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LIMITED VISIBILITY: Portraits of Women Architects

This paper considers the visibility of women architects across three New Zealand sites: the institutional architecture journal, the national architecture award system and a local website that allows for self-representation. The website, *Architecture + Women*, was set up in 2011 in anticipation of an exhibition of the work of New Zealand women architects planned for 2013 as an anniversary of an earlier event, “Constructive Agenda”, held in 1993. The website accumulates images of women in New Zealand who identify as architects. The paper considers the portrayal of women architects in each of the three sites, juxtaposing a sociological viewpoint with the biographical, seen as distinct yet overlapping modes of representation. Five portraits from the website are selected for detailed discussion as they reflect upon representations of femininity, colonial encounters, nature and the limits of the discipline—issues that are persistent for women architects in New Zealand.

Portraiture of architects has become prominent in the early twenty-first century even as popular media has exponentially increased the visibility of architecture as a profession.¹ In 2007, an exhibition, “‘Faces Behind the Façade’, A Black and White Photography Exhibition of Architects’ Portraits and Their Architecture”, was held at the headquarters of the NSW chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in Sydney.² In 2009, the National Portrait Gallery of Australia promoted a project, “Portraits + Architecture”,³ and, in 2011, the “Faces of British Architecture” exhibition was launched, depicting 45 portraits taken by photographer Timothy Soar.⁴ But it is an exhibition held in 2011 in Belgium which serves here as the ideal introduction to questions of gender in recent portraits of architects.

“Portraits Archi-Féminins, Twenty Women in the Heart of Architecture” was held to conclude a program of activities, “Architecture in the Feminine”, staged by the Fondation pour l’Architecture in Brussels. Photographers Gaël Turine and Loïc Delvaux depicted two architects and numerous other professionals from the “world of architecture”, including “a mosaic maker, a guildier, two restorers/curators of wall paintings, an art historian, a designer of stained glass windows, an architecture lecturer, a site engineer, a geometric expert, an officer for building permits, an architecture photographer, a researcher at IRPA/KIK (Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage), a model maker, two interior architects, a roofer, an editor and a guide, who are all female”.⁵

While the images of the women were in the form of photographic portraits, the advertisement for the event depicted a partial woman without a head. The part-woman consisted of a tip of long hair on a shoulder, a fastening of a

bib fronted overall, a puffed sleeve, one hand held against an elbow crease of the other part-arm. A gaping pocket appeared below a waistband. A segment of a woman represented “archi-feminins”, young, slim, long hair, in slightly childlike clothes, with no mouth and no legs. The pose is slightly defensive.

Set against a background of horizontal beams, a hint of construction, the part-woman is disturbing; the viewer wants to see her face and small flowers project out from the insecure fastening of her top. Codes of youth and femininity, clothes of childhood, set in a world once defined as masculine, the image might suggest the possibility of retaining femininity against the odds of conventional gender roles. However, the woman architect promised by the advertisement is very young, sightless and silent.

Images from the exhibition are memorable because of their gravity, composition and the use of clarity and blur.⁶ Each black-and-white photograph contains a woman centrally, in stillness and fixity. The photographs from the exhibition might be seen, like the poster, as doubtful negotiations on the borders of femininity.⁷ It is not clear which women are architects. Occupying the edges of androgyny, the images seem to signal both disjunctions between genders and emphatic assertions of gender: Denim with a necklace, a suit jacket with a see-through shirt, a singlet over womanly curves and muscles, flattened in the shadow cast on a white screen. The women look awkward in their poses, arms are crossed, a hand deliberately placed in a pocket: serious women held in an extreme clarity of focus while the backgrounds blur into interiorities.

Most of the named vocations that positioned these women in the “heart of architecture” are

to do with interiority, surface or the representation of architecture through words or images. The images tend to an untroubled abstraction that shifts attention away from individual particularities and towards familiar types—stories of a persistent location in a dichotomised gender structure that offers women architects perpetual anxiety. There is something in the sharp clarity of the images—the intrusive close observation of each feature—that seems to activate the “debasement and dehumanising connotations of submission to close, intense, prolonged and relentless, ‘mechanical’ scrutiny”.⁸

The *Architecture + Women* website

In contrast to the museum display of high definition black-and-white images originating on the other side of the world, a website has been set up to receive quotidian portraits, small snapshots, quick downloads of women architects with a New Zealand identification. The public website, *Architecture + Women*, was designed to allow for speedy self-representation and a consequent exposure of women architects and their work. The accumulating images on the site register something of the casual quality of the cropped portraits of women architects that decorated the bottom of pages 51–55 in the ground-breaking ANY publication, *Architecture and the Feminine: Mop Up Work*.⁹ Cut out and pasted onto the bottom of white pages are smiling, talking and drinking architects and theorists: Michelle Kaufmann, Ann Bergren, Durham Crout, Diana Agrest, Claire Robinson, Elizabeth Grosz, Karen Bermann, Lisa Quatrala, Amy Landesberg, George Hersey. A frieze of women that, unlike caryatids, do not serve to bear the weight of the text above, but rather their words float, as clouds of exchange, and the portraits seem to

construct a space for the conversation. The New Zealand website employs a portrait format and manipulations of that genre are evident on the site. Selected website portraits will be considered in detail as they speak to the complexities of gender played out in the architecture profession. The portraits, like mirrors, are understood, as H el ene Cixous suggests, as “the imperceptible events of appearances ... which are deposited on the surface of a face-figure”.¹⁰

The *Architecture + Women* website was set up in November 2011 in order to provide a database of women associated with architecture, whether working in New Zealand or elsewhere, or currently not working in the architectural field. Recent research has indicated a paucity of information on the whereabouts of architectural graduates and stories circulate about the trajectories of their employment. The website responds to the inclusion of data over time, visually recording both images of the architect and their work and changing statistics as different categories of engagement with architecture are registered. The purpose of the website is, in part, to address a perceived invisibility of those architecture graduates who do not take the conventional path of practice and registration. At the beginning of 2012, two months after going live, the *Architecture + Women* website had recorded 119 women in relation to their current work situations and their year of graduation.¹¹ The website indicates both professional affiliations and how women architects wish to be represented; the photographs may be taken by others, but they are selected by the architect or graduate.

These images are not understood as representations of the architects' lives to be read unproblematically. Rather, as Sidonie Smith and Julie Watson point out:

autobiographical acts are inescapably material and embodied. They cannot be understood as individualist acts of a sovereign subject, whole and entire unto itself. And the representation produced cannot be taken as a guarantee of a “true self”, authentic, coherent, and fixed. The autobiographical is a performative site of self-referentiality where the psychic formations of subjectivity and culturally coded identities intersect and “interface” one another.¹²

Website Portrait One

In her portrait on the website, *Architecture + Women*, architect Christina van Bohemen is positioned offset from the vertical centreline (the fraught first inscription that sullies a blank page) and her avoidance of the problem of symmetry signals architectural credentials.¹³ She looks out at the photographer and viewer, protected by the emphatic frame of her glasses,



Figure 1. Christina van Bohemen: NZ Registered Architect practising in Auckland. Director of Sills van Bohemen Architects. Website image <<http://www.architecturewomen.org.nz/member/christina47>>.

offering a slight smile, professional yet warm. A small inkling of reserve touches the image.

Parallel to her face is a vertical column/pilaster with a relief pattern, shadow lines creating corners and intersections, suggesting architectural plans. Christina’s face is aligned to the professional stalwarts of spatial notation and physical building. Patterns of block writing in the relief suggest signage and, across the surface of the pilaster, a series of slots of light disappears. Diminishing lines of light prevent legibility, but also suggest mechanisms of architecture—production, repetition, series.

Is Christina inside a building or on the edge of architecture? The spatial condition of the image is not easily interpreted: the surface texture of the pilaster suggests exteriority, while the reduced lighting levels evoke interiority (other images on the website utilise a similar space that is between interior and exterior). The series of vertical light bands, prison stripes, contain the space in a fringe.

In images of working women, the femininity quotient is always an issue.¹⁴ Christina’s portrait negotiates gender, depicting markers of femininity with red lipstick and an exposed/vulnerable throat, while her short hair and heavy glasses offer ambiguous signs of masculinity/professionalism. Her jewellery complicates an easy assignment of gender with its attention to detail and reference to joints and links. While portraiture might be seen as disciplining women to a constraining script of femininity, it has also been suggested that femininity is both performed as a surface and inescapably internalised in posture, gesture and language. In the portrait of Christina, femininity is both staged and complicated—there is a crafted sense of a strategic resistance to assigned gender and social roles in the image.

“These are Not People, These are Not Things”¹⁵

In her volume, *Difficult Subjects: Working Women and Visual Culture, Britain 1880–1914*, Kristina Huneault, while addressing a specific time and context, extends her analysis to a more general account of images of working women. Acknowledging the close connection between cultural representation and social formations, she points out, “Representations of women’s labour helped to shape the beliefs and expectations that informed the concrete actions of employers, legislators and workers alike”.¹⁶ To consider images of women architects requires that the specific context, social and visual cultures be considered even while the subtlety, indeterminacy and flexibility of discourse is acknowledged. Huneault concluded, “[T]here is no one easy narrative that will enable images such as these to make sense. The historical complexities that underlie specific combinations of works, viewers and contexts militate against a linear passage from repression to liberation”.¹⁷

Commissioned portraits have traditionally been employed to mark a lifetime of achievement and have the task of providing a likeness as well as a commentary on the sitter. More recently, it has been argued that the portrait attaches to those whose identity is insecure.¹⁸ In contrast, Cindy Sherman’s photographs of herself as a series of old masters subversively exploit conventional techniques of portraiture, as does the waning authority of the figurative and naturalistic. In relation to photographic portraiture, John Gage has pointed to its tentative location between “exemplary likeness and caricature”, acknowledging that “concepts of portrait likeness are complex and historically conditioned”.¹⁹

To ask for a portrait to be uploaded onto the website, in the light of all these complications, is

to suggest the possibility of an unstable appearance of collectivity, to recognise individual trajectories as shared, provisional conditions and to diminish the emphasis on singularity and separation. It is to connect person with production and to presume that the full life of an architect is engaged in her craft and career. Understood as fleeting and insecure accounts, each portrait is a design that places the architect, momentarily and repeatedly, in a spatial, material, social and temporal context.

Hélène Cixous wrote on the portraits of Roni Horn:

These are not people, these are not things: what Roni Horn has meditated on, followed, observed, hunted, sketched, drawn, grasped cut up, edited, cited, are the figures of her secret questions, the oracular faces to which Roni Horn turns and returns in every way the question that haunts her: “Who are you, Face, you who I am, whom I follow, you who look at me without seeing me, you whom I see without knowing whome, you in whom I look at myself, you who would not be without me, you whom I envelope, you who seduce me and into whom I do not enter, who are you, who is this being promised subjected to my gaze, to my objective, this being docile to my law, and who remains totally impenetrable for me? What is you? Who am I, you?”²⁰

As well as a slipping together of “who” and “me” (acknowledging the impossibility of subject–object separation), Cixous’ “whome” might also be a conjunction of who and home: “without knowing whome”, without knowing home, without home? Who is home? Is it possible to be at home? The portrait of whom as a form of housing? A portrait merged with

domesticating housing? Both “who” and “home” are understood in this context as impossible conditions—who-home, whome, links architecture to the act of portraiture. Are women at home in architecture in New Zealand?

Professional Representation

Around 50 per cent of recent architectural graduates in New Zealand are women, and yet the number of women registering as architects with the New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA) remains low. In his survey, *Practice and Gender in Architecture: A Survey of New Zealand Architecture Graduates 1987–2008*, Errol Haarhoff points out, “[I]n 1987, 3 out of 17 women graduates were registered (18 percent), compared to 25 out of 68 male graduates (37 percent).”²¹ Haarhoff asked where the non-registering architects went.

The NZIA has a provision for voluntary suspension of registration and Haarhoff’s research reveals that in 2009, a total of 117 registered architects (17 per cent of the total) were under voluntary suspension. He notes that “there are significant gender differences: the percentage of men was 12 percent compared to 28 percent for women. The reasons for suspension are not listed or known, but explanations might include more women than men take suspension for maternity and child rearing purposes. It is also possible that women may be more vulnerable to redundancies and unemployment during recessionary times.”²²

Following Haarhoff’s questions on the invisibility of non-registering graduate architects, and acknowledging that architectural recognition in New Zealand is dependent on publication, the levels of the representation of women architects in selected sites in the publication,

Architecture NZ, was examined. *Architecture NZ* is the official magazine of the NZIA and is published six times a year. Representing itself to potential advertisers, the journal is described on the publisher’s website as follows:

Recognising the architect’s central specifying role in the building process, *Architecture NZ* addresses architecture from the professional’s point of view. It provides national coverage of New Zealand’s best residential, commercial and institutional architecture—along with constructive criticism, architectural competitions and awards, and issues of professional practice. *Architecture NZ* delivers this unique mix of content in a visual format and style purpose-designed to suit its extremely discerning architectural audience.²³

Each issue has a variety of features, including interviews, book and exhibition reviews, letters to the editor, events and other matters relevant to the architecture industry as well as articles on recently completed architectural projects in New Zealand. It has exclusive coverage of the NZIA awards and the journal also publishes the NZIA directory of registered architects. Journal issues vary slightly in format; however, three areas have been relatively consistent over time and became the focus of the gender analysis. The areas are the Contributors’ page, featured projects and the NZIA New Zealand Architecture Awards. While the content generally attends to the local, at times, the journal has sought out New Zealand architects practising abroad.

Website Portrait Two

Rochelle Mahon is quietly central in her portrait. In her image, a man is seen looking

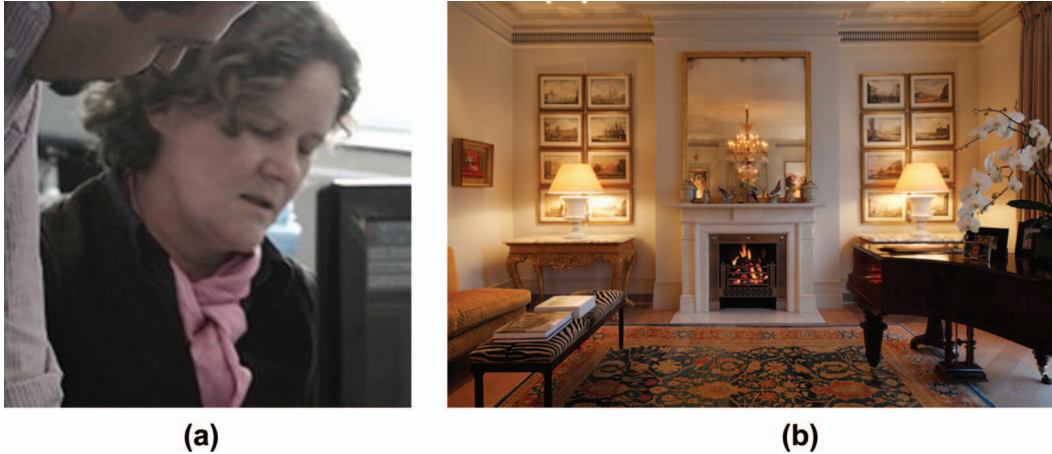


Figure 2. (a) Rochelle Mahon, Registered Architect, Managing Director, Studio Indigo, London. Website image <<http://www.architecturewomen.org.nz/member/rochelle151>>. (b) Rochelle Mahon project, house in Holland Park, 2011. Website image <<http://www.architecturewomen.org.nz/member/rochelle151>>.

over her shoulder, but the two do not have the appearance of being a couple. With a slight inclination of her head, she opens space between them; both are focused on a drawing or a piece of work. The image is all about work. Rochelle has selected an image of herself in relationship to a colleague and there is a sense of collaborative closeness in the proximity. Indifferent to the viewer, she is about to speak while her eyes look down.

The centrality of her face and the way in which his face operates as a decorative edge subvert the usual representation of gender. Her clothing is also ambiguous—her jacket is formal, a tailored suit, but it seems to have an abundance of black material, a slight excess of fabric. There is a twist of material around her throat, like a tie but not a tie, instead, a swathe of pink cloth with tucks and folds. It is a version of a tie, but connected also to the curl of her hair, coded feminine. The man's shirt is a subdued pink, an echo of her “tie” in this muted image. While the man slightly erases Rochelle's portrait (his nose in her ear), in his

deferential inclination, he also acknowledges her centrality.

The background of the portrait indicates an interior space with a high ceiling and heavy frames with a small hint of the Pacific Ocean in the blueness of a sunlit vase. Beside her portrait, Rochelle has posted an image of an interior of a house in Holland Park, London. Traditional and English, the room is organised around a lighted fire, framed by a mantelpiece with matching birds, figures and ceramic pots. A chandelier is reflected in the mirror over the fireplace. Classically detailed, the interior seems to be strictly symmetrical, but, parallel to a drooping orchid, diagonal timber floorboards suggest other organisational patterns at work.

The portrait and the project construct an architectural world distanced from New Zealand, a world that is possible only through an act of portraiture:

As Allan Sekula has argued in relationship to nineteenth-century photographic

practice, an awareness of the continuity between the respectful and the repressive archive of types of personae subjected to visual record is essential to a critical understanding of the portrayed self; “every proper portrait has in its lurking objectifying inverse of the files of the police”.²⁴

Behind the gentle portrait of Rochelle, rather than a police “mug shot”, is the implacable passport photograph that mediates access between her place of training and her place of practice. If London controlled the destiny of New Zealand’s economy in the nineteenth century, the very English room, with its ongoing acquisition of prospects (images of landscapes adorn the walls), is now structured by a woman from the colonies. Her presence, however, requires an authorisation, a passport photograph, which, in the image, might be echoed by the encircling trace of an authoritative man. In the mirror of the room is a small, reflected portrait of a woman, doubly framed, and the passport photograph that Rochelle needs to get to London suggests that there is always representational control. Access and control are attendant issues within institutions and their publications and this is also the case in *Architecture NZ*.

The *Architecture NZ* “Contributors” Page

The page titled “Contributors” in *Architecture NZ* lists the names of those who have contributed to the particular issue of the journal and includes architects, academics and book reviewers as well as photographers and cartoonists. The contributor’s name is given along with a brief description of their background, or main line of work, as an indication of their relationship to architecture—

commentator, critic, practising architect, academic, teacher or student. It also suggests how they came to architecture, whether through architectural qualification or through another interest such as art history, a general design education or writing as a journalist. In the journals from 2002 to 2011:

- 19% of the 1019 names printed in the contributors’ pages were identified as women.
- Just over half (51%) of the people listed as contributors had a background in architecture;²⁵ of this group, 15% were women.
- Approximately a third (30%) of those who contribute to the journal are practising architects, and of that group, 8% were women.
- Some women contributed to more than one issue of the magazine—18 individuals in all. Of those 18, four practise overseas.

The data indicates that women architects seldom write about architecture in *Architecture NZ*: over the last ten years, the number of women writing in this journal has not increased and remains at a low level. While the journal does both solicit and accept unsolicited articles, and individual editors have actively sought women writers, in the end, a whiff of systemic discrimination remains. The consequences for women having a faint voice in the only national journal of architecture could well be significant. The statistics on the inclusion of architectural projects in *Architecture NZ* may both contribute to, and result from, the relative absence of women contributors.

Website Portrait Three

Nothing other than a face. In Elizabeth Kerr’s background, the darkness tips away from



Figure 3. (a) Elizabeth Kerr, Built Environment Consultant/Writer/Photographer. Website image <<http://www.architecturewomen.org.nz/member/ejkerr137>>. (b) Photography—built heritage. Photo of Old National Bank, Princes Street, Dunedin. Website image <<http://www.architecturewomen.org.nz/member/ejkerr137>>.

neutrality. Cropped red hair allied to a paleness of skin, a southern complexion originating far from the Pacific. Nothing other than a single contour line separates the pale head from blackness; pixels normalise the subtle directions of the line that wanders down the face. The importance of such contrary lines in architecture is traversed in K. Michael Hays' discussion of Catherine Ingraham's take on linearity: "Such impracticalities of line as errant paths and wavy navigations can then be thought as traverses *within* architecture that infiltrate the clean, articulate, measurable space of orthogonal thought with something unwieldy, speechless, animal".²⁶ The digitally managed contour, within the architect and outside architecture, negotiates figure/ground distributions between self and not self, architect and not architect.

Constructing a diagonal in the portrait, the contour line reinforces an otherworldly quality in Elizabeth Kerr's portrait. The face has no immediately apparent context and, therefore, imaginary contexts flood in: it is a medieval

image, angelic, theatrical, from some remote time and place. This removal from the present is induced, in part, by the example of her work that sits next to the portrait: a photograph that is part of a photo-survey project, recording and assessing the Old National Bank, Princes Street, Dunedin, and depicting a detail of the façade. A detail in which volutes become eyes, a roundel shapes into a scream and a displaced keystone into an assertive nose; the golden stone picks up tints from Elizabeth's hair. The viewer encounters a hostile, overtly anthropomorphic architecture, which constructs Elizabeth Kerr as an anxious viewer; she looks askance at the architectural image that she has made.

Working on the edges of the discipline, in a zone exploited by commentaries shaped with images, writing and electronic media, Elizabeth is permitted a freedom apart from mainstream institutional control. If the "boys' club" and the "star system" have made problems for women,²⁷ the unpatrolled disciplinary borders still offer a productive, exploratory, and not

entirely unacknowledged, space. Elizabeth works at architecture with writing and photography and the public nature of her words has strengthened her connection to architecture. In 2010, she was the layperson on the judging panel for the NZIA 2010 Southern Architecture Awards.²⁸

Projects

Featured projects make up a significant part of *Architecture NZ*. They represent work promoted by the publication (and endorsed by the Institute) as worthy of recognition and discussion. Recently completed projects are featured with photographs, drawings, commentary, credits and sometimes an architect's statement. The credits record those involved in the project and include not only the architects, but also other relevant parties such as the client, consultants, contractors and suppliers. Generally, there is a leading "architect" under the name of the architectural practice, followed by a second heading, "project team", which lists the individual names of those involved in the featured project.

Sometimes, names are singled out and more explicitly labelled as site architect, project architect or design architect. Generally, however, no distinction is made between the members of the project team and, therefore, it is difficult to ascertain the skills, roles and responsibilities within the team. It is unclear whether the order of names has any relevance. The data indicates the number of women involved in architectural projects:

- Over the past five years, 186 architectural projects were featured in *Architecture NZ*; of those projects, 63% listed the names of the people involved.

- 21% of the 760 names listed in the project credits from the last five years were female.
- 39% of the projects that specified the names of those involved also gave more details about the role that the individuals played. Of those 46 projects, two female names were listed as being project architects.²⁹

The data makes it clear that architectural projects with women as the lead architect are seldom represented in the journal. It also indicates that the women who are involved in significant design or project responsibilities are not visible in the format for listing participants that is employed by the journal. The consequences of the low level of representation of work by women architects are insidious and self-perpetuating. The absence of publication and professional recognition has a consequence in the results of the national architectural awards run by the NZIA and published in *Architecture NZ*.

Website Portrait Four

The image is small and a portrayal of facial features has been refused. Sophie offers a self-portrait that does not directly refer to her work in the team of architects in the RTA Studio, a major award-winning practice in New Zealand. Instead, a truncated body bleeds off into bright whiteness, her white jacket blends into context—an image of self-detachment that recalls a succession of women photographers who have published self-portraits that engage visually with a camera.³⁰ These early images in which the eye was replaced by a lens claim a relationship with technology and modernity: "The notion that the camera lens could not only replace the human eye as a means of capturing the world visually but also



Figure 4. Sophie Wylie: Architectural Graduate practising in Auckland, RTA Studio. Website image <http://www.architecturewomen.org.nz/s?i=sophie&=Apply>.

improve upon its ability to penetrate reality to its invisible depths was paradigmatic of the new, basically positivist photographic aesthetic of the 1920s.³¹ It was also to construct a new femininity through an alliance with modern apparatus.

Nearly a century later, the bodily position of the photographer in relation to the lens is a matter of choice and the “real” has become problematic. Sophie is fused with technology—

the hands that support the lens might be imagined to grasp fitfully at a cyclopean eye that protrudes from her face. As an architectural graduate employed by a major practice, she might well be welded to digital technology, and her image, distanced from the conventional portrait type that asserts individual subjecthood, is instead allied to a hybrid condition negotiating between gender and technology.

The arm that supports the camera is decorated with bangles, while the bag that hangs from her shoulder is between handbag and satchel; perhaps, the indistinct bottle below the mirror is perfume? The mirror that serves as the conventional place to put on makeup has been deployed to conceal features and expression. As Ludmilla Jordanova points out in her discussion on scientific portraits, “The subtleties of how gender is constructed and responded to are worth insisting on”.³² Sophie presents herself as constructed, interiorised within the mirrored image and also exteriorised, looking back at herself as other. Her portrait potentially offers a critique of the use of portraits on the website by recognising their affiliations to class, wealth and status.

Making her self simultaneously the subject and object of representation, Sophie’s portrait disrupts fixed spectral positions; she observes herself looking back. “She is contained within the condition of being observed, while observing herself: The trap of autobiography”.³³ Her portrait both claims and denies the capacity of representation, commenting on the historic objectification of women in the gaze of a male artist. Working with identity as hybrid, the image oscillates between a “mastering” technology and modes of femininity; it brings to the surface contemporary dilemmas in gendered practices of architecture.

Other Portraits on the Website

Five “portraits” without faces are presented on the website. At the time of writing, two are decorative abstract drawings, one a sheet of architectural drawing, including plans, sections and three-dimensional drawings, one a practice title sheet, and one a photograph of a cup, saucer and plate of fine, decorative china. The ornamental drawings assert aesthetic practice as a mode of architectural being, the architectural drawings and the practice title sheet underline the professional potential of the web and the fine china points to productions that underline one of the complications of being a woman architect: housework and social, familial obligations. The image of the china insists, however, that domestic productions are also memorable, aesthetic events.

Associations with the domestic appear in the portraits that include children on the *Architecture + Women* website. Six images show a woman and a child, or children, while no images depict a nuclear family. The women who represent themselves in relationship to a child have various career paths—non-architectural work, practising architect, architectural designer and non-practising—and all stare straight at the camera with broad smiles. Spatially, they are located in interiors, parks and beside a car. The images assert closeness and, yet, in the context of a professional life, there is the disquieting and distancing anxiety: how will they cope?³⁴

The complications of combining parenthood and career, and the prodigious amount of labour involved, are not evident in the images, although conversations with many of the participants indicate that it is not always straightforward. All speak of the difficulties of managing time and energy in relation to family

and career. The concerns about taking a break from architecture and the desire to be a good parent are frequently mentioned as insoluble problems. However, these dilemmas are not apparent on the website; the women architects with children, despite professional invisibility, represent themselves as closely connected to their children, relaxed and happy. Double portraits, mother and child, trail a history of powerlessness, pride and death in Western images. The other participant in the image, the child, produces the mother as self through externally reflected images.

Criteria for Awards Published in *Architecture NZ*

Architecture NZ devotes space to numerous accolades awarded by the NZIA and other organisations relevant to architecture. Currently, the NZIA has three types of awards, which it presents yearly: local and national awards for projects completed during the year, and the New Zealand Architecture medal for an individual architect.³⁵ Eligibility for these awards requires that the practice or individual must be NZIA registered. Recognition for the awards goes to the practice responsible; individuals are not acknowledged.

- 262 Level Two (national) NZIA awards were presented in the last ten years to 95 different firms.
- 62 of these firms can be found today in the NZIA Directory.
- Amongst the 62 firms and their 137 principal architects, there were five women; 4.5% of principals from award-winning firms are women.
- Eight awards (3.8%) went to firms with a female listed as a principal architect.

In the last ten years, 262 awards were presented from various categories to 95 different firms.³⁶ The data indicates that, generally, women are not represented in award-winning practices—96.4% of the principals of award-winning practices are men.³⁷ Plausibly, the most award-winning practices are also the largest practices—those with four or more principals. What is of interest is that none of these practices (there are seven) have a female principal among them, suggesting, perhaps, that it is harder for females in large practices to become a principal than it is for their male counterparts. These seven firms received 72 of the 229 awards, which is to say that a little over a tenth of the firms received just under a third of all the awards. The five firms with female principals in them were all small firms with no more than three principals in total and never more than one female among them.³⁸

In New Zealand, the paradigm of a “starchitect” is perhaps less common than “star-practice”. The small market of large-scale projects is subject to what could be described as an oligopoly of well-known firms. The repetition of a company’s name in the pages of *Architecture NZ* helps to establish them as “brands”, rather than individuals.³⁹ Sometimes, the names of individual team members are published alongside, allowing for gender to surface. Women’s names will frequently appear in these citations, but given that only 21% of the 760 names listed in the project credits from the last five years were female, the figure still lags well behind the number coming through the architecture schools. Their role within the team is seldom recorded and, therefore, determining the contribution these women made to the team is difficult. While there is an acknowledgement of team efforts and a diminishing importance attached to a singular

master designer, the “brand” comes to the fore in its place.⁴⁰ And whilst some brands have gender-neutral names, the governance of these firms indicates that they are far from gender neutral. In the highest echelons of governance of large architectural firms in New Zealand, women seldom feature.

While it is in the context of meagre public representation of women architects in writing, design attribution and professional recognition that the website, *Architecture + Women*, has been set up, it is acknowledged that it does not replace professional representation. Instead, it provides an alternative site allowing for quick contact between architects, immediate visibility to prospective clients and an archive for writers and researchers to consult. It enables women architects to represent themselves in relation to their profession and is a timely way of gathering and presenting data, as it falls under the rapidly evolving phenomenon known as social media.⁴¹ A familiarity with this mode of self-presentation is entwined with the identity formation of recent graduates: “User-generated content is one of the fastest growing parts of an expanding information universe”.⁴² This is coupled with the swift rise of digital photography, which “has led to the blossoming of the amateur self-portrait”.⁴³ Is there a greater sense of relaxed candour among the younger participants? Perhaps. It may even be laced with a more conscious construction of identity given the repetition of and frequency with which photographic portraits are uploaded, dispersed and shared on the web.⁴⁴

The progression of technology allows for multiplicity, collection and expansion. No longer a name printed on a page, but an entry point to a file, a hypertext—a body within a network, a fabric. This mechanism of visual representation in a public domain, accessible at any time,

anywhere in the world, is in contrast to the statistical data generated from names, drawn from scripted media, published physically, periodically and for an intended audience.

The exponential growth in the number of both non-professional and professional media producers over the last decade has created a fundamentally new cultural situation and a challenge to our normal way of tracking and studying culture. Hundreds of millions of people are creating and sharing cultural content—blogs, photos, videos, online comments and discussions.⁴⁵

In a guide to practitioners in *Canadian Architect*, “online knowledge exchange forums”⁴⁶ are examined as a “creative outlet and an evolving marketing opportunity for architects”.⁴⁷ The details firms are encouraged to consider, under “Tips and Traps”, offer insight into the issues such a form of representation raises: issues of plurality, whose “voice” should be used, whose face, in what poses and postures, to what end?⁴⁸

Initially, the website, *Architecture + Women*, was established as a retrospective response to an exhibition, “Constructive Agenda—60 Years of Women in Architecture in New Zealand”, recording the work of women architects and held in June 1993 to celebrate the centenary of New Zealand’s suffrage movement. The exhibition included projects by female students and graduates of architecture, along with the work of practising, retired and deceased women architects. The project was initiated by architect Jane Dykes, who sent out a letter in January 1993 to all women members of the NZIA inviting involvement in the exhibition, to be held in Wellington.

Dykes formed a committee, Wellington Women in Architecture, which went on to win an

NZIA award for their exhibition held in the Wellington City Council Administration Building. The substantial response to the initial call meant that an Auckland committee was also formed. Both the Wellington and the Auckland exhibitions were well attended and a selection of the exhibition panels formed a touring exhibition to selected NZIA branches. The 1993 Constructive Agenda exhibition was the catalyst for the first Levene/AAA Urban Gaze competition, which focused on the Ellen Melville Hall and Freyberg Place.⁴⁹ The website will assist an intention to hold another exhibition in 2013 to consider the changes and persistent patterns over the subsequent ten years of architectural practice in New Zealand.

Website Portrait Five

Lynda Simmons appears to stare directly at the camera, but her dark glasses are associated with refusal of recognition. A hand cradles her



Figure 5. Lynda Simmons: NZ Registered Architect practising in Auckland, Lynda Simmons ● Architect. Website image <http://www.architecturewomen.org.nz/member/viren1419>.

face, cupping the chin and cheek in a gesture that is both intimate and also forceful—the fingers are stiff and the knuckles pronounced. Does the hand belong to the subject? The angle of the arm seems to be too shallow to be attached to the same body as the head. So the image raises the question of an absent body, head and hand separated to avoid the complications of reproduction. The hand, belonging to the subject, bears the weight of the head (the weight of daily life) and shields the face from the viewer.

The portrait is slightly wary—the hand conceals the throat. The intimate gesture, self-supporting or externally compulsive, is complicated by a raised eyebrow: a warning gesture or a device for distancing? Her raised brow, conventionally a marker of gender/ethnicity, is finely curved with a bit of weight to it—shaped by femininity and assertive. Complications of gender are repeated in the hair length—long hair, but tied back and under control. The shoulder that supports the hand is broad and black clad, underscoring a melancholic aspect of architectural practice in New Zealand.

Perhaps, she mourns an absence of architecture as she sits on a rough beach on a New Zealand coast? The portrait places her in nature (along with many other portraits on the website). The at times pejorative association between women and nature is complicated by the national branding strategies for New Zealand and differing cultural views of what constitutes nature.⁵⁰ Portraits of architects, however, might be expected to relate to building and this is so on the website, with 30 portraits in an interior setting and 11 with a building or urban setting as a backdrop.

The sea beside which Lynda sits may be part of a fluid global exchange mechanism and it might provide the kai (food) for local people. On the

edge of the Pacific, in the pervasive presence of its salty water, the portrait offers an image of an allegiance to an islanded condition of architecture; on the edge of the Pacific, in a multicultural city, Lynda navigates the shallows and rapids of architectural practice and study as her children grow around her.

Conclusion

In the first 26 weeks after the *Women + Architecture* website was launched, 144 women uploaded their profiles. By September 2012, 192 women had uploaded their portraits. Statistical data offer evidence and certainty, but are also fallible in their construction and interpretation. The data on the representation of women architects in *Architecture NZ* is at one level incontrovertible, but it is also a partial view that requires further interpretation. In contrast, there is something misleadingly optimistic about the collection of portraits of women architects on the website: successful professionals, holiday snapshots, happy couples, proud parents. The strength of stereotypes (that leads to under-representation in professional forums) also emerges in the visual clichés of motherhood, perfect parenthood and professional progress.

Cixous points out that Horn's portraits are not of named people, but rather of unknown women who speak under a name. The *Architecture + Women* website portraits can be seen as emanations from women who speak under the name of "architect". The series of images that make up the website are also a collection of moments, ideas and physical existences—conditions tending to a whole (an accumulating refining condition of woman architect). The corpus that emerges, however, is always provisional and mutable as new

portraits are inserted and others deleted. As Huneault observes,

Caught without the reassuring support of a clearly delineated binary framework, artists, writers, critics and others engaged in the construction of a public identity for working women found that these “difficult subjects” could not easily be contained, for they put otherness itself into question as a way of thinking. Concomitantly they brought the self under an uncomfortable microscope.⁵¹

The website allows the participant one more construction of “self”, a choice to partake, to

join in, share and contribute, with a sense of urgency and agency. For all the promotion and display, the weltering, layering and changing, there is a precariousness to the website, a hollowness in the tacit independence of recent generations that must remain untouched because of its potential “to rupture a carefully constructed narrative of self-determination”.⁵² The website has a vitality springing from all that has been achieved, however its richness and flicker, blinding and bewitching as it is, is fashioned in the context of statistics that reveal a fragility and poignancy in women’s involvement in the practice of architecture in New Zealand.

Notes

1. Program currently on New Zealand television with an architectural focus: *Grand Designs*, *Grand Designs Revisited*, *Homes under the Hammer*, *Home of the Future*, etc.
2. “Faces Behind the Façade: A Black and White Photography Exhibition of Architects’ Portraits and Their Architecture”, held at “Tusculum”, headquarters of the RALA, 3 Manning Street, Potts Point, Sydney, <http://www.neilfenelonphotography.com.au/exhibitions.php> (accessed 3 March 2012).
3. *Portraits + Architecture*, 11 September to 15 November 2009, curated by Christopher Chapman, <http://www.portrait.gov.au/exhibit/architecture/> (accessed 26 September 2012).
4. “Faces of British Architecture”, exhibition at The Building Centre, London, 9 January–29 February 2012.
5. <http://www.fondationpourlarchitecture.be/en/event/portraits-archi-women> (accessed 26 September 2012).
6. Gaël Turine, [http://www.gaelturine.com/#/Institutional & Corporate/Portraits for The Architecture Foundation/1](http://www.gaelturine.com/#/Institutional%20&%20Corporate/Portraits%20for%20The%20Architecture%20Foundation/1) (accessed 26 September 2012).
7. Gaël Turine, [http://www.gaelturine.com/#/Institutional & Corporate/Portraits for The Architecture Foundation/1](http://www.gaelturine.com/#/Institutional%20&%20Corporate/Portraits%20for%20The%20Architecture%20Foundation/1) (accessed 10 December 2012).
8. Joanna Woodall (ed.), *Portrait: Facing the Subject*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997, 20.
9. *Architecture and the Feminine: Mop Up Work*, Jennifer Bloomer (guest ed.), 1, no. 4 (Jan./Feb. 1994), 50–55.
10. Hélène Cixous, “Portraits of Portraits: The Very Day/Light of Roni Horn”, in Roni Horn, *A Kind of You: 6 Portraits*, with text by Hélène Cixous (trans. Eric Prenowitz), Gottingen: Steidl, 2007, 8.
11. One of the authors is represented on the website, one is not. Both are represented by virtue of the repetition of inscribed experiences caught as abstractions in the repeated organisation of the face.
12. Sidonie Smith and Julie Watson (eds), *Interfaces: Women/Autobiography/Image/*

- Performance*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002, 11.
13. <http://www.architecturewomen.org.nz/database> (accessed 5 January 2012).
 14. Ludmilla Jordanova, writing on a portrait of scientist Caroline Herschel: "Caroline's companion commented on a drawing by an unnamed painter: 'I'm sorry to say the drawing which I saw did not do justice to her intelligent countenance; the features are too strong, not feminine enough, and the expression is too fierce'. The femininity of the woman scientist and the depiction of her femininity remain contentious matters" (Ludmilla Jordanova, *Defining Features: Scientific and Medical Portraits 1660–2000*, London: Reaktion Books with The National Portrait Gallery, 2000, 108).
 15. Cixous, "Portraits of Portraits", 7.
 16. Kristina Huneault, *Difficult Subjects: Working Women and Visual Culture, Britain 1880–1914*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002, 3.
 17. Huneault, *Difficult Subjects*, 207.
 18. Woodall (ed.), *Portraiture*, 19.
 19. Woodall (ed.), *Portraiture*, 19.
 20. Cixous, "Portraits of Portraits", 7.
 21. Errol Haarhoff, *Practice and Gender in Architecture: A Survey of New Zealand Architecture Graduates 1987–2008*, Auckland, School of Architecture and Planning, University of Auckland, 2010, 24.
 22. Haarhoff, *Practice and Gender in Architecture*, 25.
 23. AGM Publishers, <http://www.agm.co.nz/index.html?category=25&id=20> (accessed 27 August 2012).
 24. Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive", *October*, 39, (Winter 1986), 7.
 25. This refers to the first subcategory—those who have an architecture education, teach at an architecture school or practise architecture.
 26. K. Michael Hays (ed.), *Architecture Theory since 1968*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000, 643.
 27. Denise Scott Brown, "Room at the Top? Sexism and the Star System in Architecture", in Ellen Perry Berkeley and Matilda McQuaid (eds), *Architecture: A Place for Women*, Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989, 237–246.
 28. In 1996, Francesca Hughes wrote of "the hope that architecture's inclusion of women will help finally to undermine the theory/practice divide ... and dispel the not entirely unconnected genealogical anxiety (architecture/not architecture), allowing their practices to supplement and expand the field as we now understand it" (Francesca Hughes, *The Architect: Reconstructing her Practice*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996, xvii).
 29. A third female project architect featured in Issue I of 2007, but she is practising overseas and so was not included in the count. The article did describe her as a New Zealander and her name was counted when she was listed on the Contributors' page as a practising female contributor.
 30. See Germaine Krull, "Self-Portrait with Ikarette", 1925; Ilse Bing, "Autoportrait dans Miroirs", 1931; Imogen Cunningham, "Self-Portrait with Korona View", 1933; and Lotte Jacobi, "Autoportrait", 1937—all in Herbert Molderings and Barbara Mülhens-Molderings, *Mirrors, Masks and Spaces. Self-Portraits by Women Photographers in the Twenties and Thirties*, <http://lemagazine.jeudepaume.org/2011/06/molderings/> (accessed 27 September 2012).
 31. Molderings and Mülhens-Molderings, *Mirrors, Masks and Spaces* (accessed 27 September 2012).
 32. Jordanova, *Defining Features*, 97.
 33. Hughes, *The Architect*, xiii.
 34. The choice to use incidental snapshots as self-portraits in a professional context is complicated. It tends to deny usual expectations of professional behaviour and constructs the website in alignment with more popular social networking sites. The happy snaps uploaded proclaim family affiliations, alternate works of labour and casual pleasures to friends and acquaintances in the architectural community. They also offer an implicit

critique of the construction of architects as single-minded and obsessive.

35. "Enduring" awards are given to projects that were completed in an earlier time-frame and that are deemed to have withstood the "test of time" and are, therefore, considered worthy of recognition.
36. During 2002–08, the categories were as follows: Community and Cultural, Hospitality/Tourism, Education, Heritage/Conservation, Commercial and Industrial, Healthcare, Residential, Multiple Housing, Interior Design, Urban Design and Colour awards. In 2009, they were changed to the following: Public Architecture, Residential Architecture—House, Residential Architecture—Multiple Housing, Commercial Architecture, Interior Architecture, Heritage, Small Project Architecture, Sustainable Architecture, International Architecture, Urban Design and Enduring Architecture.
37. It is important to note that within the 33 firms excluded are Lindley Naismith and Jane Aimer, who won two awards under the name, Aimer Naismith Architects. They have since changed their name to Scarlet Architects and, as such, their former name is no longer in the database. They have not received any awards under their new name. They would increase the number of female principals in award-winning practices from five to seven, increasing the percentage value to 5%. If their awards were counted, this would

increase the percentage of awards to firms with female architects from 3.5 to 4%.

38. To provide a snapshot of the gender makeup of those practices that have received an award(s) in the last ten years, the NZIA Directory of architectural practices was used as a consistent platform to compare practices. This public database has two categories of registered architects for each firm: principals and architects. Even though the employees of these firms may have changed since receiving the award, it is expected that this time delay will be lenient toward the number of female architects. Of the 95 different firms, it is important to note that 33 (35%) could not be found in the database and, as such, information on their gender balance is omitted.
39. The rise in branding is perhaps evidenced by the recent flourish of monographs on many of New Zealand's largest firms. The A4 New Zealand architects monograph series edited by Stephen Stratford includes volumes on *Architectus, Jasmax, Pete Bossley, Herriot + Melhuish Architecture, Architecture +* and *Studiopacific Architecture*. Other recent publications include *ASC Architects* and *Stephenson & Turner*, both edited by John Balasoglu.
40. The term, "brand", is used to describe a situation where a firm does not operate under an individual's personal name(s) or where a personal name has

been used and that person(s) is no longer associated with the firm. The lack of attribution to personal names, published in the journal, distances the work from individuals, strengthens the tie to an entire practice and potentially hides significant contributions by females. Peggy Deamer's article, "Branding the Architectural Author" (*Perspecta*, 37, (2005), 43), usefully distinguishes between the concepts of "fame" and "branding" and how they are "recontextualised" in the realm of architecture. In her discussion of authorship, she explains that "(i)n branding, the marker is disengaged from the product, and the relationship between the 'name' and the product is extremely loose".

41. In Hughes' introduction, describing the image that appears on the title page of the book, she writes: "Like the mirror postcard, the view is cacophonous: a set of different voices (allegory, autobiography, exposition, criticism, narrative) presenting the multiple and fragmented sites of their practices" (Hughes, *The Architect*, xvi).
42. Nicholas G. Carr, Elena Sommariva, Bruce Sterling, Lev Manovich, Richard Baraniuk, Stefania Garissimi, David Weinberger, Stefan Heidenreich and Tobias Krafczyk, "The New Web" (In English; Italian; Italian and English), *Domus*, 923, (March 2009), 105–128 (112).
43. Matt Ferranto, "Digital Self-Fashioning in Cyberspace:

The New Digital Self-Portrait", in Jane Kromm and Susan Benforado Bakewell (eds), *A History of Visual Culture: Western Civilization from the 18th to the 21st Century*, Oxford and New York: Berg, 2010, 357.

44. "[T]he number of images uploaded to Flickr every week today is probably larger than all objects contained in all art museums of the world" (Lev Manovich, "How to Follow Global Digital Cultures, or Cultural Analytics for Beginners", [https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:Q2cMM5VZqucjs:softwarestudies.com/cultural_analytics/cultural_analytics_overview_final.doc+%E2%80%98It+is+interesting+to+note+that+the+number+of+images+uploaded+to+Flickr+every+week+is+probably+larger+than+all+the+objects+contained+in+all+the+art+museums+of+the+world%E2%80%99&hl=en&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESH8PpZdIG2iOB5EkSlqM3F13la9Kknauokb6vskZT4Cis](https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:Q2cMM5VZqucjs:softwarestudies.com/cultural_analytics/cultural_analytics_overview_final.doc+%E2%80%98It+is+interesting+to+note+that+the+number+of+images+uploaded+to+Flickr+every+week+is+probably+larger+than+all+the+objects+contained+in+all+the+art+museums+of+the+world%E2%80%99&hl=en&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESH8PpZdIG2iOB5EkSlqM3F13la9Kknauokb6vskZT4Cisv1HC9IMppYZZRaG2xKHQ_cbb1p8qR3LgTBX2sYvheGkqLwBjCBnpfEezTxOa3slOhkCYyDibamR14YD_wKnacDXma&sig=AHIEtbQQkzUa4qrWVKHCDw_qb7_v4nMSIlg) (accessed 26 September 2012).
45. Carr et al., "The New Web", 112.
46. Sharon Vanderkaay, "The Social Media Evolution", *Canadian Architect*, 55, (June 2010), 39.
47. Vanderkaay, "The Social Media Evolution", 40.
48. "Question 6. How will we present ourselves? ... How can we reveal our interesting personalities without appearing flaky or remote?" (Vanderkaay, "The Social Media Evolution", 40).
49. The sponsor for this competition changed to Panasonic and, in 2009, the name of the competition changed to Auckland Architecture Association (AAA) Urban Eye Competition, thereby losing some of the critique implied by the name, "Urban Gaze".
50. "[T]he longstanding, pernicious associations between 'woman' and 'nature' in Western culture—associations that are rarely advantageous to either woman or nature—have made 'nature' a treacherous terrain for feminism" (Stacy Alaimo and Susan J. Hekman, *Material Feminisms*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008, 12).
51. Huneault, *Difficult Subjects*, 9.
52. Shelley Budgeon, "The Contradictions of Successful Femia: Third-Wave Feminism, Postfeminism and 'New' Femininities", in Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff (eds), *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*, Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 286.