick, white aesthetic of international modernism and sought instead a regionalist variation on it, an architecture that would be site specific and respond to local precedents, materials, culture and context. In the 1960s and 1970s, JASMaD were keen practitioners of regional modernism. In the *JASMAX* book of 2007, the approach is even described as "JASMaD vernacular",²¹ and architect Ivan Mercep is recognised as its author. Mercep was influenced by Alvar Aalto's works in the 1940s and 1950s, particularly the Saynatsalo Town Hall.

While regional modernism is often associated with domestic architecture, International House is an excellent example of it at a larger scale and within the institutional realm. At this scale, something of the domestic was sought, even within the building's larger spaces, and thus the term "humanist" is also appropriate. Aalto's influence is apparent in the design, structure and detailing of International House.

²¹ Stratford, *JASMAX*.

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JASMaD was an important architectural firm in New Zealand from the 1960s to the 1980s, contributing substantially to New Zealand's architectural history through their design of many commercial, cultural and institutional buildings. JASMaD produced several other projects for the University of Auckland including Student Housing in Freeman's Bay (1976), the Recreation Centre (1977), the Arts & Commerce Building (1984), and the refurbishment of the Old Arts Building (1987). The practice amalgamated with Bossley Cheshire and Gibbs Harris Architects in 1989 to form JASMAX.

Comparative significance

4.4 canonical status (local, national, international)

International House is an excellent example of New Zealand's regional modernism of the 1960s, at the institutional scale. Its form, scale and materiality are specific to the site and the brief. An institutional feeling is avoided, due to the use of domestically-scaled spaces and elements. There are no other halls of residences in New Zealand that use the same materials, form or scale as International House. The building is comparable, however, with College House in Christchurch (1964-70), which was built for the University of Canterbury to the design of Warren and Mahoney. College House follows the Oxbridge model of residential college planning and is influenced by British Modernism, particularly the New Brutalist movement.

The building was recognised for its architectural quality at the time of its completion, earning a New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA) Auckland Bronze Medal in 1970,²² and a national-level NZIA Silver Medal in 1971. Demonstrating enduring recognition, it earned an NZIA 25 Year Award in 1996. It is also included in *Long Live the Modern: New Zealand's New Architecture, 1904-1984*, a book developed under the auspices of DOCOMOMO New Zealand, identifying 180 of New Zealand's best and most important extant modern buildings, sites and neighbourhoods. It is considered to be a strong candidate for future Heritage New Zealand listing and local authority scheduling as a heritage building.

4.5 historic and reference values:

International House was built by the University of Auckland which was established in 1883 as Auckland University College. International House was designed by JASMaD in 1965 to provide student accommodation for the University's rapidly increasing student roll. This building was part of a large-scale building programme, undertaken by the university in response to a period of post-war expansion (1950s-1970s).²³ This is the only student hall of residence designed by JASMaD.

²² "International House Auckland University", *Home & Building*, September 1, 1970, pp 44-45.

²³ The University of Auckland, *Our History*.

5. Documentation

5.1 archives/written records/correspondence etc. (state location/ address):

Auckland Council Archives, 44-46 Lorne Street, Auckland 1010.

“JASMaD”. File J39. Sheppard Collection, University of Auckland, Architecture and Planning Library.

5.2 principal publications (in chronological order):

“International House Auckland University”. *Home & Building*. September 1, 1970. pp. 44-45.

“NZIA Silver Medal Award”. *Home & Building*. May 1971. p.28.

“25 Year: University of Auckland International House, JASMaD Architects”. *Architecture New Zealand*. May-Jun 1996. pp. 26-27.

Errol Haarhoff. “International House: University of Auckland”. *Guide to the Architecture of Central Auckland*. Auckland: Balasoglou Books, 2003. p. 65.

Andrew Barrie and Julia Gatley, “Itinerary No. 11: JASMaD in Auckland”, *Block: The Newsletter of the Auckland Branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects*, 2008. Accessed January 12, 2016, <http://www.architecture-archive.auckland.ac.nz/docs/block-digital/2008-02BlockDigital-JASMaDGuide.pdf>

Stephen Stratford and New Zealand Architectural Publications Trust. *Jasmax*. A4 New Zealand Architects Monograph Series. Auckland: New Zealand Architectural Publications Trust, 2007.

Errol Haarhoff. “International House, University of Auckland”. In Julia Gatley (ed.), *Long Live the Modern: New Zealand’s New Architecture, 1904-1984*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008. p.181.

“Vale: Ivan Mercep”. *Architecture Now*. Accessed January 12, 2016. <http://architecturenow.co.nz/articles/vale-ivan-mercep/>

Chris Barton. “Enduring Legacy Award”. *New Zealand Herald*. Accessed January 12, 2016. http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10521099

Jasmax. “International House”. *Jasmax*. Accessed January 13, 2016. <http://www.jasmax.com/work/international-house/>

The University of Auckland. “In memoriam – Ivan Mercep (1930 – 2014)”. *Creative Arts and Industries*. Accessed January 13, 2016, <http://www.creative.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/news/news-2014/2014/06/ivan-mercep--1930---2014-.html>

The University of Auckland. *Whitaker Hall*. Accessed January 13, 2016. <http://www.accommodation.auckland.ac.nz/en/our-halls-of-residence/int-house.html>

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New Zealand Institute of Architects Incorporated. *Gold Medalists: Ivan Mercep ONZM*. Accessed January 14, 2016. <https://www.nzia.co.nz/awards/nzia-gold-medal/2008.aspx?activeYear=2008>

The University of Auckland. *Our History*. Accessed January 18, 2016. <https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/the-university/university-history/people/uoa-our-history.html>

Salmond Reed Architects. *University of Auckland International House: Window Condition Assessment*. Accessed January 18, 2016. http://salmondreed.co.nz/uoa_internationalhouse/

5.3 visual material (state location/ address)

original visual records/drawings/photographs/others:

Original construction drawings: "21-27 Whitaker Place, Auckland University. International House". File 465264. Auckland Council Archives, Auckland.

Original photographs of the construction of International House available online on the University of Auckland's library database under 'International House'.

recent photographs and survey drawings:



depicted item: International House, entrance off Whitaker Place with central dining/facility block in left of mid ground.

source: Photograph by Lauren Speer.

date: January 13, 2016.

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film/video/other sources:

Accommodation UoA. "Whitaker Hall – residence tour". Accessed January 11, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1w341uEDKmg>

5.4 list documents included in supplementary dossier

n/a

6. Fiche report

name of reporter: Lauren Speer, C/- Julia Gatley

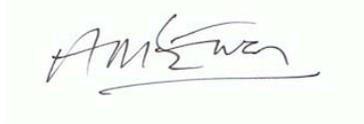
address: School of Architecture & Planning, University of Auckland

e-mail: julia.gatley@auckland.ac.nz

date of report: January 2016

examination by DOCOMOMO national/regional section

approval by wp co-ordinator/registers correspondent (name): Dr Ann McEwan



sign and date:

28 February 2016

examination by DOCOMOMO ISC/R

name of ISC member in charge of the evaluation:

comment(s):

sign and date:

ISC/R approval:

date:

wp/ref. no.:

NAI ref. no.:

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