

**The Significance of Aesthetic and Heritage Values in a  
Public Policy Environment: Victoria Theatre Case Study**

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I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Lise Milne

Dated

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the significance of aesthetic and heritage values through a case study; the Victoria Theatre in Devonport, Auckland, New Zealand. The research led me to question aesthetic philosophy, theory and experience. While analysing policy documents surrounding heritage values, reference was consistently made to ‘aesthetics’. However there were no specific definitions provided for the meaning of the word ‘aesthetic’. Aesthetic values, as is with heritage, are formed on subjective judgements. I began to question the role that ‘aesthetics’ played in policy planning as the meaning was not clearly defined. My aim was to bring to light the aesthetic and understand how subjective aesthetic and heritage values were identified on which public policy decisions were made.

A phenomenological approach to interviews uncovered subliminal heritage values found in aesthetic experiences. Even though key informants could not specifically explain the meaning of the word aesthetic, when it came to describing their passion and motivation for protection of a heritage theatre, a deep sense of the aesthetic values emerged. Common values between aesthetics and heritage were identified. Heritage became a conduit for describing the aesthetic experience. The lived experience of aesthetic and heritage values were identified.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

“If I knew you were going to ask me that I would have looked it up in the dictionary”

This was a response from a key informant when asked to describe the word aesthetic. These responses occurred consistently throughout semi-structured interviews with key informants who were involved with the Victoria Theatre project. The thesis is an exploration into the aesthetic and heritage values with Victoria Theatre as a case study. What was it about this run down old building that captured the hearts and minds of the people who fought hard to save and preserve the Victoria Theatre in Devonport, Auckland? The Victoria Theatre Trust was established in 2004 with the aim to bring life back to the theatre, which had been sitting empty on and off for the best part of a decade. The VTT rallied enormous energy and enthusiasm within the community to protect and bring back to life, a multi-purpose performing arts theatre and cinema. However, there were many people who claimed that the VTT would never succeed because aesthetic and heritage values were simply not appreciated.

The campaign to save the theatre was launched and local government was lobbied to buy the theatre. Against all odds the North Shore City Council did buy it. Victoria Theatre then gained category one registration with New Zealand Historic Places Trust. The theatre was restored, celebrating its grand opening in October 2010 with a red carpet event, and currently still operates under the management of Victoria Theatre Trust.

How did all this come about? What motivated the people who were dedicated in seeing the old theatre survive and brought back to life. What were the passions and motivations expressed by people who supported protection for Victoria Theatre. How were highly subjective policy decisions made? These considerations led me to research

concepts surrounding aesthetic philosophy, and I soon began to discover that aesthetic philosophy was not quite as straight forward as I thought.

My plan was to research aesthetic values within the context of heritage values, to provide a framework for the exploration. This approach was rather complex I began to discover, because not only was the discussion about aesthetic values highly subjective but heritage values were almost as difficult to isolate.

Historians and conservation architects had advanced the discussion on heritage values by arguing that aesthetically appealing buildings were easier to preserve, based on the visual appeal. Buildings that were not aesthetically appealing were often just as important to preserve because it's more about the feeling the building conveys through stories, times gone by, connecting the past with the present that brings shape towards the future. Historic buildings represent the past and provide some insight into what people did, the life they lived. These stories provide some insight into the values of a particular time in history. These stories, memories and reflections led to some understanding about what was considered important in giving shape to society and the life we lead today. At the heart of this discussion we begin to see the common link between heritage and aesthetic values develop.

Challenges exist in shaping policy, in making decisions that are based on highly subjective judgements. The word 'aesthetic' was used relatively freely within policy documents surrounding heritage and specifically the built environment. Aesthetics, across the decades had been subjected to much debate. Thus far the research had set me on the path of investigation into the value and significance of heritage from an aesthetic perspective. Questions arose about the policy process in deciding which buildings to protect. How and why were some buildings considered to be of value and significance, and not others.

My role as a participant observer began during Auckland Arts Festival early 2005 when I first discovered that, Victoria Theatre was under the threat of demolition. I immediately joined the Victoria Theatre Trust, as secretary and eventually set about as project manager for the VTT. I worked alongside the VTT during critical times in

raising awareness for the theatre by programming live events and movies, training staff for front of house and bar duties and running the old projectors. The business began through the tireless work from volunteers and soon we began to pay staff. The media showed a lot of interest as the VTT worked relentlessly to raise the profile of the theatre by bringing the heritage protection arguments to the fore. I participated when lobbying North Shore Council to buy the theatre and was responsible for registering the theatre with New Zealand Historic Places Trust, based on research from Salmond Reed' Conservation Plan. When the Victoria Theatre gained category one registration, the VTT won the tender to govern and restore the theatre. The grand opening was celebrated October 2010. The VTT continue to manage the protection, restoration and event/movie programming for the Victoria Theatre.

This case study provides a valuable opportunity to compile research about the value and significance of cultural and historic heritage, through the lens of aesthetic philosophy, within a public policy framework. Chapter one introduces the aim of the thesis and provides a brief overview of the history of the theatre.

Chapter two focuses on aesthetic philosophy and values. Arguments for and against aesthetic theory are discussed as expressed by philosophers such as Kant and Dewey. These philosophers shed some light on aesthetic philosophy and the complexities of thought that lead to diverse points of view. The second part of chapter two focuses on heritage values viewed through the lens of aesthetic philosophy.

Chapter three describes the mixed methods approach used within this hermeneutic phenomenological study. The three methods used to collect information were participant observation, semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. The triangulation process provided in depth analysis that led to common themes arising across the three data sets which relates back to the literature.

Chapter four sets the scene and provides a brief overview of cultural and historic heritage that transpired in Auckland's Devonport throughout the previous century. The discussion leads to some of the preservation issues that arose as part of the public policy

processes impacting on decisions that led to Victoria Theatre securing category one registration with New Zealand Historic Places Trust.

Chapter five scopes the public policy environment. The significance of cultural and historic heritage is explored through a documentary analysis of the statutory framework. Research into the Resource Management Act (1991), Local Government Act (2002), Historic Places Act (1993), the Building Act (2004) along with the Earthquake-prone Building Policy. The North Shore Heritage Strategy and district plans were sourced, analysed and interpreted.

This research takes place during a time when

- fast track changes were being made to legislation after the earthquake in Christchurch 4 September 2010
- New Zealand Historic Places Trust was being restructured in 2010
- Auckland Council merged four cities within the Auckland region to become the 'Super City', 1 November 2010.

Chapter six provides a thematic analysis of transcriptions based on themes emerging from semi-structured interviews. Aesthetic and heritage values surrounding the Victoria Theatre began to emerge.

Chapter seven explains how heritage values are viewed within the theoretical framework of aesthetic philosophy. This chapter discusses the findings from a public policy perspective arising from triangulation across three sets of data. Some of the findings begin to answer the initial research questions.

Chapter eight provides a brief conclusion and proposes further research and recommendations.

## **The Background to Victoria Theatre**

The Victoria Theatre in Devonport was almost 100 years old when it re-opened 26 October 2010. For almost a decade the derelict old theatre sat empty, threatened by demolition or conversion into apartments. The old theatre was rediscovered by a theatre company who were looking for a venue to host the production 'Jack the Ripper'. In 2004 the Victoria Theatre Trust (VTT) was established and through sheer passion and determination the VTT manoeuvred its way through a complex set of legal and political processes which lead to the grand re-opening of Victoria Theatre.

Success for the project began with the priority for the VTT to establish relationships with local councillors, conservation architects, New Zealand Historic Places Trust, ASB Trusts, media, actors, musicians, film makers and hundreds of volunteers keen to see the theatre re-open. I joined this community of people who were determined to see the project through. Our strength lay in the ability to collectively harness local knowledge and share a passion for what the theatre represented. Constantly, we were told that it would never happen, that the project was 'fraught with difficulties' and that North Shore City Council would never buy the theatre. However, the VTT stayed positive and was strategic in its operation. One of the key components contributing towards the success of the project was commissioning the Victoria Theatre Conservation Plan by (Salmond and Reed, 2006).

I had discovered Victoria Theatre during the Auckland Festival 2005 when the theatre first opened its doors to the public, over a two weekend period. AK05 provided opportunity for the VTT to implement the major strategy, to raise awareness for the theatre. It was the first time that AK05 had come to North Shore City, and Victoria Theatre hosted a variety of events.

The beautiful old theatre struck a chord as I walked in, it felt as though I had arrived home. I felt that there was something very special about this old heritage theatre, and it had something to do with feeling a sense of belonging, being part of something bigger. I loved being in the theatre and it was nearly 100 hundred years old. Appreciation for

the old theatre was 'felt' by participants through respect for artefacts and stories or memories of 'times gone by' as well as enjoyment, fun and entertainment in this unique theatre.

The VTT aimed to engage many people in the aesthetic and heritage experience of the theatre. By offering personal guided tours, upstairs backstage behind the scenes, people began to feel the 'life' of the theatre. Some people recalled having been there as a child, others loved the authentic feel. This was another way to rally support. Emotions and feelings for this beautiful old building grew. However in the policy documents there were no 'boxes to tick' for emotions. My questions aimed to uncover how public policy might take the aesthetic or heritage values into consideration. Questions were raised as to how policy decisions were made, given that emotions are 'felt' and could not be translated within in the legislative framework.

The VTT's strategy was to raise awareness for the Victoria Theatre and to provide opportunity for people to experience and 'feel' the significant aesthetic and heritage qualities of the theatre. This significant strategy played a big part in the successful outcome for heritage protection for Victoria Theatre.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Literature Review**

Victoria Theatre is a registered heritage building with New Zealand Historic Places Trust. Category one heritage registration was awarded to Victoria Theatre in 2007 after three years of full commitment by the Victoria Theatre Trust (VTT) to protect the theatre (Salmond and Reed, 2006). Full registration meant that the theatre had been protected from the very real threat of demolition and subsequent plans to completely ‘gut’ the inside of the theatre. The VTT and supporting community were passionate in their endeavour to steer the project through the legislative process. During this period it was my experience, as part of the VTT, to observe the significance and value of the theatre and what it meant for the community at large. My curiosity led to the question about what the cultural and historic heritage of such significance was for the wider community. The research led me to aesthetic philosophy in determining heritage values.

The thesis aims to better define heritage within the context of aesthetics. The first section of the chapter is a review of influences upon aesthetic philosophy and development of values. Aesthetics values are explored in the thesis through a review of Plato, Kant, Heidegger and contemporary thinkers such as van Manen and Shusterman. The second part of the literature review, explores heritage through the lens of aesthetic values.

#### **Politics of Aesthetics**

The challenges for aesthetic philosophy, from a policy perspective, are described in the following paragraphs. The development of aesthetic and heritage values within public policy is primarily concerned with social development. The ultimate way to measure social development is in the way in which policy serves the public interest (Mason, 2008). However both aesthetic and heritage values, which are closely associated, may

mean different things to different people. These values tend to evolve and develop and deserve ongoing analysis and discussion as they form the basis for policy practice and social development, shaping New Zealand's culture and society.

The development of aesthetic values underpins policy planning in culture and historic heritage development. However, the breadth and reach of 'aesthetics' is extensive. Aesthetics philosophy has developed, changed, evolved and moved in and out of prominence over centuries. Aesthetic philosophy fits comfortably in development of historic and cultural policies. Historical heritage has its origin in both architectural studies as well as conservation of heritage. The interpretation of a set of practices governed by legislation can be developed through aesthetic reflexivity and subjectivity. The development of aesthetic values is a "pivotal contemporary cultural practice through which time is expressed in space" (Deckha, 2006, p. 404)

Aesthetic values can potentially unleash and activate collective memories to produce rather than reflect heritage values to determine politics of conservation. Policies that reflect an awareness of these influences has seen accelerated growth during the 1990s (Deckha, 2006). Cultural heritage often functions as a window into society, and that window shows attitudes and values extremely well (Runco, 2007). This is the distinctive way in which aesthetic values become historical (Paparella, 2008).

Aesthetic theory as a western social construct, Kelly (2004), is situated within the context of 'tradition' where the individual is subjected to 'a happening' while participating in the transmission of cultural heritage. Gadamer (1975) referred to this as 'historically effected consciousness'. Shusterman and Tomlin (2008) sought aesthetics from a eastern perspective and warned against the way that aesthetic theory in the west had been defined as it was dominated by western arts, heritage, culture and politics. For these aestheticians, it was important to develop the philosophy to include eastern ways of seeing the world. Hence the philosophy continues to have a big future ahead of it.

From the earliest origins, cities have exhibited a conspicuous capacity to generate historic heritage in the form of ideas, styles, attitude and culture. Aesthetics, the underlying philosophy, plays a part in the development of culture, but what is at stake

here? How does heritage translate into culture, and whose interpretation does society follow? These are essentially subjective judgements influencing policy development. The stupefying effects of capitalist culture may dilute traditional cultures with certain types of popular commercial culture (Scott, 1997). In an age of globalisation, leaders in policy need to be keenly aware of the causes, synergy and the potential effect of the development of culture (Bottery, 2004). Political and economic structures intertwine with cultural heritage to the point where a ‘McDonaldization of societies’ emerges - a culture that is quick, cheap and fast to swallow (Bottery, 2004, p. 36).

Leaders in cultural policy initiatives need to examine critically the assumptions of knowledge and this can be achieved through considerable discussion of aesthetics and the politics of difference (Grierson, 2007). Since aesthetics is a matter of universal rather than individual subjectivity, culture and heritage occupy a high place in philosophy as they represent an absolute (Holzhey & Mudroch, 2005).

It is through aesthetics that philosophers determine the political meaning and function of culture, as there are no obvious ways of moving from social practices to culture, or from facts to values. Significant cultural sites become conveyors of value and “if you derived your values from the market place you would end up with all the worst kind of values” (Eagleton, 1988, p. 332).

Many interpretations of aesthetics are to be found within the literature. For example Dewey described aesthetics as an opportunity to dwell in the artistic experience, for philosophy and art move in the same medium of the imaginative mind (Capps & Capps, 2005). By contrast Foucault’s interest lay in the direct link between aesthetics and politics, for example, for a ruler such as a king to be accepted he must have a kind of glory which cannot be separated from aesthetic value. For Foucault there is a moral dilemma where reasoning links political power, glory, immortality and beauty (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982).

The notion of rulers or leaders attaining a certain mastery so that they are able to rule others is at the core of Plato’s philosophy. Plato developed a constitution, which addresses aesthetics and ethics, through the desire for unity in politics leading to a

happy civil society. At the core of Platos' ideology is his deep insight that the desire for power corrupts and destroys people. He argued that the danger in a never-ending pursuit for self-gratification undermined political unity (Lee, 2007).

In the constitution Plato resolved these issues by imagining a rare breed of philosophers who invented a new understanding through arts and culture. These philosophers do not wish power for their own purposes and are reluctant rulers, but instead they govern the city in service of the vision of gaining knowledge of what is good. Art and culture laid the foundation for a new language in politics and psychology, transforming the vision of the self, of the city and of western culture (Korab-Karpowicz, 2005; Plato, 2007).

Aesthetics and the philosophy of art became an idealism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when great philosophies of art were interpreted in metaphysical terms. In the moral sense politics, aesthetics, ethics and philosophies are drawn harmoniously together to do good, signifying social order. Aesthetic values, as with heritage, is simply the way social harmony registers itself on our senses. Therefore politics and aesthetics and historic heritage are deeply intertwined because promoting a culture of unconstrained unity between citizens is uniquely provided by these values (Eagleton, 1990, p. 75).

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century aesthetics was presented in a different spirit. Within the arts there were new movements such as the Cubist, Constructivist and Surrealist movements but the dominance of 'modernity' was established (Runco, 2007). Thus the term 'modern aesthetics' was explained and grounded in the subjective experience, through art appreciation (Shusterman, 1997).

In the mid 1950s, aesthetics was introduced into education and it took a decade for these ideas to take hold (Eisner & Day, 2004). Promoting a public policy of cultural heritage through aesthetics was seen as a strategy for increasing aesthetic opportunity and capability (Beardsley, 1973). However, during the 1980s, with the ascendance of postmodernism, discussions about aesthetics became so complex that ultimately the concept was relegated to a "no-man's land of greater proportion than ever" (Runco, 2007, p. 256). The concept of aesthetics became lost and confused.

Throughout most of the 1980s aesthetic values remained in a state of flux (Eaton & Moore, 2002). Scepticism crept in and the simplicity of aesthetic philosophy was eroded. The idea of aesthetics seemed to become misunderstood (Eaton & Moore, 2002). Hamblen (1988) repeatedly referred to ‘ambiguity’ surrounding aesthetic study. Compounding confusion, positivists could not identify with aesthetics (Risatti, 1987) because it was highly subjective and difficult to measure.

Eaton & Moore (2002) suggested that to understand aesthetics better we should first identify with the experience of aesthetics. Shusterman (2007) indicated that a review of the aesthetic experience within arts and cultural heritage policy should be ongoing. The complication for Eisner (2001) was in the orientation towards highly subjective policy decision making processes. How could those who shape public policy, be persuaded of the significance of aesthetic experience and values that cultural heritage might provide? This was an important question in policy development, because to identify the criteria of aesthetic and heritage values and understand its philosophical nature, is to lay the foundation for critical thinking (Eisner & Day, 2004)

### **Aesthetic Philosophy**

The following sections focus on aesthetic philosophy. By understanding challenges within this theoretical framework, we may be able to identify heritage values in a better light. The philosophical branch of aesthetics has its roots in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. During (1724 - 1804) Kant rejected Plato’s dualistic idea that knowledge belonged to the mind and art to the body and sensation. Instead Kant argued that the theory of aesthetics, our judgements about art, are seen to create conceptual relationships for knowledge to occur at all (Cazeaux, 2002). Kant explicitly identified the experience of pleasure and displeasure as the determining ground of aesthetic judgment (Shusterman, 1997). The notion of beauty as feeling and emotion, rather than as idea, began to emerge (Runco, 2007).

Plato took the position that rational knowledge is of a wholly distinct order from sensory experience. The emergence of this rationalist philosophy was reasserted in the seventeenth century when Descartes argued that the “constituents of knowledge are

clear and distinct ideas, as opposed to the information delivered by the senses” (Cazeaux, 2002, p. 1). These patterns of thought, separating reason from sensation are millennia-old (Cazeaux, 2002). Kant rejected dualism as described by Plato and Descartes who separated sensory experience from rational knowledge (Cazeaux, 2002). For Kant all experience occurs as experience under a description. All experience is conceptually informed. Kant was clear about what he defined as dualistic.

Kant’s philosophical approach to our perception of the world was groundbreaking. The argument that science, art, morality and spirituality are separate realms, or not, owes much of this power to Kant’s philosophical approach (Shusterman & Tomlin, 2008). Kant offers a “theory of knowledge in which concepts are the means by which we organize and come to know the world and a theory of aesthetics in which our judgements about *cultural heritage* are seen to create the conceptual relationship and cross-referrals necessary for knowledge to occur at all” (Cazeaux, 2002, p. 5). Kant called this process of conceptual determination “judgement” and he divided it into what he called ‘determinative and reflective’. One of the principal forms of reflective judgement for Kant is aesthetic judgement, the kind of judgement that is made in response to an artwork, beauty or nature and in the case for this thesis, determining cultural heritage (Cazeaux, 2002).

It is the way in which determinative and reflective judgement are brought into relationship by Kant that helps to establish the epistemic status of the aesthetic. Kant refers to this as the ‘principle of purposiveness’ which gets close to describing the aesthetic. Purposiveness – the appearance of the world as if it had been designed for our awareness – is the concept which allows Kant to claim that although concepts organize and determine the otherwise indeterminate particularity of intuition, this process does not involve the imposition of order but rather occurs as the emergence of order and graspability necessary for our faculties to obtain a unified, coherent purchase on the world: in Kant’s words, purposiveness is the “harmony of an object...with the mutual relation of the cognitive powers...that are required for every empirical cognition”(Cazeaux, 2002, p. 3).

## **Reason and Experience**

Aesthetic philosophy continues to be explored in the following chapters. The relationship between reason and experience is pivotal to the role that is assigned to the senses in the enterprise of knowledge (Bourdieu, 1990). Rationalism and Empiricism were locked in a deep struggle until Kant demonstrated that there is a need for reason as *well* as experience in the pursuit of knowledge (Shusterman, 1999, p.218). Kant saw failure in the views that knowledge and insights were attained through the power of reason alone. Traditional metaphysical philosophers such as Descartes contributed to positivist rational theory by considering experience as insignificant (Savile 2005). Kant opposed this rationalist philosophy (Shusterman & Tomlin, 2008).

Kant explored how sensible experience is competent in furnishing knowledge of the world in his book 'Critique of Pure Reason' (Savile, 2005). Kant proposed that while reason can teach us much about the nature and structure of the world, knowledge was gained through experience (Savile 2005). Kant saw the failure of traditional metaphysics, whereas philosophers up to and including Descartes focused on the power of reason alone to gain insights about the world. To them mere experience could not provide such knowledge (Savile, 2005).

This rationale was largely an unquestioned assumption that Kant's predecessors had usually taken about knowledge. For them knowledge of the "world as it is in itself" was absolute (Savile 2005, p.2). Kant's enormous difficulty was to replace this positivist view with a more articulate, stable view of the relation of the world that is cognitively accessible to the mind.

Kant's approach to understanding what knowledge could be acquired was explored by isolating the traditional view of 'reason' alone, independently of all sensory experience. His work turned away from traditional thinking that stemmed back to the Greeks. Kant provided a positive account of knowledge-enabling experience (Savile, 2005). Kant teaches us that 'world experience' is coloured through our own minds, our own ways of thought (Savile, 2005).

Kant's principal teaching was that reputable empirical knowledge of the world experience was revealed to us by our own ways of thought, "the world as it appears" and not "the world as it is in itself" (Savile 2005 p.5). Kant proposed that while reason can teach us much about the nature and structure of our cognitive grasp of the world, it cannot itself deliver any determinate matter of substance. That is the business of experience.

## **Ontology**

For Heidegger reasoning is expressly bringing into view what is seen. 'Bringing into view' what one sees or hears in the mind is effectively "bringing the essence of being into view" (Heidegger, 1991, p. 56).

An aesthetic experience is one described in O'Cluanain (1979) as the discovery of an extension of the world through the uncovering of a depth of meaning circumscribed by the object. Fundamentally ontological, the aesthetic perception constitutes body and world in the present moment (O'Cluanain, 1979).

Aesthetic experience is perceived in the immediate and lived by the subject. The perception of a close bond between object and subject is the aesthetic experience. According to Merleau-Ponty the 'outside' and 'inside' form an indivisible whole that can not be reached by conscious judgment. An integration takes place "in itself for itself" in absolute consciousness (O'Cluanain, 1979, p. 248).

The experience of aesthetic perception is a sensory exploration in the form of a communication or communion found in 'being'. The positioning of phenomenology of aesthetics is in the ontological dimension. The relationship of 'being' is between the subject and the object in which the subject is the body, world and situation.

## **Phenomenology of Aesthetics**

The phenomenology of aesthetics has been neglected, specifically the manner in which the aesthetic is experienced (Nelson & Rawlings, 2007; Runco, 2007). Phenomenology is concerned with lived meaning; the 'whatness' of a phenomena. The

phenomenological method is a philosophical method best suited to the study of the human experience, and therein aesthetics emerges as a significant and uniquely human experience (Bindemen, 1998).

It can be said that the aesthetic experience is what makes the quality of judgments of taste possible (Holzhey & Mudroch, 2005). Ultimately the aesthetic experience is about honouring expression (Moore, 1992). Since philosophy and the 'aesthetic' move in the same medium of the imaginative mind, the study of aesthetic experience, according to Dewy might be the closest that we come to understanding and defining the human experience (Capps & Capps, 2005).

Risatti (1987) indicated that because aesthetics is so closely related to values, the aesthetic experience should also be projected into the future construction and development of societies and their values. In fact this is the basis and very nature of aesthetic criticism (Risatti, 1987). Reimer & Smith (1992) suggested that when one interacts aesthetically with a work of art one also brings to that immediacy, a knowing about the content within the artwork. Therefore the aesthetic experience draws on a type of knowing that has arisen from the past, that has been brought into the present and that is projected into the future based on current knowledge. The aesthetic experience provides a satisfyingly emotional quality which is essentially phenomenological, in that the aesthetic experience provides a sense of unity, affect and value that is directly fulfilling rather than deferred for some other time or end (Shusterman, 1997).

These are the highest levels of thinking skills, to make judgements and to develop a kind of understanding that is reflective. This view was summarised by Kant, that the aesthetic experience is one of beauty, as beautiful as nature, and is simply the state in which common knowledge is viewed but in a different light (Carey, 2006). The phenomenological aesthetic experience is a feeling of "knowing that, as the moment of letting the world go and clinging instead to the formal act of *knowing* it, promises to reunite those poles of subject and object, value and fact, reason and nature...found in the universal subjectivity of the aesthetic" (Eagleton, 1988, p. 333).

The term aesthetic might concern itself with beauty but to Kant that was not what he had in mind (Savile, 2005). His usage of the term aesthetic drew upon the Greek word 'aisthesis' meaning sensation, or perception. Kant interprets experience in the 'Critique of Pure Reason' as something "in which we are passive recipients of sensory stimuli made by sensibility" (Savile 2005, p. 14). These are phenomenological experiences.

Perkins in Eisner & Day (2004) believed that the best way to ground aesthetics was through the phenomenology of aesthetics to provide deeper understanding of aesthetic experience which is also expressed by (Beardsley, 1973; Eaton & Moore, 2002; Eisner, 2001; Gotshalk, 1968; Palus & Horth, 1996; Risatti, 1987; Smith, 1995). Aesthetic phenomenology is a distinctive cognitive dimension of human experience and requires a broad-ranging array of responses to art, culture and heritage (Reimer & Smith, 1992). It can also be said that the aesthetic experience is what makes the highly subjective quality of judgments of taste possible (Holzhey & Mudroch, 2005)..

Phenomenology seeks to reveal these essential moments in the experience of art. Phenomenology offers us rich and in-depth meaning, through a style of philosophising and as a method of analysing art as a significant creative phenomenon (Cozma, 2007). Phenomenology offers new horizons to the entirety of philosophy by focusing on defining dimensions of aesthetic existence in relation to the whole web of existence (Cozma, 2005). This idea is backed up by Eagleton, (1988) whereby he states that what matters in aesthetics is not art but this whole project of reconstructing the human subject from the inside. Defining humanistic and philosophical aesthetics can reveal certain insight into the world of art practice through a re-evaluation of the relationship between aesthetics and art (Peters, 2001).

It is vital to clarify the importance of the aesthetic as a mode of experience, rather than some consumer-based mode of perception or attitude. Only by clarifying the aesthetics experiential depth can any justice be done to beauty and art's trans-cultural and trans-historical formative significance (Shusterman & Tomlin, 2008, p. 43).

It is hard to understand the extraordinary power of history and heritage without an appreciation, although often subliminal, of the aesthetic. Aesthetic experiences that are

valuably pleasurable, vividly felt, subjectively savoured are objectively meaningful. Generally, aesthetic experience at its highest and best, is considered to be an experience of great value.

### **Dewey's Perspective on Aesthetics**

Aesthetic experience has been long considered the most essential of aesthetic concepts “surpassing the realm of art” Shusterman (1997, p. 29). However, aesthetic concepts continued to come under increasing attack in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with deep confusion raging and the very existence of aesthetics values questioned. Shusterman (1997) argued that the decline of the concept of the aesthetic experience was due to the move from an experiential to an informational culture and the changing role of the aesthetic experience in Anglo-American philosophy from the philosophers Dewey to Danto.

However, this view was not shared by all. While Dewey celebrated aesthetic experience and made it the very centre of his philosophy, Duchamp, Danto and Dickie were propelling the marginalisation of aesthetic philosophy, warning that aesthetic pleasure was a danger to be avoided.

Shusterman (1997) argued that Dewey did not confine himself to the description of aesthetic experience. Dewey confused the notion of aesthetic experience by proposing it as a theoretical definition of art. Shusterman (1997) was adamant in describing Dewey's definition as hopelessly inadequate by standard philosophical criteria. Shusterman argued that Dewey employed the concept of aesthetic experience to define what art in fact is but then transformed it into something quite different.

Dewey's essentially evaluative, phenomenological and transformational notion of aesthetic experience has been gradually replaced by a purely descriptive, semantic one whose chief purpose is to explain and thus support the established demarcation of art from other human domains. Such changes generate tensions that make the concept suspicious. Moreover, when aesthetic experience proves unable to supply this

definition, as Danto concludes, the whole concept is abandoned for one that promises to do so – interpretation (Susterman, 1997, p.33).

Dewey (1920) spent considerable time thinking and writing about the nature of experience and reason. Dewey acknowledged the importance of Kant's work which began at a time when mathematics and other rational sciences developed among the Greeks, scientific truths did not react back into daily experience. They remained isolated, apart and super-imposed. Medicine was the art in which perhaps the greatest amount of positivist knowledge was obtained, but it did not reach the dignity of science. It remained an art (Dewey, 1957, p. 77). It was Dewey's function to show "how and why it is now possible to make claims for experience as a guide in science and moral life which the older empiricists did not and could not make for it" (Dewey, 1957, p. 78).

Dewey also reasoned that the mind is "passive and receptive in knowing" (1957, p. 91). For example a small child who is dependent on the mother, father, nurse or older sibling is constantly instructed as to the meaning of what he does and undergoes. Things come to him clothed in language, not in physical nakedness, and this garb of communication makes him a sharer in the beliefs of those about him... The conceptions that are socially current and important become the child's principles of interpretation and estimation long before he attains to personal and deliberate control of conduct (Dewey, 1957, p. 92).

Dewey claimed that "only reason can lift us above subjection" (Dewey, 1957, p. 95). Dewey reasoned that the actual lived experience must have had some concrete and vital purpose; for the thought of experience followed after the actual experience had occurred. Dewey attempted a philosophic reconstruction between reason and experience. "It would permit the co-operation of those who respect the past and the institutionally established with those who are interested in establishing a freer and happier future" (Dewey, 1957, p. 100).

The labyrinth through which aesthetic philosophy has travelled can lead to tangents so far and wide that the original idea or focus might lose itself. The literature review has only just scratched the surface of aesthetic philosophy. The time has come to find a

firm footing and to narrow the research focus. The aim was to identify the parameters for aesthetics, clearly these are difficult to locate. Therefore, the review turns toward aesthetics from a heritage perspective.

### **Heritage Through the Lens of Aesthetics Values**

So far this chapter has presented some of the major discussions surrounding aesthetic philosophy. The next part of the literature review focuses on heritage values, and discovers that there are complexities surrounding heritage values in policy analysis as well! Defining heritage almost defies definition but offers as a stepping stone toward a greater understanding of heritage (Trapeznik and McLean, 2000). Heritage, pertaining to the built environment, is problematic and this is so because different people attach different values to defining significant heritage features. Heritage seems to be constantly in dispute and this is why it is often in the news. For example archaeologists want to excavate an interesting site which frustrates developers. Artists want a 21<sup>st</sup> century sculpture while architects or the church may have a different agenda. Heritage advocates have competing views. One person may take a more romantic traditional approach to heritage values, whereas another person may lean towards a more innovative view of heritage. Some heritage practitioners are more concerned about the preservation of physical remnants of the historic heritage whereas others are more interested in historic narrative. A bridge between the gulf of these two domains deserves attention to accurately reflect New Zealand's cultural heritage Howard (2003). Ultimately with every heritage action, there is a section of society that feels ignored or excluded (Howard, 2003).

An appreciation for historical heritage grows when it is widely accepted by the community as a whole. Our worldview influences the development of heritage values and in turn influences the way heritage is treated. People have differing influences that shape their world view. Heritage values are likely to be influenced by nationality, gender, ethnicity, class religion, poverty, insiderness, expertise and age (Howard, 2003, p.213). Heritage values might be derived from innate experiences. For example the

Pakeha focus maybe more on possession, tangible objects that are fixed and non- living “rather than seeking to understand the past” (Trapeznik and McLean, 2000, p. 16).

Whereas Maori heritage maybe more inextricably intertwined with stories and explanations to associate with the creation and production of the object.

Very few buildings of significance to Maori have been registered as historic place, reflecting difficulties in defining assessment criteria and “suspicions of interference from external agencies which may obstruct Maori rights of *kaitiakitanga*... A key issue is that evaluation systems devised by Pakeha specialists have never been popular because Maori heritage is primarily *iwi*, *hapu*, and *whanau* based. Maori assert the primacy of *tangata whenua* to establish the significance of any historic place, area, or *wahi tapu* associated with their *iwi*, *hapu* or *whanau*.” (Donaghey, 2008, p 114).

Aesthetic judgements are required in deciphering heritage values. What is considered aesthetically pleasing to one person may not be considered of value to another.

Therefore careful use of language is required in assessing a building’s external and internal spaces. Unity of style and history of a place make up factors that inform analysis and assessment for the built environment.

The conservation plan plays an effective role in establishing heritage parameters (Trapeznik and McLean, 2000). Subjective judgements are taken into consideration when describing principal features of overall unity and design of a building. The conservation plan also takes into account economic and social values. When plans were developed to protect and restore Victoria Theatre for example, the conservation plan was an essential component in setting out policies and specifications for the aesthetic significance (attractive or artistic) alongside physical significance (architectural, engineering, technological). Physical elements were more easily measured (Salmond and Reed, 2006).

History of a place is valued as an important quality in assessing heritage significance. History provides a sense of the living, people, social interaction, entertainment. “The cultural significance of a building or place comes from an appreciation of its physical character and from an understanding of its associations over time with persons and

events. The nature and scope of this significance can be assessed on the basis of a number of characteristics, for example, the extent to which a building demonstrates design and/or construction techniques or knowledge of the time, or whether the building has aesthetic significance due either to its uniqueness, or its being representative of commonly held ideas of beauty, design and form, or whether the building or site has clear association with particular events or persons in history” (Salmon and Reed, 2006). Historical value becomes more prominent as research into heritage assessment develops (Salmond and Trapeznik, 2002). Buildings evolve over time, adding further layers of meaning and significance to inform knowledge and understanding of our cultural and historic heritage (Salmond and Trapeznik, 2000). Heritage assessments influences the way in which unique identity shapes culture within New Zealand.

Higher standards of practice for restoration and conservation are pursued, especially in Auckland’s Devonport. Devonport is a historical village where advocates play a big part in actively promoting heritage, mostly defending change. Others promote an innovative approach that fits in with current needs. The Auckland Council District Plan (North Shore Section) proposed changes to Plan 33 under the Resource Management Act (1991). Plan change 33 proposed new policy for discretionary activity status regarding protection of buildings in the business zones, Flagstaff (2011). Heritage advocates argued against a discretionary move as they felt it would compromise aesthetic and heritage activities within the Devonport village.

This is a classic argument, tradition versus innovate use of heritage buildings. However, Mason and McEwen (2005) suggest that problems arise less out of policy and more out of planners who process the applications. Specialist skills are required for a capacity to research effectively. Maintaining an open mind and understanding the subjective nature is necessary during the administrative process in assessing heritage features (Trapeznik and McLean, 2000). “Achievable and effective outcomes for historic heritage can only occur in the context of rigorous evaluation and assessment frameworks...in assessing theoretical principles and...operational strategies” (Donaghey, 2006, p1). A good understanding of history, space, architectural merit and aesthetic all come into play during analysis and assessment of heritage buildings. Contributory statutes should be

“structured and linked in such a way that functional relationships between the agencies responsible for their implementation are clear and unambiguous” (Vossler in Trapznik, 2000 p. 70). Assessment for Victoria Theatre through the Conservation Plan was based on rigorous research and archival findings (Salmond and Reed, 2006) An intimate knowledge of the building and of its history protected the essential character and evolving needs of the heritage theatre. Innovations were considered.

Values within society change over time, and so does technology. What was not important two decades ago, may now be an integral part of society. For example, a smaller digital cinema in the upper part of the Albert (one of the theatres contained within the Victoria) will be installed, a new innovation. However, at the same time plans are to open up middle landing and restore it back to its original use. Here we see innovation and tradition working together to create new experiences within the traditional context. This move allows for the original landing to be brought back to its original use and provides the required room to move between the downstairs theatre and two upstairs cinemas as well as providing up to date digital cinema. Another example of innovation for the use of Victoria Theatre is reflected in plans to install an internal lift to assist young and old and to provide wheelchair access.

### **Significance of Heritage Values**

By the mid 1990’s in New Zealand the value and significance of historic and cultural heritage had received no systematic study. There was little debate about historic and cultural heritage in terms of the built environment. With the realisation that the loss of a historic building was permanent, politicians and the general public became more supportive about retaining protection for important buildings (Trapeznik and McLean, 2000).

By 2010 issues around protecting New Zealand’s unique identity through protection of historic buildings had heated up considerably. This was reflected through the media, the tide had turned. The heritage debate had become mainstream. Heritage buildings

were considered more as treasures of distinctive value. Older historical buildings provided the wider community with a deeper understanding of identity as New Zealanders.

Historians laid the claim that heritage buildings are nothing without the story behind them. Heritage buildings without an historical account portrays a past without the people, without life, Trapeznik and McLean (2000), and often do not denote the struggles of the people and their ideals. Understanding the life within the building goes some way to understanding cultural heritage. Social Science research offers the life back to the building through 'korero' (stories), memories and reflections (Trapeznik and McLean, 2000).

Heritage is often romanticised. Migrants who moved to New Zealand often romanticise about their homeland. Victoria Theatre brings nostalgia to some people in the community. The problem with nostalgia is that stories might be brushed over to find something that is safe, secure, unchanged, worthwhile and good. These ideals present a past that is comforting, unchanging. However, a nostalgia for the lost past might constrain direction towards new, creative and innovative ways of using a heritage building (Trapeznik and McLean, 2000). "The past should not be presented merely to ensure harmony and consensus" (Trapeznik and McLean, 2000, p. 21). By provoking re-examination of heritage buildings to reflect our past accurately, stories should be about real life and challenges of people of the era, and *not* be just a romantic notion of consensus and harmony alone.

There is no mention of intangible values in the Conservation Act, Resource Management Act and Historic Places Act. The dynamic quality of heritage value is absent within the defining legislation" (Donaghey, 2006. p.95). The disparate nature of the legislative framework raises legitimate concerns over its ability to facilitate effective management of the nations' historic heritage. If primary legislation is a crucial factor in determining effectiveness of strategies for heritage evaluation, assessment and protection then identification and assessment processes, whilst separate from eventual management of a place, should automatically trigger protection. Existing legislative

provisions are confusing, they lack integration and compromise the ultimate effectiveness of assessment measures (Donaghey, 2006, p.101).

The New Zealand Government's commitment to resourcing cultural and historic heritage is declining. Features of a substantive national strategy are endorsed by inadequate understanding of fundamental aesthetic values are absent from New Zealand environment. These factors have serious implications for effectiveness of arts, culture and heritage policy and management (Donaghey, 2006). Further research will help to clarify parameters so that policy analysts can better place 'intangible heritage values' into policy context. "Another possible way to look at policy... is to think of it as the principle (be it values, interests and resources) that underlines the actions that will take place to solve public issues" (Mason, 2008).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

Chapter two provides an overview of the complex issues surrounding the subjective nature of aesthetic and heritage issues as reported through the literature. Further research is required to identify specific actions to address subjective decisions that will affect the future of a heritage building. The following chapter outlines the research methodology adopted in order to carry out such research.

Through the centuries, aesthetics has been debated, argued, misunderstood in many ways, yet the term is still freely used and the philosophy continues to evolve. To define aesthetics in terms of cultural and historic heritage, is to explore it as an experience that is shared by people. How might different factors merge together in a systematic way to identify the phenomenon of the aesthetic? I focused my attention on a case study, drawing upon my own personal experience, through participant observations and interviews.

Since 2005 I was involved with the Victoria Theatre Trust as a participant and observer. As stated earlier in the thesis, my involvement with the VTT was in raising awareness for the theatre, to convince North Shore City Council to buy Victoria Theatre and register Victoria Theatre with New Zealand Historic Places Trust. Since that time the VTT won the tender to manage the theatre and I enjoyed celebrating the grand opening of Victoria Theatre with previous and current Victoria Theatre Trustees alongside the wider community.

The challenge identified through this research lay in the task of exploring ‘aesthetics’ within a public policy framework. What was the value and significance of a heritage building, the Victoria Theatre, and how were these values assessed? How were these judgments of taste made within the policy process?

Aesthetics philosophy might play a latent role when decisions, strategies, planning and ultimately legislation is considered. However, consideration for aesthetics may be more meaningful than we realise. Policy decisions give rise to important matters that shape peoples’ deep sense of belonging to a place. Aesthetic judgements are what make up the stories embedded in history, and passed down through the generations to form the culture that we live in.

Policy researchers and analysts play a part in envisioning the future. Decisions about the intangible based on judgments about what is good for society, impacts on the lives of current and future generations. Questions may arise about critical issues such as what judgments are being made, what ideas are these based on, how are judgments formed and what decisions have been precluded as a result? To understand how aesthetic and heritage ideas are determined within culture and society is to understand the “politics of difference” (Grierson (2007)). Like a work of art, the question about whether something is considered good or of value is a judgement of taste and is fundamental to the inner meaning of aesthetics. Within the interpretive paradigm, I adopted a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to uncover how the aesthetic sense or experience is perceived by a community of people who were involved with the Victoria Theatre project. The aim was to explore what an aesthetic experience, the lived experience, was like for them when interviewed within Victoria Theatre.

### **Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

Hermeneutics has to do with interpretation of the experience and phenomenology is the description of experience (Bergum, 1989). Fundamentally the hermeneutic phenomenological research is a textual practice, where, according to van Manen (1990), theory cannot be separated from the activity of writing, just as knowledge of the

experience cannot be separated from the meaning of the experience (Bergum, 1989). As ideas and entities are altered and organised into projects they also act on and orient our own behaviour and actions informing what we can do with them (Grierson & Brearley, 2009). This process of 'being' in the world and becoming the world is inseparable (van Manen, 1990). Thus ontology and epistemology are inseparable.

To investigate certain kinds of questions that uncover and describe the internal meaning of an aesthetic sense in the practice of phenomenology is not an easy task. The reader can tell a good phenomenological description because it will "resonate with our sense of lived life" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27). A hermeneutic ability is required to make interpretive sense of the uniqueness of experience. Hermeneutics asks for the meaning and significance of certain phenomena. It is not a question that can be solved and "cannot be closed down" (p. 22).

Phenomenology is pure description of lived experience and hermeneutics is interpretation of experience via some text or some symbolic form provided, such as in the case of a work of art. Description is also analysis as it includes both the interpretive (hermeneutic) as well as the descriptive (phenomenological) elements that are interchangeable (van Manen, 1990). "When we interpret the meaning of something, we actually interpret an interpretation" (van Manen, 1990, p. 26). A good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience – is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience. "The meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation. The phenomenology is hermeneutic where it designates the business of interpreting" (Heidegger cited in van Manen, 1990, p. 25).

Forming questions that stay true to hermeneutic phenomenology extends understanding into the world of the arts, to reveal the art world rather than represent the art world (Grierson, 2007). By interpreting the text through writing and rewriting while reflecting on what it is to be creative, the artistic and cultural processes may open up or reveal a reality or set of conditions, rather than replicating or representing reality.

## **Mixed Methods**

Semi-structured interviews with key informants were carried out through a phenomenology. The complexity of a mixed method or multi method approach relies on inserting oneself into the tradition of scholarship. The research design aimed to incorporate internal consistency, and especially when a complex research design such as mixed methods approach is adopted (van Manen, 1990). Reflective practice occurred during my role as a participant observer, giving shape to an ethnography with a focus on a single case to guide the research.

The Victoria Theatre case study provided rich material for in-depth investigation, ideal for a holistic approach (Tellis, 1997). Case study, as a tool, determined some of the more difficult questions in research studies, such as defining the aesthetic experience and heritage value. The Victoria Theatre was the focal point, an anchor, enabling a practical account via a mixed method exploration within a purely qualitative, research methodology. Each data set was analysed individually through a process of mind mapping themes, words, phrases and then analysed to form a synthesis.

“An important way to strengthen a study design is through triangulation” (Patton, 1990, p. 187). Triangulation is considered a way in which to increase research validity and is accomplished through incorporating a combination of methods when exploring the same phenomena. A case study is a triangulated research strategy Tellis (1997) and is a way of increasing confidence in one’s findings (Thomas & Nelson, 1985). Analysis from each data set was triangulated by finding common themes that occurred across the three methods of research.

## **Participant Observation**

Participant-observation is a method enabling a collection of expression of experiences. In this manner a shared view is composed as to what counts for understanding appreciation of the aesthetic experience.

Qualitative methods were employed during the process of studying everyday life events that were closely experienced by participants. Through interaction and communication with participants a perception of reality was constructed in an interpretive manner (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 218). Observations through participation were conducted within a social situation. Recall was retrospective and historical until thesis research began.

As a participant observer an appreciation for the aesthetic experience grew. Reflecting on an appreciation of the aesthetic experience while engaging with the literature may have corresponded with historical reality, in gaining an accumulation of traditional and historical perspectives of aesthetics. Risatti (1987) indicated that because aesthetics is so closely related to values, that research on the aesthetic experience should build on the future construction and development of this philosophy in relation to society and social values.

My involvement started with Auckland Festival '05 when the Victoria Theatre was opened to the public. Immediately I became involved with the Victoria Theatre Trust who were instrumental in looking after the Vic during a time when no one else seemed to care.

We opened the theatre doors to raise awareness for Victoria Theatre, where under my management staff were employed, trained and helped us to grow the business. We trained the projectionists to use the old projectors. I worked with the major movie distributors to secure film. I designed the movie programme every week, and employed staff to design the fliers. We also ran theatrical events, school fundraisers and began to grow community enthusiasm. It was through the local community that we collected signatures in support for council purchase of the building, during the Special Consultative Process which local government undertook.

Salmond Reed had completed major research into all aspects of the heritage features and values. I used this conservation plan to put together a proposal for the NZHPT to register the theatre as a heritage building.

Category two was not enough to fully protect the theatre and there were plans to completely gut the inside of the theatre to make way for a multi-plex cinema. Once the NZHPT realised that the proscenium arch was in danger of being dismantled, they immediately upgraded the status to category one. As a result of category one registration discussions between the commercial operator Lighthouse, and local government came to a halt. The tender was put out again. The VTT applied again and this time won the tender to govern the project.

The VTT worked hard to restore the theatre. The operator for Academy Cinema was brought into the project to manage the cinema screenings. The bar was leased to Didas and the VTT continue to work with theatre companies to put on live theatre.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

Seven key informants were selected based on their interest in the protection, preservation and promotion of the Victoria Theatre. Semi-structured interviews were conducted. The objective was to determine intrinsic values contained within aesthetics. This was not an easy task.

Seven key informants were invited to take part in the semi-structured interviews. Each informant was involved with the Victoria Theatre project. Two informants were the past and present Chair of the Victoria Theatre Trust, another wrote the conservation plan for the theatre. Two were directly involved with project management in operating the theatre. One was a local heritage advocate involved in potential funding for Victoria Theatre and another was an actor on the Victoria Theatre stage, his parents had met through the Victoria Theatre. Each key informant interviewed were happy to be recorded via audio digital technology. All key informants were comfortable in having the interview recorded via a digital recorder and each one seemed to feel at ease during the semi-structured interview.

A certain amount of flexibility was adopted to draw on past experiences uncovering certain aspects of the aesthetic phenomena. Particular attention was required in staying sensitive to the unique view of the participant. “Generating knowledge about an

individual's experiential world is based on both a subject's self-knowledge and the researcher's ability to overcome his or her point of view" (Haggman-Laitila, 1999, p. 13).

The interview process took on an holistic approach through questions that did not evaluate an individual hypothesis, but a whole belief system (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1990). The intent was not to research factual representations or theoretical explanations of experiences. The intent was to bring forward "plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world" (van Manen, 1990, p. 9).

### **Documentary Analysis**

Gathering information for document analysis for this thesis, required the ability to scan websites, newspapers, local government reports, plans, strategies and legislation. These include the online parliamentary site to locate the Hansard Debates, Questions & Answers and Order Papers relating to specific legislation to situate the case study, Victoria Theatre, within context of this exploration. Hard copies of the relevant Bills, Acts, Amendments and discussion documents were printed off and analysed. All hard copies were then filed.

To keep up with information I activated an email alert so that each time certain issues or specific bills were introduced in parliament, the link would be sent to my email address. Any particularly relevant alerts were filed and referenced into the Endnote library.

Other methods of data collection involved communication with North Shore City Council (NSCC). By making a personal visit I managed to secure a hard copy of the North Shore Heritage Strategy which was released in November 2009. The NSCC Community Liaison Manager also forwarded me documents via email regarding structural assessments, feasibility studies and earth-quake strengthening reports for the Victoria Theatre.

Documents were collected through my involvement with the Victoria Theatre Trust, including old programmes, tickets, photos, mind maps, books and pamphlets and

minutes of meetings. Letters from New Zealand Historic Places Trust relating to the registration of Victoria Theatre, as well as a copy of the Conservation Plan provided further history and background on the life of Victoria Theatre. Newspaper clippings enabled me to keep up with current media issues relating to public debates regarding aesthetics and the value of heritage buildings.

### **Thematic Analyses**

No conceptual formulation or single statement can possibly capture the full mystery of aesthetic experience. So a phenomenological theme is much less a singular statement than a fuller description of the structure of a lived experience. “A thematic phrase does not do justice to the fullness of the life of a phenomenon. A thematic phrase only serves to point at, to allude to, or to hint at, an aspect of the phenomenon” (van Manen, 1990, p. 92).

It was crucial that the text be scrutinised for meaning that is central to the experience. These units of meaning were then “synthesised to provide a general description of the whole” (Goulding, 2005, p. 212). Van Manen’s (2006) approach to thematic analysis guided the synthesis process. An ambitious phenomenologist is motivated by the desire to “bring to nearness that which constantly eludes our grasp of human truth” (van Manen, 2006, p. 717).

### **Reflective Practice**

Reflective practice enhanced the ability to be flexible when adapting within a changing environment. The reflective inquiry process permitted meaning to surface (Sarantakos, 1998). At each stage in the research process, reflections triggered fresh new insights (McMurray, Pace, & Scott, 2004). Interpretations were brought forward through the process of writing, with the aim to uncover deeper meaning of the aesthetic experience.

## **Ethics**

Throughout the research process there were many practical responsibilities to be considered and these were based on the key principals as outlined by the AUT Ethics Committee. Key informants volunteered consent during participation within the interview process. Decisions to contribute towards the research exploration was based on informed decisions and transparency outlined on the AUTECH website, which provides ethical research guidelines and procedures for AUT researchers. For more information the participation information sheet and ethical guidelines are attached (see appendix). The AUT Ethics key principles are

- informed and voluntary consent
- respect for rights of privacy and confidentiality
- minimisation of risk
- truthfulness, including limitation of deception
- social and cultural sensitivity, including commitment to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti O Waitangi
- research adequacy and
- avoidance of conflict of interest.

The task was to generate an understanding of the meaning of aesthetics. The dynamic process of social research was based on mutual trust and co-operation between researcher and key informants who were given clear guidelines as well as clear understanding of conventions and expectations (Sarantakos, 1998).

My research practice relied on ethical consideration. Key elements within this research design reflected

- accuracy in gathering and processing data
- staying close to interpretations of experiences
- ensuring internal consistency within the research methodology

- transparency throughout all communication
- respectful manner during the entire research process
- mindful research procedures to avoid any misunderstanding
- being conscience about confidentiality especially in the way that files were stored

While engaged in research, I followed these values which served as the foundation for professional and social relations (McMurray et al., 2004). In general, social science progresses through honesty and openness, and is hindered by ego-defences and deceptions.

Further ethical considerations based on Tolich (1999) were adopted in relation to

- sensitivity and judgement of the researcher
- not overstating the benefits
- ensuring that what was promised is delivered
- being careful about publishing and storing information that was revealed
- acknowledging and protecting the rights, interests and sensitivities of the participants

### **Triangulation**

Research analysis started by identifying common themes which emerged from transcriptions across seven semi-structured key informant interviews. The transcriptions were analysed, themes identified and these were put onto mind maps. A second set of mind maps was developed based on documentary analysis of the public policy framework. The notion of heritage values was explored through the lens of aesthetic philosophy. A third set of mind maps was constructed from analysis of participant observation. Much of this information was gathered up from written

observations, minutes of meetings, media reports and observations during my involvement with the Victoria Theatre Trust since 2005.

Triangulation corroborates the same phenomenon from multiple sources. For example themes from each data set were identified and mind-mapped. Themes from document analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant observation were identified and transferred for further analysis. Common themes across the three data sets linked back to the literature providing another layer of analysis. A deeper insight into the aesthetic and heritage values occurred.

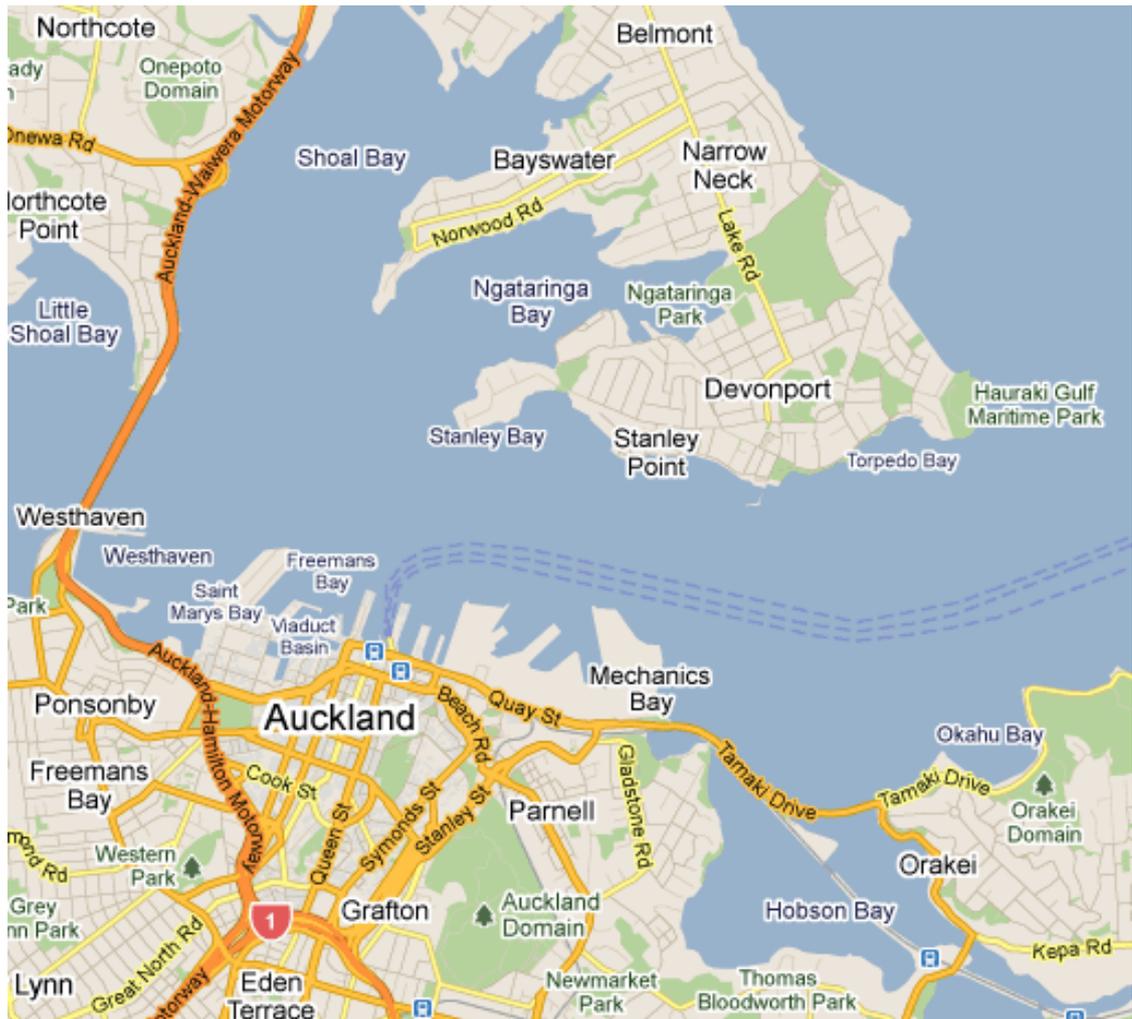
## **Conclusion**

This hermeneutic phenomenological exploration about ‘being in the world’ has to do with interpretation and is required to make sense of a unique experience. Phenomenology is purely a description of the lived experience. The thesis analyses aesthetics as it is perceived within historic and cultural heritage policy. The Victoria Theatre project was a suitable case study to identify some part of the heritage values through the lens of aesthetic philosophy.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SETTING THE SCENE

**A brief overview of historic heritage in Devonport, Auckland, New Zealand**



The Victoria Theatre case study is a useful tool for identifying the essence of aesthetic philosophy within a cultural and historic heritage framework. The previous chapters outlined the literature review and research methodology. This chapter sets the scene to provide a geographical and historical context for Victoria Theatre.

Information from local newspapers provide a deeper understanding of the area in which the Victoria Theatre is situated. Devonport is one of the earliest settled areas of Auckland and is situated at the very southern point of North Shore City. Farm land was subdivided in the 1880s and large wooden villas were built in the style that is unique to Devonport. Victoria Theatre is situated in the heritage village of Devonport, a fifteen minute ferry ride across the Waitemata Harbour from Auckland's Central Business District.

Key informants agreed that the Victoria Theatre makes a major contribution to the character of the main street of Devonport. It is believed to be the oldest purpose-built cinema building still standing in New Zealand. Built in 1912, Victoria Theatre was reconstructed in 1929 and remains an example of theatre design from the hey day of cinema in New Zealand. Conservation architects and heritage advocates believed that any change to the building which recovers its 1929 configuration and appearance will contribute to the overall significance of the building (Salmond & Reed, 2006).

In 2010 there was a move by Devonport Heritage to make a large part of Devonport officially 'historic'. The idea that heritage values in the area were significant enough to warrant attention occurred when bones and Maori remnants were discovered near another potential heritage building facing demolition, the Masonic Tavern (Flagstaff, 2010d).

The application for Devonport as 'historic' was described in two phases. The first was to protect Maori heritage sites with the recent discovery of Maori warrior bones found close to the Masonic Tavern. The skeletal remains were believed to be from a Maori battle at Torpedo Bay during 1793 between Ngapuhi and Ngati Paoa, who at the time occupied North Head. The battle was the first intertribal musket war campaign in the Auckland region (Flagstaff, 2010).

The subsequent finding of moa bones and a Maori adze head confirmed Devonport as one of the oldest pre-European settlement sites in Auckland (Flagstaff, 2010d, p. 23). The find was thought to be more than 500 years old and possibly dating back to the 1400s. Other discoveries considered exciting and unique by New Zealand Historic

Places Trust revealed that old reclaimed foreshore areas still contain intact early Maori pre-historic sites, even within this heavily built-up and modified urban environment. Artefacts such as pearl shell fish hooks indicate settlement in the area occurred centuries ago (Flagstaff, 2010d, p. 23).

The artefacts were found during work to renovate the old defence buildings in Torpedo Bay which was used in the late 1800s as a submarine mining station to defend Auckland against a possible invasion from the Imperial Russian Fleet and also used as a base for torpedo boats designed to ram enemy ships which never arrived. Just as well, as the torpedo boats fitted with a long spar and an attached warhead, were highly unstable and considered to be more dangerous for the crew than for enemy ships (Flagstaff, 2010a).

The second phase of the application covers Pakeha heritage sites for the built environment supported by Devonport Heritage. The Masonic Friendly Society, Devonport Heritage and the Devonport Museum were joined by Ngati Paoa in their battle to preserve the unique settlement of Devonport and promote the official recognition of the Devonport isthmus as an Historic Heritage Precinct (Flagstaff, 2010c). Local historical sites range from early Maori settlement right through to early European settler sites.

Devonport's Victoria Theatre, built in 1912, is situated in the heart of the historic trails that lead around the harbour to North Head and from Victoria Rd and Kerrs St up to the top of Mt Victoria (North Shore Times Advertiser: Heritage plan gains favour in Devonport, 2010). In the case of Victoria Theatre there was a belief that if left in its present form there was a danger of the it becoming a white elephant (Flagstaff, 2002) Most people in Devonport wanted Victoria Theatre re launched as a modern cinema within a multi-purpose performing arts venue.

However, the theatre was under threat of demolition and during 2005 the campaign for protection of Victoria Theatre began to gain momentum driven by the Chair of the Victoria Theatre Trust. The Victoria Theatre was not registered with New Zealand Historic Places Trust but it did have a heritage classification under the North Shore District Plan. It was considered a significant building, one of the most prominent in

Devonport, as it was revamped in the 1930s and was one of the areas first art deco buildings.

For many years Victoria Theatre was closed until the Victoria Theatre Trust formed to raise awareness for the potential protection and restoration of the theatre. When the very real possibility of demolition for the theatre was evident the VTT and supporting community presented submissions at North Shore Council, held over several days. Many submissions were heard, including a song by a local musician Tim Finn. After many days of submission the council unanimously agreed to buy Victoria Theatre. The Victoria Theatre ultimately won the battle for protection when it was acknowledged as a significant heritage theatre by New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT, 2007a).

### **Aesthetics from the perspective of Cultural and Historic Heritage**

*This photo was taken of the downstairs theatre by a member of the VTT.*



Careful consideration for aesthetics is fundamental to art and culture. From a heritage perspective, intrinsic aesthetic qualities of significance were identified. For example the Victoria Theatre Conservation Plan relates to aesthetics:

To the extent to which a building demonstrates design and/or construction techniques or knowledge of the time; or whether the building has aesthetic significance due either to its uniqueness, or its being representative of commonly held ideas of beauty, design and form; or whether the building or site has clear association with particular events or persons in history (Salmond & Reed, 2006, p. 26).

These values are consistent with the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS, 1965) and the New Zealand Charter (ICOMOS, 1995a). Common values are shared with United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2010). Much of our heritage is imbued with a message from the past of age old traditions and monuments, in this way the unity of human values as a common heritage is sustained. Within the framework of culture and tradition the fundamental principles, recognized under the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), are that the preservation and restoration of historic buildings should be agreed upon internationally.

Against the backdrop of the 2003 amendment to the Resource Management Act (RMA, 1991), local demands for better heritage identification and protection have taken place. The North Shore Long-term Council Community Plan (NSCC/2009-2024, 2006) identified heritage as one of the community outcomes considered to be most important to the residents of North Shore City. The Historic Heritage Strategy (NSCC, 2009) was developed to provide clear direction for how an integrated approach of this rich yet fragile resource was to be approached and managed. The principal objective of the Historic Heritage Strategy was to effectively facilitate the identification, protection and education around the fascinating history and heritage places of North Shore City.

The Victoria Theatre Conservation Plan assigned value, although subjective, to cultural and historic significance. Proper understanding of a place and history in association with people and events over time, as well as authentic architectural physical character, is capable of being analysed when a building is or has

aesthetic significance due to its overall unity of the design of the theatre, or contributes to its aesthetic integrity, or intrinsic aesthetic qualities valued by the community (Salmond & Reed, 2006, p. 27).

The Conservation Plan for Victoria Theatre is aligned with national and internationally recognised methodologies and techniques adopted by North Shore City Council (NSCC, 2002 Updated 2009) and New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT, 2010b). Conservation policies were formally adopted by those responsible for the ongoing care and maintenance of the Victoria Theatre and were acknowledged as a basis for overall and detailed planning of existing fabric and new work (Salmond & Reed, 2006).

### **Preservation Issues for Victoria Theatre**

Once North Shore City Council had purchased the Victoria Theatre, they put the theatre out to tender. North Shore City Council would own the land but sell the building. The VTT put in a tender bid to project manage the restoration of the theatre with the idea of maintaining the theatre's integrity and use it in the way it was originally intended, as a multi-purpose performing arts theatre and cinema. However, the NSCC sought a commercial operator to manage the project. The Lighthouse Cinema Group won the tender and began plans to create a multi-screen complex (Flagstaff, 2008b). The plan was to extend the circle level of the theatre throughout the building to create a second floor. Both this and the ground floor would then be split in two to make four 70-80 seat cinemas. This meant completely gutting the inside of the theatre. The theatre was at risk of losing its character.

In the mean time the VTT had registered with NZHPT for heritage protection based on criteria from the Victoria Theatre Conservation Plan (Salmond & Reed, 2006). Final registration for Victoria Theatre was confirmed with NZHPT(2007a), however, preservation issues held back plans by Lighthouse Cinema (Petone) Ltd.

One of the main preservation issues holding up plans for redevelopment for a multi-screen cinema complex, were planned alterations to the proscenium arch above the original stage. The Director of Lighthouse Cinema said that heritage

and non-heritage architects and engineers were at logger-heads and that if heritage features were to be fully protected then there was no way anyone could make a dollar (Flagstaff, 2008b). However, the VTT felt that there was no need for yet another multiplex cinema and was hoping that its vision of re-opening the theatre as a multi-purpose performing arts centre and cinema would come to fruition.

The VTT plan for a multi-use 300-seat single auditorium development for the theatre would fulfil a need for a medium-sized venue for North Shore and Auckland. “Commercially there are arguments against our plans, but for the building’s historic value, it is the way to go...If we were in Italy we wouldn’t be having this conversation” (Burren cited in Flagstaff, 2008b). Burren went on to say that this was just another example of Auckland losing part of its heritage and that issues surrounding the theatre’s survival had boiled down to culture versus money (Flagstaff, 2008b).

*This photo was taken by VTT of the upstairs theatre/cinema*



The Lighthouse Cinema continued negotiations with North Shore City Council and NZHPT for an amended plan which took into account restraints on what it

could do since the Category One registration status was awarded to Victoria Theatre. The company had converted Category Two buildings in Wellington into cinemas but the Category One registration “created obstacles that were insurmountable” (Werry cited in New Zealand Herald, 2008). Heritage considerations versus alterations to the theatre’s internal layout to create a workable cinema had been major stumbling blocks in the process (Flagstaff, 2008a).

North Shore City Council had chosen the Lighthouse Cinema group because it believed it could operate without needing continuing council financial support. However, after twelve months of negotiation, the Wellington based art-house cinema group pulled out of negotiations after the Historic Places Trust turned down its alterations plan (New Zealand Herald, 2008). The withdrawal opened the door for a fresh tender bid by the Victoria Theatre Trust reviving “the huge plan for a multi-purpose theatre and performing arts and cinema venue for the community” (Burren cited in New Zealand Herald: Bidder backs out of the theatre project, 2008). Devonport had waited long enough, it was time for action and there were some fantastic and extremely talented people waiting to re-open and breathe new life in the Victoria Theatre according to Burren (Flagstaff, 2008a).

The Victoria Theatre had been closed to public since June 2006, and reopened in October 2010. John Davies of Auckland’s Academy Cinema was contracted to manage the three theatre complex, while the newly restructured VTT managed programming to include for performing arts (Flagstaff, 2010b).

The new Chair of the VTT, Margot McRae reported “we’re saving the oldest purpose built cinema in the Southern Hemisphere and we’re going to take it into the future” (New Zealand Herald, 2010). Events were held before the official opening including heritage week tours, plays, films and a Michael King Writer’s Centre event (Flagstaff, 2010e).

Capital was being put into interior work that delivered comfort and good quality film and sound equipment. All interior painting was finished, including

marbled columns in the foyer. Wooden floors in the foyer were sanded. The George theatre, since renamed Benwell's theatre, had its fit-out completed with a digital projector. New heating systems were installed and volunteers contributed their time to spring clean the theatre (Flagstaff, 2010f).

*This photo was taken by a member of the VTT during the grand opening October 2010*



The importance of heritage was reflected in the community of Devonport resulting in the grand opening of Victoria Theatre 26 October 2010. This major milestone was achieved through the passion and motivation held by community members. From mid 2004 to end 2010 volunteers worked long and hard to protect, promote and preserve Victoria Theatre. Community strength and passion were rallied and as a result the Victoria Theatre opened its doors as a gathering place for fun and entertainment. The following chapter explains how this translated through the public policy environment.

*A timeline of Victoria Theatre is provided in the Appendix.*

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS**

#### **Scoping the Policy Framework**

The aim of this chapter is to outline the policy processes that the Victoria Theatre Trust went through to ensure heritage protection for Victoria Theatre with New Zealand Historic Places Trust. My approach in carrying out research for this thesis is by way of a case study. The focus in this chapter is on the legislation surrounding the registration process of a historic building with NZHPT.

#### **Overview**

By an Act of Parliament the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT) was established in 1954. As a Crown Entity, the NZHPT is the guardian of New Zealand's national heritage (NZHPT, 2010a) and is a leading national historic heritage agency as prescribed by the Historic Places Act 1993.

The NZHPT vision is that “our heritage is valued, respected and preserved for present and future generations” (NZHPT, 2009, p. 1) Heritage values specified state that Heritage places of New Zealand:

- are rich, varied and unique;
- are central to our national identity and well-being, now and in the future;
- embody the stories of all generations, cultures, traditions and communities;
- include the heritage places of Maori which are integral to their whakapapa and identity;
- make a creative contribution to the diversity of our national life;

- deserve the best recognition and care for the benefit of future generations;
- are resources for increasing economic growth including tourism.

## **Challenges**

The key focus and challenges for NZHPT are far and wide. Reviews of the Historic Places Act 1993 took place by the NZ Government in 2010, alongside reforms within the Resource Management Act 1991. Changes made within both of these Acts have the potential to affect New Zealand's heritage (NZHPT 2009) because decisions on the value and significance of heritage buildings are now made within Central Government. The decision making processes prior to these changes were based on local knowledge. Local knowledge and understanding provides the context in which the building is situated and these considerations can not be made from the Beehive in Wellington.

In addition, planned changes are taking place for the removal of the right of New Zealand Historic Places Trust members to elect Branch Committee members as part of the 'disestablishment' of local branches (Parliament, 2010)<sup>1</sup>. It was reported in the media that the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Culture "Mr Finlayson upset the 23,000 grassroots members of the trust by announcing plans to disestablish the 24 branch committees, and worse, scrap the right of volunteer membership to elect three members on to the trust's nine-member national board" (Rudman, 2010, p. A13).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hon Christopher Finlayson, Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage was questioned in Parliament by Steve Chadwick during March 2010 about this. Order Paper and questions 2760 (2010) Hon Chris Finlayson's response was to see answers to Parliamentary QWA 2759 (2010) in which he states that he has not received advice from NZHPT directly.

<sup>2</sup> "In 2006...the Labour government introduced legislation to change the structure of the trust board. At the time, eight of 11 board members were elected by the membership and three appointed by Government. Labour proposed reducing the trust board to nine members, of whom six would be government appointees. Judith Tizard, the minister in charge of the bill, said increasing the number of

The role of New Zealand Historic Places Trust, locally and nationally, has been to lead by providing “advice on national policy initiatives, heritage assessments for proposals affecting specific heritage places and assistance... with heritage projects throughout the country” (NZHPT 2009 p.3).

However, the complexities brought about through changes within its recent legislation has the potential to diminish the ability as a nation to identify, protect and promote New Zealand’s heritage. This research takes place in the midst of changes to legislation for the Resource Management Act 1991, the Historic Places Act 1993 and the Local Government Act 2002 and during a time when Auckland was transitioning into a ‘super city’. Local Government Authorities themselves are being ‘disestablished’. The challenge to identify, protect and promote our historic heritage becomes even more of a moving target for NZHPT.

### **Local Government and Historic Heritage**

Local Government Authorities follow legislation for heritage management and protection through district plans and policy statements under the RMA. Local Government Authorities have responsibilities for heritage management and protection of Historic Places (NZHPT 2009). The North Shore City Council released its Historic Heritage Strategy in November 2009. On the first page of this report it is quoted that, “In order to plan for the future, we must look to the past” (NSCC, 2009). The strategy includes the category one registered historic building, the Victoria Theatre. The heritage strategy was developed in response to community awareness and concerns about the protection of the city’s historic buildings, including buildings “ruined by unsympathetic alterations and additions” (NSCC 2009 p.4).

At the same time there is a growing awareness of the positive contribution historic heritage can make to the city’s well-being. Not only can heritage sites, structures

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government appointees “will more adequately reflect the government’s interest in the trust” and “ensure a greater range of skills and experience in the make-up of the board”.

and information be used to promote a sense of identity within the community but they may also offer economic opportunities, particularly through cultural tourism (NSCC 2009 p.4).

The North Shore Heritage Strategy recognises historic heritage and defines them as category A or B in the following way

Category A: This category includes buildings, objects and places which have outstanding aesthetic beauty, or architectural, scientific or historical significance well beyond their immediate environment. It is of prime importance that items in Category A are protected. The exterior of buildings classified Category A together with such other elements (interior, site etc.) specified in the Schedule, are afforded protection by the City Plan (NSCC 2009, p. 57).

Category B: This category includes buildings, objects and places of such quality and character that, although less significant than Category A items, should not be wilfully removed, damaged or significantly altered unless there is a compelling reason. The exterior of buildings classified Category B, together with such other elements (for example interior, site) specified in the Schedule, are afforded protections by the District Plan (NSCC 2009, p. 57).

According to the North Shore City Council District Plan (NSCC, 2002) older distinctive buildings with cultural heritage values, such as the Victoria Theatre, reveal a special identity and unique sense of place in understanding the built environment. These aesthetic values and visual interests contribute a source of inspiration for education and act as a collective cultural heritage that binds communities and cities. Stewardship and conservation of fragile heritage places are fundamental values of cultural well-being. The objective of cultural heritage policies according to NSCC (2002) is to recognise and protect places of significance which are consistent with heritage values.

## **The Significance of Historical Heritage defined by the Resource Management Act and the Historic Places Act**

There are two primary pieces of legislation protecting historic and cultural heritage. These are the Historic Places Act (HPA, 1993) and the Resource Management Act (RMA, 1991). Historical heritage is recognised under section 6(f) of the (RMA, 1991) as a natural and physical resource of national importance. The RMA considers historic heritage as contributing to an understanding and appreciation of New Zealand culture and history. Under section 5 of the RMA it states that it aims to conserve and protect, where feasible, the values of heritage and Tangata Whenua.

The RMA uses the term ‘historic heritage’ in place of ‘cultural heritage’. While there is a reference to *natural and physical resources* in the RMA the definition of historic heritage is described as “the critical value ascribed to these is their ability to contribute to an understanding and appreciation of New Zealand’s history and cultures” (NSCC 2009, p. 9).

Historical heritage as defined by the (RMA 1991) derive from the following qualities:

- Archaeological
- Architectural
- Cultural
- Historic
- Scientific
- Technological; and includes:
  - historic sites, structures, places, and areas;
  - archaeological sites;

- sites of significance to Maori, including waahi tapu; and
- surroundings associated with the natural and physical resources.

The Historic Places Act 1993 describes Category 1 as “Places of special or outstanding historical or cultural heritage significance or value” (HPA 1993)<sup>3</sup>. The criteria for registration for historic places are those that possess “**aesthetic**, archaeological, architectural, cultural, historical, scientific, social, spiritual, technological or traditional significance or value” (HPA 1993)<sup>4</sup>. Through consultation, education and advocacy the resource consent process is addressed particularly when activity affects a registered historic place according to Auckland Regional Council (ARC, 2010).

An example of this is the Victoria Theatre in Devonport, North Shore City which is believed to be the oldest purpose-built cinema building still standing in New Zealand.

The particular appeal of a building such as the Victoria Theatre lies substantially in its authenticity as an “old fashioned cinema”, but also in its location in the suburb of Devonport, where it makes a major contribution to the character for the central business district, and constitutes an opportunity for a continuing and valuable social service. In an age of highly competitive mass market personal entertainment, there is a strong and growing public fondness for the enjoyment of cinema in the tradition of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when an important part of the experience of “going to the pictures” was the setting. (Salmond & Reed, 2006, p. 1).

However, even after Victoria Theatre had been registered with New Zealand Historic Places Trust, the building’s external features were safe, but plans were to gut the inside of the theatre. Category two did not offer enough protection for significant structures such as the proscenium arch and stage in the downstairs theatre, these were under threat again. The Lighthouse Cinema group were negotiating with North Shore City Council,

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<sup>3</sup> Historic Places Act 1993 section 22 (3) (a) (i)

<sup>4</sup> Historic Places Act 1993 section 23 (1)

as they had won the tender process and had plans to convert the theatre into a four screen multiplex. Consequently, New Zealand Historic Places Trust upgraded the registration category from two to one. This move protected the theatre's internal space. The Lighthouse Group pulled out of the tender, citing that it was not economically viable to run a multiplex theatre under category one registration conditions. The tender went back out to the community and this time, the Victoria Theatre Trust won the tender, to promote, protect and preserve Victoria Theatre as multi-purpose performing arts and cinema theatre. The North Shore City District Plan under category A, reflected Victoria Theatre as a heritage building of local significance due to heritage values that

“The Victoria Theatre is the oldest surviving purpose-built cinema building in New Zealand. Apart from intermittent periods of inactivity, it has been in continuous use as a cinema and entertainment venue since the construction of the original building in 1912” (Salmond and Reed, 2006, p.26).

Mason and McEwan (2005) identified problems within the RMA during assessment of the built environment through Wellington's District Plan. Their research indicated that

Fifty five percent of the buildings with consent history, have led to a loss of heritage values. These consented activities were often of a large scale in terms of the degree of intervention and/or the scale of the proposal in relation to the building, notably rooftop additions and constructions of balconies and verandas. Many of these consents resulted from the conversion of inner city commercial buildings to a residential use (Mason and McEwan, 2005, pii)

“The Plan needs to be clearer about it's role in regard to heritage protection” p.77. “The heritage objective, policies, assessment criteria imply that the Plan is seeking greater outcomes than the current rules can deliver” p.76.

## **Statutory Framework**

In accordance with the RMA (1991) section 5, the North Shore City Council is required to recognise and provide for the sustainable management of natural and physical

resources. This means managing the use, development and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being and for their health and safety. In matters of national importance under section 6(f) of the RMA (1991) it states that

In achieving the purpose of this Act, all persons exercising functions and powers under it, in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources, shall recognise and provide for the protection of historic heritage from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

This legislation is recognised in the conservation plan for the Victoria Theatre (Salmond & Reed, 2006, p.36), as is the legislation under section 187 of the (RMA 1991) where it states that the meaning of heritage order and heritage protection authority includes the New Zealand Historic Places Trust in so far as it exercises its functions under the Historic Places Act (HPA 1993). It means that the New Zealand Historic Places Trust is defined as a ‘Heritage Protection Authority’ (Salmond & Reed, 2006) and may give notice according to requirement to the territorial local authority to protect any building classified under the HPA (1993).

During 2006 when the Victoria Theatre Conservation Plan was published the Victoria Theatre was not classified under the HPA (1993). However, it was scheduled within the Local Authority, North Shore City District Plan under Category A as having “outstanding aesthetic beauty, or architectural, scientific or historical significance well beyond their immediate environment” in section 11.4.1.6 (NSCC, 2002 Updated 2009).

### **New Zealand Historic Places Trust**

Under section 57 (HPA 1993) it states that the Trust (NZHPT) will adopt one or more statements of general policy for the “management, administration, control, and use of all historic places owned or controlled by the Trust or vested in it” (HPA 1993 1 a). The Trust will amend statements so that they are adapted to changing circumstances, or with

increased knowledge. These statements are to be reviewed within 10 years after adoption by the Trust. Policies developed by NZHPT are

Supported by the Government and funded via Vote Arts, Culture and Heritage through the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, the work, powers and functions are prescribed by the Historic Places Act 1993. Most protective mechanisms for land-based historic heritage are administered by local authorities through their District Plan policies and heritage listings under the RMA (1991), although the NZHPT retains regulatory responsibilities regarding archaeological sites (NZHPT 2010).

The Trust is governed by the Board of Trustees assisted by the Maori Heritage Council. NZHPT is an autonomous Crown Entity under the Crown Entities Act 2004. The national office for NZHPT is in Wellington with regional offices in Kerikeri, Auckland, Tauranga, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.

Along-side crown funding, revenue is also gathered through membership, visitor entry fees to its properties, merchandising and fundraising. Significant efforts to increase self-generated revenue have helped NZHPT to deliver its core activities (NZHPT 2009).

The NZHPT seek to ensure that heritage places are appreciated by recording and sharing their stories. The governance framework is designed so that the Board approves the allocation of resources in accordance with strategic priorities and carries out duties which, under the Historic Places Act, it cannot delegate to management.

The Board is composed of three persons elected by members of the NZHPT. Six persons are appointed by the Minister of Arts, Culture and Heritage (three of whom must, in the opinion of the Minister after consultation with the Minister of Maori Affairs, be qualified for appointment having regard to their knowledge of te ao Maori and tikanga Maori (NZHPT 2009).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Board members are listed on page 5 in the NZHPT Annual Plan 2009.

The Trust believes that conservation of heritage is important to the way we shape our communities, socially, economically, aesthetically and culturally in order to develop a greater understanding of history and identity for New Zealanders.

Careful prioritisation and workload management saw significant achievements for NZHPT (2009) under six separate areas:

- leadership, education, information and advice;
- working with iwi, hapu and whanau;
- heritage properties managed by NZHPT;
- archaeology;
- improving heritage survival; and
- registration.

Leadership, education, information, advice and telling stories of New Zealand's heritage places is a key outcome of the work provided by NZHPT. This was achieved through promotional and training events, hands-on workshops, seminars, books, ceremonies, media, websites and a film directed by an NZHPT staff member for inclusion at the 2010 Jasmx Film Festival. This busy schedule ensures that NZHPT provides information about New Zealand heritage on domestic and international heritage issues.

The 48 historic places cared for by the NZHPT are significant for their contribution to local economies as cultural and heritage tourism sites. Their stories are integral to New Zealanders' sense of identity, place and belonging (NZHPT 2009, p. 10).

### **Victoria Theatre Trust**

The Victoria Theatre Trust (VTT) was registered as a trust in 2004 and their primary focus was to raise awareness about the heritage value of Victoria Theatre as a purpose

built performing arts and cinema venue. The Victoria Theatre situated in the historic village of Devonport lay unused, unprotected, deteriorating and the under threat of demolition. However, the then owners of Victoria Theatre, Kea Property Group, allowed the VTT to use the building as a performing arts and cinema venue. Gradually, through many hours of voluntary work, the theatre was equipped and primed for events leading to full time use of the theatre.

Public awareness is encouraged through continued use of built heritage. The NSCC considers that buildings should be used and not retained simply as monuments. Expectations are that a better standard of information about cultural heritage will lead to willingness and ability to conserve the environmental resource. Policies for protection and preservation of heritage resources are carried out via the conservation plan which sets out how such a plan, identifying significant sites, should be carried out NSCC (2002 ).

The Victoria Theatre Trust also brought awareness to Victoria Theatre through lobbying local government. Under a grant from the North Shore Heritage Trust and with the leadership of the VTT a conservation plan was professionally prepared by Devonport based conservation architects, Salmond & Reed to “meet a standard acceptable to statutory authorities and to provide guidance on the refurbishment of the building so that it can once more function on a fully commercial basis” (Salmond & Reed, 2006, p. 2).

The Victoria Theatre Trust (VTT) approached NSCC in November 2004 with a request that Council purchase the Victoria Theatre. The property is registered under the legal description “Pt 20A, Section 2 Takapuna Parish, CT567/76 with an area of 660sqm” (Salmond & Reed, 2006, p. 5).

Under the Local Government Act (2002) the North Shore City Council set up public consultation through a Special Consultative procedure (LGA, 2002). The public voted in favour of council ownership of the theatre and subsequently NSCC became the owner of Victoria Theatre.

## **Significant Historic Heritage of Victoria Theatre**

The Victoria Theatre plays an important part in the social fabric of the Devonport community and is believed to be the “oldest surviving purpose-built cinema building still standing in New Zealand” (Salmond & Reed, 2006, p.35). Although originally constructed in 1912 the theatres’ architectural character reflects a prevailing taste of the late 1920’s with elements of Art Deco design. Recovering its 1924 configuration and appearance will contribute to the overall significance of the building (Salmond & Reed 2006).

- In 2005 Archifact Ltd was commissioned by the Community Services Department of North Shore City Council to prepare a heritage feasibility assessment on the proposed adaptive reuse of the Victoria Theatre. Advice was provided by the NSCC commissioning agent. The brief sought to “provide respect, and enhance, where appropriate, the values and integrity of existing heritage elements” (Archifact, 2005, p. 6).

The Victoria Theatre was not registered under the provisions of the Historic Places Act 1993. However, it was scheduled Category A by the North Shore City Council in the District Plan Appendix 11A Schedule of Buildings, Objects and Places of Heritage Significance (reference No: 302) (NSCC, 2002).

This category includes buildings, objects and places which have outstanding aesthetic beauty or architectural, scientific or historical significance well beyond their immediate environment. It is of prime importance that items in Category A are protected. The exterior of buildings classified Category A together with such other elements (interior, site etc.) specified in the Schedule, are afforded protection by the Plan (NSCC 2002) section 11 no 295.

The assessment of key heritage elements which determines whether a building, object, or place is worthy of protection in the North Shore City District Plan is assessed against the following factors

- architecture
- history
- environment
- garden
- integrity

However, “it is not necessary for a place to meet all criteria in order to be scheduled in the District Plan” (Archifact, 2005 p.15). From a five-level scale the degree of significance of cultural value of the spaces and elements of Victoria Theatre was at the highest ‘A’ for exceptional significance.

### **Heritage Feasibility of Proposed Changes for the Victoria Theatre in 2005**

In 2005 the Victoria Theatre Trust (VTT) proposed to adapt and reuse the existing building based on a design prepared by Michell & Stout Architects in association with Peter Bartlett, Architect. However according to Archifact (2005) a more comprehensive inventory of surviving heritage fabric and its value was necessary and consequently key heritage elements and their values were identified.

It is necessary to assess heritage significance by considering all the elements of value in the context of a conservation plan. Failing to do so risks predetermination of the concept over existing values (Archifact, 2005 p. 36).

The changes proposed by Michell & Stout were to demolish the existing interior structure of the theatre except for the main staircase. Other proposed changes mentioned in Archifact (2005) triggered a number of additional requirements that were not reflected by Michell & Stout, which proposed removal of existing fabric which would result in the “loss of several key items that have heritage significance including the original fabric of 1912 and equally significant existing fabric of the 1929 changes” (Archifact, 2005).

Therefore as a response to the design work of Michell & Stout, the VTT were advised that a conservation plan be developed in accordance with the North Shore City Council District Plan 2002. A conservation plan is necessary when significant work or alterations are proposed accordingly and must include a statement of the significance of the heritage item, physical condition, structural integrity necessary for retaining or revealing the heritage and cultural (NSCC 2002) section 11<sup>6</sup>.

## **The Conservation Plan**

The conservation plan for Victoria Theatre was intended to assist with conservation and maintenance of the building (Salmond & Reed, 2006). The plan identified appropriate processes and procedures. According to this plan the original appearance of its principal interior space, the auditorium, may have diminished its intrinsic character when one theatre was split into two, “but these are capable of being reversed” (Salmond & Reed, 2006, p. 1).

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<sup>6</sup> 11.3.1 Buildings, Objects and Places of Heritage Significance

Objective – **1.** That buildings, objects and places of heritage significance be recognised and protected.

1 By ensuring that any demolition, alteration, work to or use of a building, object or place of heritage significance is carried out in a manner that is consistent with the heritage values of the scheduled item, including architectural quality, evidence of historical association, environmental character or historical integrity.

2 By managing the effects of activities that cause the loss of cultural heritage values associated with scheduled items to avoid, remedy or mitigate those effects.

3 By encouraging the continued use of scheduled buildings.

4 By raising public awareness of heritage values and built heritage. 5. By ensuring that the character of a scheduled building, together with any other scheduled elements on the site which add to the particular quality and character of that building rendered worthy of scheduling,

The conservation plan was recognised as a first step in developing a master plan strategy to maintain and enhance heritage values while realising an appropriate future use (Archifact, 2005). The Victoria Theatre Trust commissioned Salmond Reed Architects to produce a conservation report in conjunction with section 58 of the HPA (1993). The conservation plan sets out a series of policies, recommendations and strategies implementing essential and desirable work relating to history, architecture, landscape, people, association, conditions etc, that drew elements specific to solutions that ensured the spirit of the place was maintained.

In the Conservation Plan, Salmond Reed provided specialist professional skills and disciplines based on international best practice, in line with the (International Council for Monuments and Sites). In article 9 (ICOMOS, 1965) it states that

The process of restoration is a highly specialized operation. Its aim is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for original material and authentic documents...The restoration must be preceded and followed by an archaeological and historical study of the monument.

The ICOMOS New Zealand Charter sets out principles to guide the conservation of places of cultural heritage value in New Zealand to provide guidelines for “community leaders, organisations and individuals concerned with conservation issues. It is a statement of professional practice from members of ICOMOS New Zealand” (ICOMOS, 1995b). The Conservation Plan for Victoria Theatre produced by Salmond Reed is in keeping with the principles set out by ICOMOS.

However, plans for Victoria Theatre are constrained and limited by numerous factors which “must be taken into account in the development of a coherent and achievable conservation policy” (Salmond & Reed, 2006 p.35). Any development of the theatre for continued use is constrained by the necessity for conservation of elements of the building which are identified as having cultural significance. Identified constraints on development include<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Details of these constraints are listed on page 35 of the Conservation Plan

- Historical;
- Social;
- Architectural;
- Setting; and
- Technical.

### **Earthquake-prone Building Policy**

The North Shore City Council commissioned a report by Lewis & Williamson (2006) Consulting Engineers regarding the Earthquake-prone Buildings Policy in line with section 131 of the Building Act 2004 (NSCC 2006). Section 131 requires Territorial Authorities to adopt a policy on earthquake-prone, dangerous, and insanitary buildings within its district which must state how the policy will apply to heritage buildings.

In the North Shore City, the Territorial Authority until 2010 was the North Shore City Council (NSCC 2006). The NSCC developed the policy for earthquake-prone buildings in jurisdiction consultation with the community and in accordance with section 83 of the LGA (2002). The NSCC Earthquake-prone Buildings Policy prioritised both the identification and the requirement to strengthen heritage buildings following adoption of the policy appraisal based on the building having a “Heritage Classification of A or B under the Council’s register” (NSCC 2006). Consultation would also occur with the New Zealand Historic Places Trust if buildings are registered under Historic Places Act (1993).

The NSCC commissioned a report to investigate the “legislative situation as it related to seismic strengthening of the Victoria Theatre as an existing building” (Lewis & Williamson, 2006, p.1). This concept was first introduced LGA (1974) section 624, regarding seismic strengthening of existing unreinforced masonry buildings and was superseded by the Building Act 1991 and later clarified by the (Building Act 2004) section 122 which requires unreinforced masonry buildings to be strengthened if it were

to have its ultimate strength exceeded by a lateral load of 0.1g. This represents an increase of about 2.5 times over the check strength that applied prior to 2004.

The report also pointed to another issue that was not clear at the time relating to a new concept in the 1991 Building Act for the requirement in upgrading a building for seismic performance where there was a “change of use” of a building (Lewis & Williamson, 2006, p.5).

Where the use of a building is changed then section 46 (2) of the Act requires that:

the territorial authority be satisfied on reasonable grounds that in its new use the building will: (a) comply with the provisions of the building code for...structural...behaviour...as near as is reasonably practicable to the same extent as if it were a new building.

The interpretation of “change of use” was unclear to critics, as there was no definition given in the Act.

However, this was clarified in the 2004 Building Act 115 “Change of Use” and means

“to change the use of all or part of a building from one use to another with the result that the requirements for compliance with the building code in relation to the new use are in addition to, or more onerous than, the requirements for compliance with the building code in relation to the old use” (Lewis & Williamson, 2006, p.6).

This raises the question regarding the seismic strength of the Victoria Theatre in relation to how many people it can hold and the long term design plan for the theatre.

Since the Lewis & Williamson report (2006) the NSCC Environmental Services issued their Earthquake-prone Buildings Policy (NSCC 2006). The policy states that:

It does not wish to see the intrinsic heritage values of these buildings adversely affected by structural improvements measure. Any upgrading work required to reduce a danger must take into account the principles of the International Council

on Monuments and Sites NZ Charter... the council will consult with their Senior Heritage Advisor to identify a mutually acceptable way forward while preserving the heritage value of the building (NSCC, 2006, p. 7).

### **Final Registration of an Historic Place**

The consistency between the reports, legislation, local government processes, conservation plan and procedures undertaken by the VTT enabled the Victoria Theatre to gain category one protection as a significant building by New Zealand Historic Places Trust. In March 2007 Victoria Theatre was awarded final registration of an historic place (NZHPT, 2007b).

A proposal for registration was written by the VTT based on the Conservation Plan for the Victoria Theatre (Salmond & Reed, 2006) and sent to NZHPT. Further details for the proposal were supplied by NZHPT (2007b). In March 2007 the VTT received a letter to say that the Victoria Theatre had received a Category Two status on the Register (NZHPT 2007b). A month later the VTT received a second letter regarding final registration for Victoria Theatre which had been upgraded to Category One (NZHPT 2007a).

The NZHPT considered Victoria Theatre had sufficient significance to merit inclusion on the Register on the grounds of its architectural, cultural, historical, social and technological significance or value.

Questions remain about the significance of heritage values within policy documents.

A panel of experts note significant misunderstanding about heritage and its value with the lack of common definition of historic heritage in major heritage legislation. There is little recognition of concepts of social value and cultural significance. Intangible values need to assume greater prominence as these reflect the contemporary, evolving values of indigenous communities (Donaghey, 2006, p. 250).

Serious evaluation of heritage values is necessary. The RMA and District Plans need clarification. The ICOMOS New Zealand Charter is unclear. Heritage values are lost, through indistinct definitions and guidelines within policy documents. Further investigation is required to identify intangible heritage values within the built environment to retain their historic and aesthetic qualities. In the next chapter I turn towards an exploration of heritage values through the aesthetic to uncover the part that aesthetic values play in defining heritage values.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

The aim of chapter five was to assess documents and literature relating to identification and clarification of heritage values within the public policy. The following chapter explores the nature of heritage values as they relate to the aesthetic. It was important to transcribe semi-structured interviews with seven key informants myself. Each participant was involved with the Victoria Theatre in various ways. I analysed the transcriptions to provide insight into the essence and notion of the 'aesthetic' and identified themes. Since a phenomenological approach was taken within each interview, I have allowed the key informants to tell their story in their own words. The stories are arranged in themes and each theme identifies certain values. The stories express the 'lived experience' to convey the phenomenology of aesthetic and heritage values.

#### **How the research was conducted**

The Victoria Theatre celebrated its grand opening while I was in the field interviewing. Key informants reflected on their 'lived experience' when describing events, feelings, memories that had occurred in the lead up to the re-opening of Victoria Theatre in October 2010. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the Victoria Theatre itself. For some participants it had been two years since they had stepped back into the theatre. Other participants were actively involved in current work leading up to the grand opening. The ambience of the heritage theatre provided the ideal setting for

respondents to reflect. Interviews held within the Victoria Theatre enabled participants to ‘soak up the atmosphere’ while reflecting on their experiences and impressions.

Eight indicative questions were asked during interviews relating to the value and significance of cultural and historic heritage pertaining to Victoria Theatre from an aesthetic perspective. Central themes discussed centred around

- importance, appeal and cultural well being
- motivation to be involved in the project
- aesthetic sense, experience and significance
- subjective decision making, governing policy under the Historic Places Act

### **How themes were identified**

I felt that it was important to transcribe the interviews myself and I listened to each transcription several times. Data was initially grouped according to the questions. Mind maps were constructed, one large chart per theme. Multiple colours on the charts assisted in identifying the base question. There were fifteen mind-maps in total.

I created word documents listing bullet points from the mind-maps. The main aim was to continue analysing themes in such a way that I could trace data back to the original interview. A useful system in tracking data was introduced, by producing hard copies at each stage when collating

- original transcriptions
- themes arising from central questions
- mind-mapping
- a further layer of themes identified

The key objective was to identify aesthetic and heritage values through the ‘lived experience’. The themes relate to the nature and quality of aesthetic in which all values can be found.

## **Unique Character**

### *Location, unique features, cultural well being, being pleasurable*

Nestled within the village of Devonport, Victoria Theatre is the pinnacle building for the peninsula, an icon. Key informants commented “If only people realised the little treasure they have” or “Devonport should be so proud to have this, it’s a gift actually” are some of the feelings conveyed during interviews. Victoria Theatre adds to an already unique identity of Devonport and for 98 years has given pleasure to those who visit her. One key informant mentioned that “I don’t think consciously about the issues of identity, I just feel it”. Key informants mentioned that some members of the community could not let the theatre go because they had had good times there and thought that others should have the same opportunity to enjoy the theatre too.

This notion, of ‘being pleasurable’ describes an aesthetic sense in a simplistic way. Key informants feel that the community in which the theatre “lives” share this aesthetic experience. ‘Being pleasurable’ is a fundamental value of aesthetic philosophy, one that has nonetheless come under increasing critique in the last half-century (Shusterman & Tomlin, 2008). Victoria Theatre is precious and prized very highly for being pleasurable.

Over nearly 100 years, similar events have taken place within this theatre. Visitors would be looking at the same brick wall at the back of the stage and would walk up the same marble staircase. What this means is that somehow this destination has a link to the past, where similar experiences were shared. The value and significance of cultural and historic heritage is that it provides this link.

"Time is no longer primarily a gulf to be bridged, because it separates, but it is actually the supportive ground of process in which the present is rooted. Hence temporal distance is not something that must be overcome. This was, rather, the naive assumption of historicism, namely that we must set ourselves within the spirit of the age, and think with its ideas and its thoughts, not with our own, and thus advance towards historical objectivity. In fact the important thing is to recognise the distance in time as a positive and productive possibility of understanding. It is not a yawning abyss, but is filled with the continuity of custom and tradition, in the light of which all that is handed down presents itself to us." (Gadamer cited in Gilmour, 1986, p. 171).

Since 1912 Victoria Theatre has been a draw card and an important building in the main street of Devonport. The theatre, a large imposing building, presides over Devonport at the North entrance to the village. The size is a function of what it actually does and for that reason it is important in the streetscape. The theatre is a commercial enterprise. Perhaps more exuberant architecturally because it was built for entertainment, the theatre provides a social hub and character for Devonport.

During the first decade in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when the theatre wasn't doing anything, it was disappointing to see a closed, empty theatre. People would arrive by ferry, walk past the lovely Windsor Reserve and when they got to the top of the street, there it was, old, derelict and seemingly uncared for. Victoria Theatre is one of the oldest purpose built cinemas still standing in the Southern Hemisphere. It has stood the test of time and was built to last. The following quote from the Victoria Theatre Conservation Plan presents the unique characteristic of the place in which it is situated.

By the first decade of the twentieth century Devonport was a well developed retail and commercial centre. Its increasing importance following the establishment of Auckland was due to the citing of the important signal station on Mount Victoria and later the establishment of a naval base in the settlement. Devonport became a Borough in 1886, by which time it was established as the principal landing place on the North Shore of the Waitemata Harbour for overland traffic to the north.

With a resident population of over 7,000, the community was well able to support the growing entertainment trend of cinema (Salmond & Reed, 2006, p. 6).

The Victoria Theatre represents architecture of the early 1900s, refurbished during the art deco period of late 1920s. The theatre adds to the identity of Devonport. One key informant commented that “history is right here”. Another key informant remarked that the heritage building was protected by people who “honour this history and are happy to be part of it”.

The chandelier hangs from the ceiling and is part of the unique look of the theatre. The ‘Crying Room’ is still there which has a window so parents could see the screen or stage if the baby or children were restless. This is the only theatre of its kind so “you don’t want to get rid of it when there is only one left” remarked one key informant. The theatre serves as a reminder for people who have been here before and when they come back they feel connected to the community and to their past experience. Old photos “which takes you back” are also a reminder of times before when it was one open auditorium with the circle upstairs, before the theatre was split into three levels during 1980s. The same respondent said “Children who saw the Punch and Judy show will remember seeing it at the Victoria Theatre.” Victoria Theatre triggers memories and experiences from the past which might be considered part of the aesthetic.

As a public place architecturally of the time, old photos show the Victoria Theatre when it had lobbies, foyers, lounges with sofas, armchairs and florid carpets. Making agreeable, nice places to be during an era when some great architecture took place is what is interesting about the theatre. Originally the second level was like a living room or a drawing room, people would go there to smoke. The hope is that maybe one day the foyer might be recovered. Several participants expressed the desire to see the theatre fully restored back to its original 1929 condition. This would provide a 300-400 seat venue and “there is a need in Auckland for a theatre of this capacity” according to one key informant.

The experience of going upstairs coming into big spaces that were different from domestic spaces that people were used too, would still be like an adventure a

progressive discovery, like it was “in the old days”. Features are preserved from previous incarnations. For example the proscenium arch with the waterfall curtain sits over the stage where the sight lines are really well thought out. People sat looking at the same stage. The proscenium arch provided a frame for the performances and is the focal point within the building. The proscenium arch sets the scene for what occurred nearly 100 years ago connecting the past with the present.

During the first decade in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when the theatre was an unused derelict old building, many residents in Devonport were confronted with the alarming reality of the Victoria Theatre being converted into apartments. The very real concern was that if this was made into apartments, it would have killed the theatre, just one small step back from demolition. The community took this to heart and felt that its soul would be destroyed, its whole reason to be there. To turn the theatre into apartments was untenable. However the community embraced Victoria Theatre, to them the theatre was not a dilapidated building it was just old with the intrinsic quality of a theatre described by one key informant as “shabby chic”.

With an enormous amount of energy and vision, the Victoria Theatre survived keeping its essence for what it was. “It’s got it’s old thing happening it’s old vibe”. The Victoria Theatre kept its integrity as a multi-purpose theatre and cinema, continuing its life for what it was built for reflecting traditions of the era and as part of the old historic village of Devonport. The Victoria Theatre has not been compromised and has a right to be there, presiding over the street. “This is respect” and is special in that the significant historic theatre still continues its same life for what it was built for.

### **Motivation for protection of a theatre**

#### ***Memories, stories, understanding, passion***

Passion for theatre and specifically heritage theatre is clearly a key factor in motivating support for the Victoria Theatre project. But what drives this passion, where does it

come from? Key informants described the factors that motivated their passion and energy to protect, promote and preserve Victoria Theatre.

The stories that surfaced during the interviews were rich and varied. Mostly, but not all, were stories relating back to childhood memories. Dewey (1920) writes that childhood memories arise from interpretations, determined long before personal and deliberate control was attained during the childhood years. All key informants who reflected on childhood memories related to experiences and associations which seemed to trigger motivation and passion for theatre and the arts.

Key themes arose and were based on a memory, a connection to the past or a cultural experience relating to the past, almost fantasy in a sense because “you could loose yourself in this other world” believed one key informant. Stories attached to the Victoria Theatre provided “a feeling of holding our past, taking us back,” described by another key informant as:

Architecture becomes hugely interesting and because with old buildings you necessarily try and understand the providence of old buildings, the underlying social mission and message and who was there, the history of the place and you get completely seduced by that and then as you do more you see how they all link in the past...So you begin to get a sense of the social scale and complexity of another age before us and that whole idea of what ‘heritage’ actually is, its’ what we’ve received from the past and it’s very compelling.

The Victoria Theatre has been part of people’s lives for a long time. For most residents, the theatre has always been here. Heritage buildings are more than just buildings. People remember things all the time and tell stories about what happened here. The stories are part of a continuum, the continuum of cultural heritage and being part of “something bigger”. The theatre provided a space “when going to the pictures was important before telly...it’s a world outside of home...the other church of the community”.

As people become immersed in stories, history and simply by just spending time around old buildings soaking up heritage, an aesthetic consciousness appears to grow. Subconsciously an appreciation grows and people gain deeper understanding for “something bigger”. That is

“what is wonderful when working with heritage buildings, because it’s about everything that was, everything that now is and everything that might be”.

Heritage isn’t so much about looking back it’s more about looking forward and keeping its essence. Working with heritage is quite difficult when there is no relevance. “So it’s important that a building like the Victoria Theatre is used as it was originally designed for, that is what keeps it alive” (Key Informant). But it needs the human impulse to do so, and that’s why having a group of people such as the Victoria Theatre Trust who can give their time and effort are important in keeping the theatre alive. This passion for the Victoria Theatre is part of a belief in adding to the collective good. One key informant recalls, with fondness, this memory.

“In the 1980s there were various live performances here, one was a play called ‘The Hostage’ in which I had the only serious part. It’s an Irish farce, and I had the part as the IRA Officer. We performed up here on this sloping stage and the crazy thing was the rest of the cast, had all these eeget roles....It’s the Irish way of saying idiot. So they were all eegets. Well in every performance the eegets were going around doing stupid things and this guy comes on whose dead straight...It was interesting because we performed here and as you know it’s a sloping stage which from my knowledge is where the term ‘upstaging someone’ came from. So if you went upstage, the other actor would have to turn around and therefore be side on or back on to the audience...There is a little bit of ‘off stage’, stage right and even less to the left. Some times we had so many people exiting stage left before the curtain came down to get to the other side we would have to clamber up the bricks because the bricks were a bit step like and there would be people perched on there just to get a few more people off the stage”.

Childhood experiences had a lot of bearing in appreciation for the heritage theatre. Going to loads of art galleries and being able to discuss the work provided stimulation and appreciation for the arts. Falling in love with a picturesque home that looked like something out of Anne of Green Gables triggered a love for old things for one key informant.

It seems that being surrounded by heritage buildings informs you without knowing it. It seems that childhood memories influences their adult views on heritage.

I don't try to convert people to heritage, you can't truly convert people, I mean if they hate old things they hate old things, it's like we speak a foreign language, you love them or you hate them. It's just as hard for me to convince them as it is for them to convince me that there is no value, they couldn't convince me of that ever, so how can I convince them. It is actually a taste thing, in the end. Because some people say why would you want something old when you can have something new, and they can't see it. So I just know that you can't make people think what they don't feel actually, but you can convince some people some of the time.

The Victoria Theatre has played an important part in the social fabric of the Devonport community, as a place of public entertainment – especially in the pre-television era – and as an occasional venue for public meetings... This is the heritage value described in the Victoria Theatre Conservation Plan (Salmond & Reed, 2006). The North Shore City Council's role under the Section 6(f) of the Resource Management Act 1991 was required to recognise and provide for, as a matter of national importance, the recognition and protection of heritage values of sites, buildings, places or areas.

## **The Significance of Cultural Heritage**

### ***Cohesion***

For any funding agency to take this project seriously, a conservation report was required because

“that’s ticking off a whole lot of things you need around the history and organisation’s commitment to doing things properly. You have got to have all the right people in place”.

At the same time there were other priorities to consider. For example when trying to convince an architect, town planner or councillor about the heritage merits of a building, then the best way to approach this is by rallying the community, showing commitment for doing things properly. Not only does this show that the right people have been involved, it also demonstrates that there are a group of people involved and not just one person pushing their agenda.

When asked to consider the aesthetic in terms of policy, each key informant’s response was completely unique. In fact at this point, it became difficult to establish common themes.

From an administrative perspective and for the purpose of funding or assessments or anything to do with applications for heritage “you’ve got to cover off a whole lot of different points of view, so some of them will be just about the architectural merit” (Key Informant). These matters relate to just the physical aspects of a building, for example a building may have certain types of windows that are a unique representation of its era.

It was through stories, memories, songs that ultimately struck a chord at council level. The emotional response resonated within the council chamber.

Cultural heritage is more around the stories so that’s much, much broader because its’ about that buildings’ place in its’ life time and the stories, but it’s also about communities and how the past influences parts of their lives in the future...so if your thinking about strategic cultural preservation also, often you’ve got to convince a whole lot of different people about the importance...planners, funders and communities who may just want a nice bit of space rather than that huckery old building there (Key Informant).

These comments demonstrate the political nature of decision making processes surrounding cultural and historic heritage. However, from a cultural perspective, the emphasis shifted to become more about stories that make up the history of the place.

As a result of stories, songs, poems presented to council a unanimous decision was made for North Shore City Council to buy the Victoria Theatre. The media was present keen to record a song written and performed by Tim Finn as his submission to council.

Singing a song was the best way former Split Enz frontman Tim Finn could think of to convince a New Zealand city council meeting to save an historic theatre. He strummed a guitar and pleaded in a specially composed song to preserve the theatre on Auckland's North Shore, the *New Zealand Herald* reported. "It's not the best song I ever wrote but I'm passionate about the Victoria Theatre in Devonport," Finn told councilors. The song described the 1912 building as a beautiful theatre and included the refrain: "How could you let her down?" Finn's song was one of 184 submissions for or against the council buying the building and using it as a performing arts venue. "It sounds a bit flaky but there's a magic and atmosphere in a theatre," he said. "If it's pulled down and turned into apartments you have lost a performing space." Finn said the theatre was perfect for acoustic shows and he would like to launch his new album there. <http://www.smh.com.au>

The VTT and supporters rallied to protect the theatre by presenting many stories about why the theatre was important to them, stories about the history and culture, the events that took place. Many letters of support were written and all these combined led towards convincing the council to buy the theatre.

The commitment demonstrated by the community was overwhelming. For three full days the community presented submissions to council, demonstrating their determination in protecting the theatre. The submissions were passionate, and entertaining and aimed at convincing North Shore City Council to buy the theatre. The first major milestone for heritage protection of Victoria Theatre occurred when a unanimous decision by council was made in favour of buying the theatre, including the

mayor and his allies who were previously against the idea of council owning the theatre.

## **Immersion**

### *Soaking up the atmosphere*

Key respondents were asked “where do you think your sense of an aesthetic experience has come from?” One response was

It certainly comes out of my training, yes, and then because you immerse yourself in the work of others and you immerse yourself in historical enquiry if you like and because you start to think along those lines. The thing with buildings is that you create buildings, it’s a bit like what I was saying a building has a form and it’s created just to provide a certain functional programme so in this case it’s a whole lot of people looking at a screen, so it could be just a box with no decoration at all so we are compelled to decorate in some way or to ornament. Sometimes the architecture is the ornament and sometimes the architecture can be very abstracted and not have any evident aesthetic programme because its really the elements of the architecture are the aesthetic. So where windows go or how windows are made where the windows are windows whether they are slots or screens, that’s how you make an aesthetic.

Another respondent described their aesthetic experience as coming from memories.

Seeing Mrs Henderson Presents at the Victoria Theatre, reminds me of my great aunties who used to sing and do mad stuff, I bet they were all in places like this...old memories being able to replicate the past...the further back you go, the more you’ll find...Kind of rag and bone antique dealer in us all that likes a place like this...All the ferreters would love this building, it’s the historical aspect....To set the stage the scene the feel, in any realm...to get people to really understand (theatre) you’ve got to immerse them into that. They’ve got to be fully immersed. So an old Victorian Picture Theatre which this is, to get people fully understanding why that’s so important otherwise you’re just partially doing it.

We've got to try and get all their senses to really emotionally engage people and that's what your doing here with this theatre, emotionally engaging people. So they become passionate and fall in love with it. I think that's how you do it, I don't know, I've only been in my life once. I think that's how you do it, it's the emotional engagement.

The same key informant went on to say the following.

My job as a producer and artistic director...is to really, really find the best possible way of immersing people into understanding why (preservation is important)...it's not just drive by art...capturing people's imagination...It wasn't about ME putting plays on, I mean I'd love to do something in here eventually, but it was much more about that. Without that, without the preservation what's the point of even thinking about doing a production. Whereas a lot of people just have no concept of getting a building like this preserved and up and running...Well look at the Civic (in Auckland city). Another thing as well is my grand father used to do sound effects for silent movies. A lot of it is my genetic past from all those people, from designers and you know, that kind of mad cap thing which has also helped in understanding what this is about....it's that fun loving free spirit that just adores music and production...and knowing lots of other people who do as well. You know a creative clubhouse.

Yet another response was

Love the upstairs...there is some sort of presence...it's more raw...when it was just one theatre...old-time photos just bring it back and I wish I was there back in that time...I still like the rawness...Reminds me of horror movies, I'm sure there's a ghost here...part of the ambience...I like the bricks on the stage, it's not modern... Aesthetic means the look and feel the time it was built and rebuilt again and the history and the architecture. I think it is isn't it I believe it is. It has to be, its integral to this building and the preservation of the building and you've got to appreciate it, if it was a completely modern building inside and someone wanted to come along and build apartments no problem they wouldn't have a problem

getting the ok for that. Funny I've spoken to an architect friend of mine in Christchurch and I told him about this building and he's totally not for keeping the old, what is here and he goes "oh those people, get rid of them, you can't keep the old stylised buildings, you can't, you've got to change and move with the times because it's too difficult to keep them, and he goes "no you've to modern everything up". I was like, oh then I shouldn't be talking you about this then and I think to myself thanks, thanks for the input... Isn't it wonderful to see something from ages gone by, and you go wow, that's beautiful keep that there and we'll still develop else where. That's what I think. But why do people go to museums, they want to see how people lived... This is like a living theatre.

#### Another response

The environment we create our various senses connect with and help us get an emotional link with something... The way something is brought together to appeal to people... It's a very personal thing

#### Again another response

Some might think the colourful art deco is gaudy, whereas I think its aesthetically pleasing because its cheery its bright... It speaks of another age almost sort of a circus feel to the place... Something helped create expectations and helped deliver on expectations... Generally some commonality, it's the total package... Creativity enhances the aesthetics in things

The aesthetic values described by key informants resonates with Risatti (1987) who indicated that aesthetics is closely related to the development of values in society. The aesthetic value described here is one of immersion, when entering the Victoria Theatre, for example, a sense of the past presents itself into the present. Reimer and Smith (1992) describe immersion as an aesthetic interaction with a work of art that brings immediacy, a knowing about the content within the artwork. Therefore the aesthetic experience draws on a type of knowing that has arisen from the past, that has been brought into the present and is projected in to the future based on current knowledge.

Aesthetic and heritage have much in common. In this case they share the same values, through aesthetic and historical/cultural heritage appreciation. Through immersion, each one of us brings our own understanding and knowledge to the current environment.

## **Emotional Responses**

### *Celebration, communication, commemoration*

“The art deco features of Victoria Theatre are not that beautiful frankly”(Key Informant). The appeal for supporters of Victoria Theatre was that this gathering place provided a space of entertainment where enormous fun, happiness, joyfulness and good times are to be had. The theatre was a place to meet for old times sake where people gathered, “celebrated, communicated and commemorated” (Key Informant). The theatre provided a sense of excitement where “you know you’re coming to something special. “My parents first met here on a blind date”. The sense is a feeling people get when there is an emotional link to the past “kind of thing”. It’s what appeals and “sometimes you can’t specifically say what it is”.

The physical appeal of the theatre might create a certain ambience through the architecture or design. An aesthetic sense might also be felt through a cultural experience within the theatre. It transports one. But it is very difficult to put a dollar value on the aesthetic experience. “At our peril city fathers ignore the cultural value in connecting with the past, it’s a difficult balance of economics to honour the past, celebrate the present and protect the future” (Key Informant).

People in the village can still walk to the theatre as they did 100 years ago which is part of the heritage tradition that was passed on. Yet the theatre was standing empty when a key informant, first discovered it. This is how the key informant described her emotional response when she first discovered the Victoria Theatre.

When I walked in those doors all those years ago I couldn’t believe it (Victoria Theatre) was just sitting there. I was ashamed to be a kiwi seeing it like that. It’s

the Italian in me....I could see what Victoria Theatre could be...It seems unbelievably obvious to me and I think its my cultural up bringing. I thought this is a lot of work, a lot, and I remember that brick wall represents brick by brick by brick...Immense effort I knew, (in driving the campaign)... it's like stepping in, throwing myself in...but knowing we don't have a building anywhere like this in Auckland...Hand in glove product of architect town planner father and set designer mother...Passion from protecting a beautiful old building that's a theatre...we haven't even tickled on theatre in NZ yet....It's like a show where you get all the foundations right, people on board before the curtain goes up.

The immediate gut reaction when there was talk of changing the theatre was,

“oh no you can't do that you can't change that building...I started falling in love with old buildings...I go round taking pictures of really decrepit places and I love them, I've probably always loved history”

It must be a hell of a challenge for the decision makers with all the changes occurring (since the earthquake in Canterbury and the transition into Auckland super-city). It's difficult to get the right balance and not an easy decision to preserve or destroy buildings. How our city fathers allowed that crap, nasty 70's boxes in Devonport, its an abomination and a blight on the village.

Another key informant commented that the theatre was not a church but it was like one in that it invoked the higher mysteries of life.

My response to heritage buildings is just emotional, it really is, I love them they are important they shouldn't go...I haven't analysed why exactly, I don't think most people do. It's just that I love them they belong, they should be here, I love going into old buildings, I love feeling the old wood. I just have an absolute emotional response, which is 'oh isn't this beautiful'. Now I don't go and try and work out why I think it's beautiful....I think anyone that loves heritage buildings has a sense of the aesthetic, if you think about it consciously or not. In fact, you know its only because you ask these questions that I have been thinking about it.

The emotional response to Victoria Theatre is not just perceived as an individual feeling of a specific emotion, in this case love and appreciation for the heritage theatre, but a universalised emotional state that is shared by many people (Shusterman & Tomlin, p. 110). This is the aesthetic.

### **A sense of permanence**

*Classical ideas, welcoming, relevant, continuity, tradition, fitting in, simplicity, representation*

Victoria Theatre will stay under the protection of New Zealand Historic Places Trust for its entire natural life. Victoria Theatre reminds people, not just of an era gone by but, of a time when there was more permanence. “That’s what we are celebrating, giving the community the gift of some more permanence”.

Heritage is also about relevance, when a building is used in the way it was meant. That is what keeps the building alive. Heritage is about looking forward and keeping it relevant for what we are doing now. A building that fits into the context creates a continuum. The continuum creates a sense of permanence but it needs the human impulse to do so. It needs good people who give their time and effort.

It is not just about what the Victoria Theatre looks like that is important, but what it represents. Continuity of what was there provided an old feel. “I love going back to the old times...I love hearing stories of people who have come here”. A sense of permanence is described as follows

An aesthetic appreciation might be one of simplicity, scale, orderliness, not to shock, that is aesthetics...Classical ideas follow the rules, rules that were being broken for the sake of being genius...There is a beauty in simplicity, pitched roofs straight up walls and if you follow these it leads to an aesthetic beauty. If you break the rules to do something original and new, to shock and surprise people, then it becomes more about a personal expression for the architect...I would rather have a little house that blends into the background rather than have something stand out ‘wow look at me’... Modernism is about trying to be

original and trying to redesign, but people should have the courage to stay with classical ideas...It's simply 'good manners' to fit in...we enjoy order in our lives

The reason why we like order in our lives is that

One is the scale, heritage buildings are often of a more human scale so they are more accessible, they are not skyscrapers even the big buildings aren't that big, but there is a scale that is more interesting and comfortable perhaps. But I think the other thing is that they are more classical, the beauty is simply in classical type architectural shapes and sizes and designs and that is pleasing to people and what is also pleasing about old buildings is a series of old buildings is their consistency, this is what happens in Devonport with the old villas, there is a consistency of design and shape a street of villas. Why is that so attractive, it is attractive it simply is attractive. That's why people love the Paris streets or Italian villages because you see the same buildings, you see they all look the same, they are built of the same material they are the same height and find them pleasing...and its because we like order in our lives.

Another reason why we like order in our lives is that

there is something pleasing and orderly and comforting actually about buildings that all look the same and fit in together and I think that also when you have buildings of classical designs which are either simple cottages or more ornate, simply classical shapes and designs they don't shock you like the new ones do.

There is something orderly, pleasing and comforting about an old building of simple classical designs

“The new is all about shocking and breaking the boundaries and pushing things and so a lot of modern architecture is about being original. Heritage architecture wasn't about being original it was fitting in, it was about consistency, it was about giving a lovely homogenous feel about a place that we love...and that's why Devonport has been so successful as a place because so much of it has been kept, we don't just have little pockets, there's a whole feel of protection here...it's that

love of or the comfort of order. Villas turn their faces to the street, they are welcoming they don't hide behind great big block fence and that sort of thing. It's a much more welcoming neighbourly approach and helps create a neighbourly feel about a place which is really important. It's the same with the bigger buildings, it's never too big they are always within the scale and the proportions are pleasant they are not out to break any rules. There is a really important aesthetic value in them that we don't always know why we like it, but I believe that's why we like it. It's that whole thing, there's something comforting about them and the fact that they've been here so long is comforting as well actually. You know you feel like your fitting into a continuum just living in the space of your life time that your part of something bigger and you know that's huge that's what heritage is all about...What we've got now has to be kept for future generations so you know you're part of this continuum.

De Botton (2007) is an architect and describes the importance of orderliness in providing a sense of permanence.

Architectural order attracts us too, as a defence against feelings of over-complication. We welcome man-made environments that grant us an impression of regularity and predictability, on which we can rely to rest our minds. We don't in the end, much like surprises (p. 182)

"We require that our environments act as guardians of a calmness and direction on which we have a precarious hold. The architects who benefit us most may be those generous enough to lay aside their claims to genius in order to devote themselves to assembling graceful but predominately unoriginal boxes. Architecture should have the confidence and the kindness to be a little boring (p. 183).

### **A story within a story**

*Emotional link, connection, relating to a memory "but something bigger than that"*

One theory proposed by a key informant is that aesthetics is a concept that is far too subjective for making assessments on the heritage value of older buildings. This is because an emotional response towards an old derelict building differs from one person to another. Aesthetic judgements are a matter of taste.

The value and significance of historic buildings are more easily identifiable when assessed on heritage values and therefore safer to argue for. If buildings were assessed on aesthetic value the argument might be that an old building is simply ugly or unappealing. These values are subjective and are based on a judgment of taste which is difficult to assess.

It also appears that an appreciation for heritage buildings is greater when an appreciation for aesthetics is understood. For example, some buildings maybe old and grungy and not considered aesthetically pleasing as a heritage building. However, an appreciation for the aesthetic value of an old grungy building might enhance its heritage value.

Here I attempt to explain the logic of this discussion. The Victoria Theatre is considered by some as just an old building. But when people understand the history and architectural features, a new perspective is added to the appeal of Victoria Theatre. This is an aesthetic quality. Another way in which an aesthetic quality was identified is through an emotional link based on tradition. A story or a memory provides a connection about film or theatre which is aesthetically appropriate within a cultural tradition that many locals can relate too. This is an emotional connection, an aesthetic quality, endears Victoria Theatre by situating the old theatre into the wider context and creating 'something bigger', like a story within a story. This emotional link connects Victoria Theatre to a story or a memory or an experience which many people can relate too, providing an aesthetic quality.

Aesthetics is a tool that enables context, connection, tradition, relevance, part of who we are through emotional responses to celebrate, communicate and commemorate cultural and historic heritage. Therefore the aesthetic might be identified as a useful way to

assess, enhance and protect the local built environment within the boundaries of heritage guidelines.

### **Simply good manners**

Large modern buildings made out of glass, steel and concrete which tower over modest traditional architecture might scream “Wow look at me” (Key Informant). The obsession with demolition of heritage buildings such as His Majesty’s Theatre during the 1980s in Auckland might be justified by becoming more modern. After all some people don’t like old things, especially when you can have new things. Being modern is associated with new, young, original, fashionable, the latest, what’s different and experimental. From an architectural perspective Auckland city’s skyline began to change as older character buildings were replaced with new tall glass and steel structures.

From an aesthetic perspective heritage advocates, from Devonport Heritage for example “might prefer a kinder and more gentle approach to modern building developments” (Key Informant). The approach is one of respect for the past and being true to the original design. Collectively, key informants describe the notion of enhancing a place but without being brutal. There is strength in the idea of being kind and possibly a little boring about architecture. By going back to the roots, understanding a sense of history in the case of Victoria Theatre dating back to early 1800s one might be inspired to link the past with the present but with a new twist. Maybe aesthetics are about core values such as being graceful and welcoming about fitting in or simply showing good manners (Key Informants).

One key informant commented that with heritage projects people don’t always realise it’s lost until it’s gone. Heritage is something that unless you have an interest in something it can be overlooked. “It’s definitely about the story and the community...I do get a wow from looking at something that looks amazing, but I get more of a wow if there’s a story there about the community”(Key Informant). Stories about architectural

things, are stories about what were fashions and why things were done in a certain way (Key Informant).

### **Catherine's cute factor**

Catherine explained that her assessment of heritage buildings was rated on Catherine's cute factor, a scale devised to assess the merit of a heritage building. Catherine had an old shed in the back of her garden and she explains how different people value different buildings in many different ways.

*No body is going to look at an old shed for example, and say oh my gosh, what a beautiful aesthetically pleasing shed that is you've got there, but to me it is*

I love going and seeing, if you're talking about buildings, I love going and seeing beautiful buildings.

I mean that's what you think it's (aesthetics) about being beautifully and visually pleasing, but that's in the eye of the beholder anyway, because I like something. I have a rickety old, probably from when our house was built, or it might have been older than that it might have been a previous house, a rickety old garden shed in our back yard that was probably from about the 1930's or something, there's holes that the cats can get in and I love it because it sits underneath the plum tree and its beautiful and no body is going to look at it, oh my gosh, what a beautiful aesthetically pleasing shed that is you've got in your back garden, but to me it is....and they developed this little joke about how there was Catherine's cute factor, but I was like but it's so cute look at it and then they have this joke, so this rates highly on your cute factor, then, look at the picture, look its so cute. You know other people might not find that so great but those are the kind of things that appeal to me.

Catherine is basing funding decisions on the cute factor. However Catherine has also admitted that her 'cute factor' has a higher chance on her scale when she goes to visit the building because it adds to the aesthetic appeal.

I mean a wooden church looks like a wooden church looks like a wooden church, you know, if your not an architect or something. But actually then if you've done the drive up the driveway or along the thing past the trees along the gate it gives you a whole other idea

It seems that experiencing a moment in time within a particular context adds to the memories and stories but as part of the bigger picture. Maybe this is meant by the term 'but it's more than that'. Somehow the aesthetic experience of a heritage building became a story within a story. Maybe that was meant by "the further back you go, the more you'll find" to find a deeper and richer appreciation.

To try to present a case for protecting a heritage theatre or a shed based on aesthetic values is too broad. The trouble with using aesthetics as a criteria for judging its value or significance for heritage protection, is that the term aesthetic is very subjective and no-one actually knows what it means. This is in fact a major theme to emerge. For example how can a decision be made based on the aesthetics if beauty is in the eye of the beholder? What is aesthetically appealing to one person may not be pleasing to another and therefore making policy decisions on aesthetic merits becomes very difficult.

An old historic building might not be terribly pleasing to look at and some people don't have the imagination to see what it could look like. Some people just can't see beyond what is there and think that it is a horrible building...But the building can be bought back to its original design...There is a danger in making judgements on the way a building looks, so the criteria for protecting a heritage building should be based on heritage, on the age because that is safer and easier to manage...You can't legislate on aesthetic criteria rules to protect a building on aesthetic merits are really hard to write.

When a building is beautiful it is easier to convey things like it is ‘classical’, intact and in keeping with its surroundings. A lot of heritage buildings don’t have these qualities, but they are still terribly important to protect. The concept of aesthetics is a difficult one to argue, aesthetics doesn’t provide a basis for protection. Public policy has got to be ascertained in a clinical way, evaluated on paper. There is no box that you can tick for an emotional response.

Yet the assessment criteria within the Conservation Plan for Victoria Theatre places value on aesthetic significance.

“Whether a feature has aesthetic significance due to its contribution to the overall unity of the design of the building or whether an element of that feature makes a corresponding contribution to its aesthetic integrity, or has intrinsic aesthetic qualities which are valued by the community” (Salmond & Reed, 2006, p.28).

Catherine’s cute factor relies on a feeling, something that is aesthetically pleasing to either look at or find out about, from a historical sense. The aesthetic value can not be avoided, therefore the thesis aims to continue to analyse that part the aesthetic values play in identifying the significance of a heritage building.

## **The difficulty in arguing a case for aesthetic appreciation**

### ***The Case for Ordinarity***

It is difficult to illustrate the complexity associated with an aesthetic appeal in relation to determining heritage significance and deciding whether or not a building should be protected.

The point is that buildings are sometimes considered historic because they are aesthetically pleasing to look at, and these are often the buildings that are easy to make a case for. Buildings might get on lists because they are architecturally good, but ‘aesthetics’ doesn’t deal with issues of historic significance. Or does it?

“One of the great difficulties you have is persuading the great unwashed that grungy old buildings are also historic, because they are not aesthetic they are not pretty they are not elegant and beautifully decorated, so for some people in the community it’s hard to understand their importance as part of our heritage”

The buildings that are industrial for example are not a thing of classical beauty, so some people may question their value and significance. Heritage experts in the field may respond that our history is not just made up of just lovely things

“It’s all very well knowing about palaces and kings and queens and all that but it’s what ordinary folk did that’s interesting. That’s our real heritage. The grand things look after themselves because they are grand because they represent a sort of pinnacle of excess and achievement and great skill and money...But if I have a personal view of what heritage is, it’s about ordinariness, what you might call the vernacular, its representative of past lives. I think that is the most interesting part of history, what ordinary folk, because it explains how our cities and mass take shape. It explains the aesthetics of townscape because aesthetic doesn’t just relate to buildings, you can take an entire street and say that has an agreeable quality it has an aesthetic that is a combination of the forms of buildings, the way they are resolved architecturally, the way they are decorated the way they sit in these sites, the way these sites sit in the street where they are in relation to the street, where they are in relation to foliage trees and so on. So you have an urban aesthetics or a town aesthetic which I think is hugely important, and that’s a product of decisions made a long time ago... then the wonderful softening of time makes it all gel into the entire thing, this is the argument that underlies the importance of managing what people do with their house, limiting what you can do because while people have the right to do what they like on their property in many ways there is often an effect on other people if you do the wrong thing. And that is very much an aesthetic issue because it can suddenly transform a lovely neighbourhood a street full of houses with all the same general form yet all quite distinct and then suddenly the super modern glass and steel wunderkind creation can transform that

and actually reduce monetary value for neighbouring properties and that's an aesthetic thing as much as anything else".

If you try to argue aesthetics that's when a lot of people who are anti say well they're just ugly, well it doesn't matter, they are not actually that ugly actually but I always believe you have to try to see how other people see it, if you try to win people over, you have to try to put yourself in their shoes and you see they just look like old dilapidated sheds for example, but they've got beautiful old timber and they've got history and they are what they are and they sit where they should belong there, they are part of it, its' like they've just grown up out of it, for all those reasons, they are not aesthetic reasons they are heritage reasons and that's what you have to argue because they are not a thing of classical.

To try and convince any council to buy a heritage building based on aesthetic merit is clearly inappropriate because decision makers have different ideas, after all the aesthetic is a judgment of taste. One person may think a building is aesthetically pleasing, another may not agree. So for that reason it becomes necessary to put the aesthetic aside and convince the council about protection of buildings from a heritage perspective. Therefore the significance of heritage is extremely valuable because here is something that people can build a case for. At a policy level the boxes can be ticked, heritage value is identifiable.

The following is a quote from a key informant who sees heritage as a political issue.

The district plans have a duty under the Resource Management Act to identify significant heritage and the Historic Places Act allows the trust, or requires the Historic Places Trust to make a register of buildings at a national level that are considered to be important and it is very much based on both the very fine buildings, the large very important buildings, but lots of representative of more modest buildings as well, so it's a reasonably comprehensive list.

But the trouble is that heritage is politics, it's not aesthetics, it's becomes about aesthetics through politics. It's not about heritage its about politics and because

someone political decided these are run down sheds on the wharf, lets turn it into party central and biff the sheds and then some bloody smart arse in the community says, hang on these are important, these are the last sheds on the wharves that were littered with these sheds and the whole thing here is representative of architectural heritage. No apparent architectural merit or distinction, but in fact fantastic architectural character, and character is architecturally more interesting per se. And some said if we loose those they are all gone, we shouldn't loose these and you could still have party central anyway and the politicians get all huffy and say well who wants to have party central with grungy old sheds. And that demonstrates their lack of imagination because they can not understand what can be done with those. And the architects haven't helped much either, because some of the ideas are so awful, some of the ideas are so bad, it's kind of embarrassing.

So in the end heritage becomes a sort of a lap dog of politics, it becomes one political view, use heritage to beat the other one over the head with. The other one says but it's just grungy old buildings and that one there is spoiling the view from the other one and so on. You don't get rational about these things, you just get positions taken. Whatever comes out of it is kind of good luck really. But what is interesting is that the politicians increasingly have realised that heritage matters to people and therefore becomes a political issues, it becomes a vote winner. Our late lamented mayor astonishingly became an advocate for heritage and it would be churlish to say he was just doing it for political reasons. I do feel he kind of understood it was an issue, he may not have understood in detail but he understood it as important, which in itself is a huge achievement for a politician

## **The aesthetic sense**

*Connecting various senses, creating an emotional link, appreciation of the environment, what something represents, it's bigger than that*

The question of aesthetics was raised in the second half of the interview. Participants were invited to describe what the word or concept aesthetic meant for them. There was certain hesitation. The literature too reports some hesitation about the use of the term 'aesthetic' or the experience of aesthetics. For example Gadamer (2004) critiques "aesthetic consciousness as an alienated abstraction from the experience of truth of art" (p. 103) while Shusterman & Tomlin (2008) attempt to re-examine the notion of aesthetic experience which has come under increasing critique in the last half-century.

The literature conveys a sense that something was not quite adding up, or another way of putting it might be, not having enough words to describe the full essence of what aesthetic means. It occurred to me that the meaning of the word 'aesthetic' might be a concept that is perhaps not fully formed in the English language.

My own interest in aesthetics as a philosophy and concept is understood slightly differently from that of some key informants. To my amazement, most key informants struggled to find the words to describe 'aesthetics'. I particularly noted that while the term 'aesthetic' was not resonant within their explanation of the meaning of the word, how they acted and what they said was.

Each respondent was asked the same question "what does the word or concept 'aesthetic' mean to you? One response was

"aesthetic doesn't mean anything particularly to me. It's a conduit for how you account for a way a building is presented. I just accept that it's one of the facts that it needs to be considered and you place it into an aesthetic context, historical, artistic and cultural".

Some uncertainty surfaced for other key informants "Oh see I don't know what I think it means...so I guess it's a sense of what they (heritage buildings) can show about history

from what they look like”. Another said “Gosh if I’d known I was going to be asked a difficult question I would’ve looked it up in the dictionary” yet this respondent went on to say that “the aesthetics are about the total environment, so it’s the environment we create that our various senses connect with and help us get an emotional link with something”.

The briefest response was “appreciation of beauty I suppose is aesthetics”. Another was “I don’t even know what the word aesthetic means. I’d love to know what its derivative comes from, what does it mean”? The same respondent also made the comment “it (Victoria Theatre) warms the cockles of my heart, it’s wonderful but it’s more than that”.

Maybe this sense of not fully understanding aesthetics tells us something about culture, society and education in New Zealand. In terms of heritage, aesthetic appreciation might still be a reasonably new idea.

We are colonial just bung things up with no respect, we may not have old buildings but they are still just as important. The places that we do have are like our castles, those few old buildings are our monuments. What is aggravating is that people can’t see it’s only been the last three or four years that the debate has entered the media. Even ten years ago heritage advocates were perceived as odd. In Paris there is no debate about whether to preserve or not, it’s a given. There is never a debate about knocking down places, they have complete respect embedded in the culture and we are still fighting the first battle...But these days there are more people who are advocates through the media...It’s enormously comforting that its happening, like the tide coming in. It is a sign of growing up, but also due to nagging, yapping, never letting go, the writing, letters, constant, demolition by stealth, you just have to keep the level of debate up in the community. Amazingly enough people are moving towards that far ground. People are eventually coming some of the way towards you, raising awareness, keeping on about it, never letting up. Its innate in Europe, here we are young. Architecture seems to be more about self expression and breaking rules I think,

there's not enough heritage taught or planning taught and there has to be community pressure, to keep it alive. It's people power, community power, it's not come from public policy. The rules came about through campaigners who said that a community response was required and in 1994 Devonport Heritage was born where actual heritage rules were put into the district plan. The rules were brought about through community push. Plan change 21 is directly because of Devonport Heritage...For example Takapuna Councillors couldn't give a stuff about heritage and even with the new city. Sandra Coney is just one vote, the planners should be listening.

Some key informants are grasping for an explanation of the aesthetic and the best attempt is to use terms such as 'it's more than that', or 'it's bigger than that' or words to that description. Each time an attempt was made to describe an aesthetic sense by key informants there was always a comment alluding to the idea that it was difficult to fully describe an aesthetic experience. This idea is one of the more significant themes to arise. For example the following quote and similar comments were often made by various respondents

“when you talk about aesthetics often your talking about what it looks like, but I think 'it's bigger than that'. It's not just what something looks like its what 'something represents' as well...I think of aesthetics as 'something more'”

This statement indicates an attempt to describe something that is almost indescribable and might be categorised as a phenomenological description. The essence of what is being conveyed here is the idea of trying to grasp something, but not quite able to reach it. Stories and descriptions get close to defining the meaning of the aesthetic but never seem to quite get there. There is a sense that there are not enough words to describe the aesthetic feeling or that people have never really thought about the word 'aesthetic' in this way.

## **Words describing the aesthetic in the District Plan:**

### *Treatment of aesthetics*

The word aesthetics is used within policy documents. The following section describes how aesthetic interest contributes to the value and significance provided by the unique identity that a place may have.

The North Shore District Plan was updated 2009 and states that

11.1 Cultural Heritage: Cultural heritage has a value as a record, as a source of inspiration and education, and as a means of providing continuity, legibility and understanding to the built environment. Older buildings throughout the city are distinctive and provide a special identity and unique sense of place. Aesthetic and visual interest contribute value to this identity and its coherence. Cities and communities are bound together in part by their collective cultural heritage. Cultural resources comprise a wide range of heritage features created or formed by people, and include objects, buildings, sites and areas.

The District Plan does not explain how aesthetics are measured or even described specifically, but uses terms to describe significant cultural and heritage values. Following is a list of words and phrases used within the District Plan that allude to aesthetic values

- visual integrity;
- original fabric, appearance and character;
- should not dominate or obscure;
- sympathetic to the original design;
- provide heritage values of the site;

- unique industrial heritage of national and international significance;
- ongoing relationships with neighbouring suburbs;
- contributes to socio-economic and local cultural significance;
- distinctive rooflines;
- continue to be used;
- not have adverse effect on environment;
- does not detract from the features;
- controls on signs;
- controls on location;
- controls on landscaping;
- compatible with protection of the heritage item;
- place to be retained in its future use and development;
- have outstanding aesthetic beauty or architectural or historical significance;
- attractive or unique because of the excellence artistic merit or uniqueness of its design, composition, craftsmanship or detail;
- contributes to the continuity or character of the street; and
- occupies its original site.

The District Plan states that the value of cultural heritage is assessed against aesthetic and visual interest which contributes to cultural identity and its coherence. Yet key informant comments such as “so again it depends on what we think aesthetics means” or “it shouldn’t have that word aesthetics in there...because I think I’ve never thought

about it...because no one has ever asked me, it's one of those things like what does that mean exactly'.

We use the word aesthetics to assess the value of cultural heritage and yet we don't actually know what aesthetic means. What does *that* mean?

## **Consideration for the aesthetics**

### *Greater regard, being true to the original, preserving history*

Architectural design is an important consideration within spatial planning and particularly when considering aesthetic appeal in Devonport for example.

Look at the buildings up on the street here, it would be such a shame if that was all knocked down...A whole street of villas with the same features, verandas or porches, villas that are built of the same material that are the same height, are pleasing to look at (Key Informant).

So when we walk around Devonport and when we have visitors friends family come visit from overseas, they feel the same thing, I'd look at it and think that its been changed badly and that one there's a horrible concrete block and actually they feel the same thing (Key Informant).

So it was a pity in a way that they did close off the circle in Victoria Theatre because when you look at the old photos there were packed houses (Key Informant).

Here's a building that's been designed and it's been buggered up and I think the design contribution is to recover and rediscover the original design intent. Then with due modesty and with complete arrogance see how you can improve on it. It's really thinking, well if we must make change how do we do it in a way that doesn't destroy that original idea it's being true to the original. If you look around here, what do you do with all this stuff, my ideal for this would be to recover the

original auditorium but I don't think that it's possible or practical so it probably won't happen, so in which case we have to some how or other do more work in here to have perhaps greater regard for the original, for what is original for the building and that's an interesting exercise, so this is an unfinished business here, that's the issue here, it's a time issue there's no tearing hurry for the building here, so long as it's working fine and we can think about these things at our leisure (Key Informant).

Key informants had varying degrees of appreciation for the art deco nature of Victoria Theatre, one of the views expressed was "The art deco era was not particularly beautiful, but incredibly striking. The Victoria Theatre is strip classical verging in parts art deco and that "gets you close to what the aesthetic is".

The idea of preserving history in this country is not well understood.

There is all sorts of rubbish talked about oh we're too young to have heritage, we've only been here, European settlement for 180 odd years, whatever it is. We don't have anything of significance, but that's rubbish because everything that's happened is significant because this is our heritage. And just because we can look back beyond these shores over into Europe and elsewhere and say that's real history, that's nonsense because that's over there. It's of no value to us here. For a lot of us its part of our background, if you like although we never lived there, our part of our background, our cultural background and a lot of the ideas embodied come from there but we've given it a distinct flavour here and that's why they are so important. Our buildings are our buildings, our streets and towns are our towns are made the way we made them and they are not repeated in England or anywhere else. There are similarities in Australia and with the US but there's a uniqueness about what each place does, and that sense of place is our sense of heritage.

So the idea that we don't have any history worth preserving is nonsense, we have stuff the rest of the world thinks is wonderful.

And Devonport?

Actually that's an interesting thing, everybody said Devonport lovely old villas and I think Devonport, fantastic topography, waters edge, nice old houses distributed around the topography some are in straight lines in streets and some are round the contour. And the aesthetic of Devonport to my mind is not nice old villas, it's topography, buildings and the landscape. There is no rationale explanation for the shape of Victoria Road. It comes up, does a slight turn, then another turn. Except that that's a historical pattern laid down when the area was farmed and if you don't understand that originally Devonport was a series of grants made to people to go farming and the roads were just an administrative convenience to get from here to there. Caliope Road was just a logical way of using the topography.

So they are like farm tracks originally?

Yes, so they get formalised because the surveyors say right oh from that track down to the sea, I mean I'm over simplifying, but they say well there's the shape of that land. This is what I'm getting at, is that the shape of a city like Auckland is as much to do with where the tram lines went because the tram lines were laid out from the centre out to the ridges and that immediately stimulated residential development close to the tram lines because initially Auckland was a walking city, like Devonport was a walking town, you walked every where. Very few people had horse and cart. There were lots of horses but very people owned a horse and cart. And so places like Freemans Bay and St Mary's Bay was within easy walking distance from the centre as was Parnell. Then as the trams happened people built out there. There were villages around, Mt Eden and Mt Roskill or Mt Albert. Then those villages were linked by the trams and then people would just populate around the tram lines. They could just get out of bed in the morning jump on a tram and go to work. That's how the city grew. If you don't understand the trams like people don't these days, it's such a rational form of

transport. We should have trams back in this city again. In fact we had trams in Devonport for goodness sake. It's astonishing.

But that's part of the aesthetic is, if you like. You must take a broad view of what aesthetic is. It's not just about decorative ornamental style, it's the collective effect of buildings and landscape and the texture of streets and so on and so you look for patterns, for aesthetic patterns.

I think spatial planning is becoming a reality. It is aware of these things. Auckland city has done it before it went out of business did a huge amount of work, a thing on what is called thematic heritage. Understanding all the strands of our existence here that have lead to decisions about planning and have caused things to be done in a certain way, whether it's farming or transport or utilities, articulation of water and gas electricity, all those things. They all have an effect. So the aesthetic is the total thing.

Aesthetic values are universal. Aesthetic values appear to be about quality of design and overall unity. Aesthetic values do not involve the imposition of order but rather occurs as the emergence of order and graspability, necessary for our faculties to obtain a unified, coherent purchase on the world (Cazeaux, 2002).

## **Conclusion**

In summary, aesthetic and heritage values share common factors for that reason it is useful to refer to heritage in association with aesthetic values. The aesthetic sense was conveyed through descriptions defining a sense of pleasure and unity that are universal qualities. The aesthetic might be sensed or experienced through a unique sense of place. Victoria Theatre provided happy memories, passion and stories which gets close to the aesthetic.

Appreciation for heritage values can be found through the aesthetic. Assessments of heritage buildings that are not clearly defined in policy documents result in the loss of heritage values in New Zealand.

Through understanding stories about ‘happenings’ in old buildings, participants developed a sense of how life was back then. Retaining respect for the past brought a certain cohesion and appreciation for a stable society, it was felt. Respect for classical ideas and fitting in, were regarded as important aesthetic and heritage values. Aesthetics is about having an eye for good design in creating a gathering place or a feeling for community that is fun and pleasurable and to share a sense of connection and unity. The ‘aesthetic’ paved a way towards protection for the Victoria Theatre, guiding policy and legislation, drawing strength from shared passion.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Discussion and Findings

The discussion now turns to the question and title of the thesis. Chapter seven provides an overview of findings from the mixed method study. The challenge was to identify what part aesthetics play in the policy making process and specifically relating to the value and significance of heritage buildings. Clarification is required to identify aesthetic values as they relate to heritage. The need to identify heritage values, arises out of research into heritage assessment values. Research by Donaghey, (2006) & Mason (2005) revealed that heritage values are lacking in clear and “consistent declaration of the nature and meaning of heritage” (Donaghey, 2006, p. 308).

This chapter considers what aesthetic values are and how these values are defined in policy documents by considering the aesthetic experience and what it is like for a community of people motivated and passionately involved with the protection of the Victoria Theatre. My own experience provides further insight and reflection integrating the research analysis. I attempt to consolidate major findings from the literature review, documentary analysis, interviews, participant observation, synthesising details through a triangulation process. The strength of the triangulation process is that the findings are reliable because regular themes have arisen across the data sets.

Research outcomes are explored to discover the relative strengths and short comings that the branch of aesthetic philosophy plays within the public policy environment. The aesthetics was better defined when questions around heritage were raised. Heritage and aesthetics share commonalities between them, where one supported the other. The following discussion explains this notion in more depth.

#### Conservation Plan

Criteria for category one registration for historic places is that Victoria Theatre possessed outstanding “**aesthetic**, archaeological, architectural, cultural, historical, scientific, social, spiritual, technological, or traditional significance or value” (HPA, 1993, 23 (1)). The result of a category one heritage status with NZHPT was directly due

to the Victoria Theatre Trust producing the Conservation Plan, a strategy which was to commit to protecting Victoria Theatre by following heritage guidelines based on policy set out by the Historic Places Act 1993 and the North Shore City Council District Plan 2002. Commitment to the project was demonstrated through the production of the Conservation Plan. This process also began to align key players. One of the Victoria Theatre Trust's main priorities was to produce the Conservation Plan and this was undertaken by Salmond Reed Conservation Architects who were based in Devonport.

The Conservation Plan opened up opportunity which led to another priority and that was to embrace local government and community support. The VTT strategy aimed to harness collective wisdom through communication and networking with key players and organisations. These were

- North Shore City Council
- New Zealand Historic Places Trust
- Conservation Architects
- Funders
- Local heritage advocates
- Local artists, writers, musicians, theatre groups, film distributors
- Many volunteers

The Conservation Plan stood out as being the key document enabling the management and protection of heritage processes under the Resource Management Act 1991, the Building Act 2004, the Historic Places Act (1993) and the Local Government Act (2002). Historic heritage was divided into two sections in the Conservation Plan. Firstly through the visual identification of significant heritage artefacts and secondly through subjective concepts around retaining or revealing cultural heritage. The Conservation Plan aimed to contain complex legal and political processes. The Conservation Plan also ensured that 'all the boxes were ticked' as required by NZHPT for heritage protection of Victoria Theatre. Significant heritage items were identified. Cultural heritage began to reveal itself from historical studies providing a unique sense of place in understanding the built environment. Key heritage elements and values were

identified in accordance with section 58 of the Historic Places Act (1993) and also in accordance with the North Shore District Plan (2002).

The Conservation Plan operated as a guide in assisting and maintaining consistency between reports and legislation to manage heritage and protection under the RMA (1991), BA (2004), HPA (1993), LGA (2002). The Conservation Plan enabled appropriate local government statutory processes, partnerships, strategic decisions and public consultation to occur. It also provided background to “get all the right people in place” and provided evidence that the VTT were committed to doing things properly.

The Conservation Plan identified artefacts and cultural elements worthy of protection to meet a standard acceptable to statutory authorities which enabled the next major step. Public consultation through a Special Consultative Procedure (SPC) under the Local Government Act (2002) took place (LGA 2002 83, 1). This was the first of its kind in the North Shore City. The public voted in favour for North Shore City Council to purchase Victoria Theatre. After much consultation the NSCC heard submissions, in Council Chambers from locals who supported the protection of the theatre (Bethell, 2006). North Shore City Council (NSCC) was persuaded to buy the Victoria Theatre with the view to keeping the land and selling off the building.

The option was put forward as a mechanism for securing ownership of the building and land, and on-selling the building to a group that would meet the heritage and community and cultural outcomes sought by council during the SCP process and following on from the submissions. In the end Council chose an alternate mechanism to handle the saving of this building as feedback during submissions indicated that leasing was an option that the community was also happy with (Key Informant).

During the Special Consultative Procedure the VTT undertook registration processes for the Victoria Theatre through NZHPT. The Conservation Plan provided background for the registration documents. In June 2007 Victoria Theatre was awarded Category One Heritage registration under HPA 1993.

North Shore City Council put the Victoria Theatre out to tender and a Wellington based commercial operator won the bid. However, once full registration for protection of the theatre was gained, negotiations with the commercial operator ceased as upgraded heritage restrictions interfered with plans to demolish the inside of the building, including the proscenium arch.

The Conservation Plan provided direction for the VTT to navigate their way through a complex legal process. The next major step was for the local group, the Victoria Theatre Trust, to win the tender which had been put out for the second time. The VTT did win the tender. Once the theatre was secured by the Victoria Theatre Trust, refurbishment unique to the character of Victoria Theatre took place. The grand opening was nicely timed, awarding safe passage for Victoria Theatre, just prior to North Shore City's transition into the new Auckland Super City on 1 October 2010, under the management of Victoria Theatre Trust.

### **Local Knowledge**

The decision made by NSCC to buy the Victoria Theatre was in part based on an emotional response from people who understood the value and significance of cultural and historic heritage. During this time a sense of the aesthetics came into play. People presented poems, songs, letters, stories, memories, in parts theatrical, to the council chambers. Emotions were 'felt'. 'Heritage' lead the way to council chambers and 'aesthetics' presented her case. Intelligent perceptions that was integral to the process as an active grasping of reality, restored a primacy to the perceptual process and was not merely just a passive registration of sensory data (O'Cluanain, 1979, p. 274).

Even those who initially had voted against the protection of the theatre may have felt a sense of solidarity within this emotional response. Latent aesthetics were possibly stirred. The special relationship to the world of subjectively perceiving aesthetic experience may have been mobilized into a unity of coherent expression that had consequences to the way the world was viewed (O'Cluanain, 1979). This surfacing of an artistic attitude of attentiveness and selectiveness is a sensory experience that was felt

profoundly and intimately, colluding with an epiphany of significant latent and a much more intimately true and real experience (O'Cluanain, 1979).

Aesthetics contributed a source for inspiration. A collective cultural heritage consciousness began to grow, '*binding communities together*'. The marriage of heritage and aesthetics ensured that the intrinsic character and spirit of 'place' was preserved. Aesthetic experience was activated through concepts of heritage where one provided strength and support for the other.

### **Aesthetics from a Heritage Perspective**

The *use* of the word aesthetic was found across the policy documents in the analysis. Although the word was used relatively freely, there was no specific definition given for the meaning of the word. There was no explanation to define terms or boundaries within the policy framework. Very broad generalisations were associated with the meaning of aesthetics. For example

**Aesthetic**, archaeological, architectural, cultural, historical, scientific, social, spiritual, technological, or traditional significance or value" (HPA, 1993, 23 (1).

**Aesthetic** considerations may be foremost in the appreciation of a nineteenth century villa or church, for some, while others will value the same buildings because of their historic associations or spiritual process (NSCC, 2009, p.12).

Cultural heritage has a value as a record, as a source of inspiration and education, and as a means of providing continuity, legibility and understanding to the built environment. Older buildings throughout the city are distinctive and provide a special identity and unique sense of place. **Aesthetic** and visual interest contribute value to this identity and its coherence. Cities and communities are bound together in part by their collective cultural heritage (North Shore District Plan updated 2009 11.1 Cultural Heritage).

Based on the Conservation Plan (Salmond & Reed, 2006), the cultural significance values stems from an appreciation of the physical character of Victoria Theatre and association with people and events over time. For example

**Aesthetic** significance due to its overall unity of the design of the theatre, or contributes to its **aesthetic integrity**, or **intrinsic aesthetic** qualities valued by the community.

the extent to which a building demonstrates design and/or construction techniques or knowledge of the time; or whether the building has **aesthetic significance** due either to its uniqueness, or its being representative of commonly held ideas of beauty, design and form; or whether the building or site has clear association with particular events or persons in history (Salmond & Reed, 2006, p. 26).

The term 'aesthetic' is a highly subjective concept. I presumed that there were simple definitions that could be drawn out from the research. I expected masses of information pointing directly to its meaning when interviewing key informants who were creative in their own right, especially as the word 'aesthetic' was consistently used throughout the policy documents.

However, I discovered the opposite. On many occasions throughout the interview process consistent statements indicated that the term 'aesthetic' was a concept difficult to describe or did not fit. This was a surprise to me. The literature too was darting here and there, but I thought that reflected my inability to isolate the meaning of 'aesthetic'.

Eventually it began to dawn on me that this was not the case at all. The reason why the literature and analysis of policy documents, interviews with key informants and my observations as a participant lacked clarification of the word 'aesthetic' was because nobody did actually know what the word meant in. This notion appears to be prevalent throughout the western world.

I was beginning to ask myself, what does this mean about the western understanding of the aesthetic? Why was the concept or word used in policy documents if there was no clear meaning for its definition? How could aesthetic judgements be made based on

this lack of clarity? Why was there so much difficulty in explaining the meaning of this word? I began to question the structure of the interview questions as it was not clear as to what had actually occurred. Yet to my surprise, as I began to analyse the research I discovered to my delight that even though key informants were unsure about the specific meaning of the word aesthetic, their descriptions about their feelings for heritage buildings most certainly reflected the aesthetic experience.

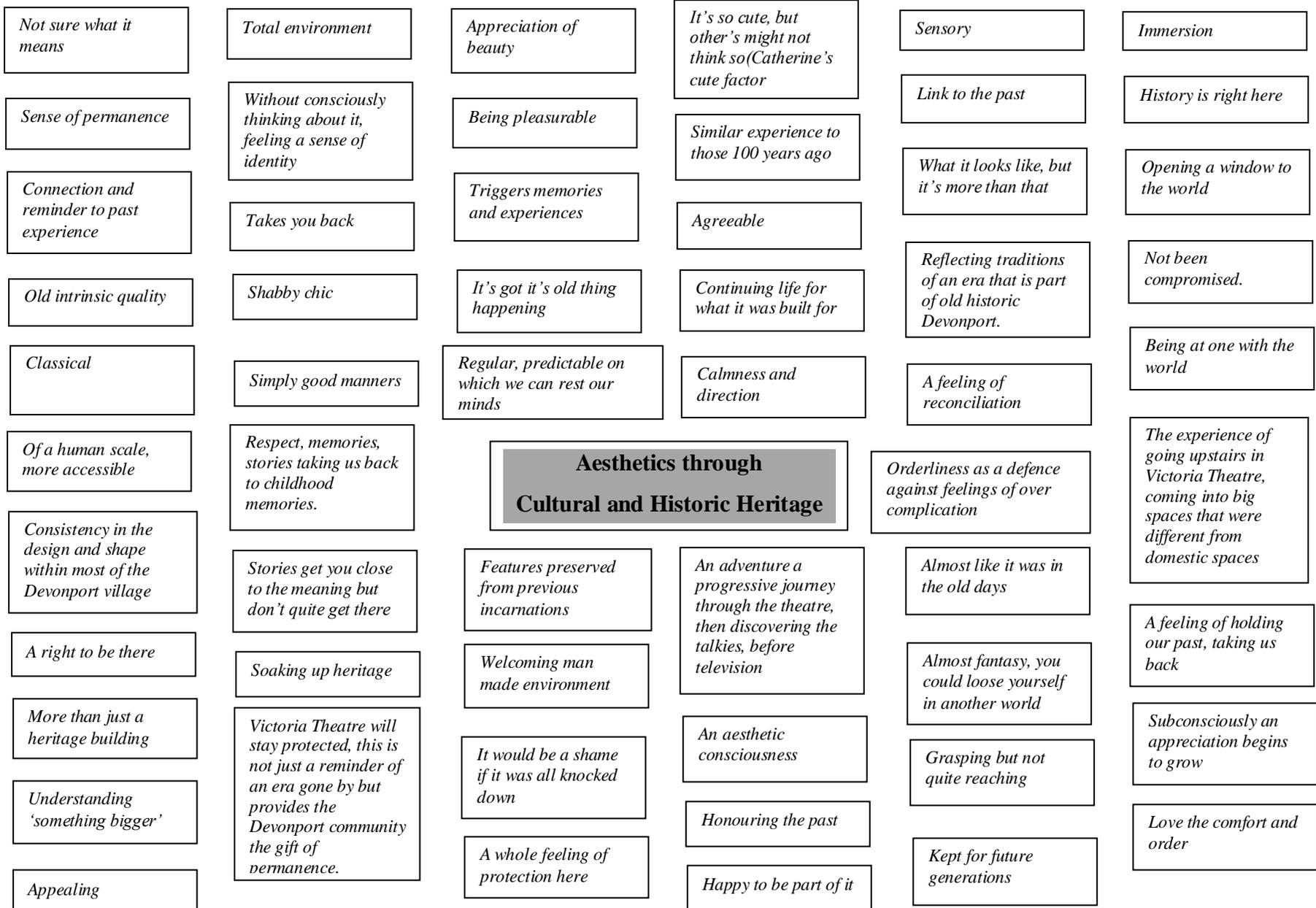
With comments such as “you shouldn’t have that word (*aesthetics*) in there” or “who wrote these questions”, I was in doubt as to my ability to construct a sentence. But on checking and double checking, the questions were sound and regardless of the ambiguity surrounding the ‘aesthetic’. Questions asked were

- Why is a building such as the Victoria Theatre important for you?
- What aspect of a building such as the Victoria Theatre appeals to you the most?
- In your opinion does a building such as the Victoria Theatre provide an identity for Devonport?
- What has it been in your life, do you think, that has given you the motivation to be involved in the theatre project?
- Do you think you have a sense for the aesthetics of heritage buildings?

The lessons learned, surrounding ambiguity of aesthetics, were of strategic interest. Especially since the use of the word ‘aesthetic’ was scattered throughout policy documents to measure significant values.

Since there were no specific meanings or descriptions provided for the word ‘aesthetic’ in any part of the policy documentation, I began to analyse its meaning through the lens of ‘cultural and historic heritage’. This approach seemed to be more successful. Words or phrases were used by key informants which revealed the aesthetic by describing feelings about the heritage buildings.

The following list indicates that the aesthetic, possibly latent, was experienced even though a specific definition for the word is yet to be found.



## **Exploring Policy Direction**

Victoria Theatre was a useful case study to explore policy direction when decisions were made by North Shore City during the lead up to the official opening of the theatre in October 2010. The registration of Victoria Theatre occurred prior to the restructuring of New Zealand Historic Places Trust and prior to the transition of the amalgamation of Auckland into one super city.

The successful category one registration awarded to Victoria Theatre was based on four key contributing factors identified in this exploration. To reach these four key outcomes, preliminary examination was required to explore the subjective side of policy. This was not an easy task as policy can tend towards being more objective so that for example, “boxes can be ticked”. It is difficult to ascertain subjective elements such as isolating the aesthetic experiences that capture hearts and imagination within a cultural and historic heritage study.

The subjective side of policy involves deeper levels of intrinsic thinking about issues surrounding people, values and culture. The aim of subjective policy in matters of heritage might be to generate further ideas, propose connections, venture suggestions and build relationships.

Category one registration with New Zealand Historic Places Trust for Victoria Theatre occurred as a result of understanding legal criteria and processes. This was achieved firstly by producing a professional Conservation Plan by Salmond Reed, who were highly experienced in the field of built heritage. This guiding document was a testament, a conviction and proved how serious the VTT were in committing towards the protection of Victoria Theatre. Local Councillors and the surrounding community could begin to see concrete evidence on the steps to take towards protection of the theatre and this is how and why the passionate emotions were rallied regarding the value and significance of cultural and historic heritage.

As a result of the conservation plan proved to the community that the research had laid the foundation by identifying protection and promoting historic and cultural heritage.

Local councillors had a defined sense of direction and could assist with guidance through the legal framework. For example the Special Consultative Process was instigated and the VTT played a part in distribution of flyers, raising awareness through the local supermarkets so that locals were aware of the issues. Another process that the VTT instigated was the level of interest for submissions to council. The VTT rallied much support for this process and the strength and commitment of the community was demonstrated through their submissions and became too powerful for the Council to ignore. Another stage of the legislative process was the registration for heritage protection for Victoria Theatre. The VTT were surprised to find that the theatre was not on the register and made it a priority to ensure it was. The research and administration of documentation was a lengthy process and it was completed in a thorough manner. One other policy process encountered by the VTT was to win the tender, and this occurred as a direct result of the category one heritage protection for Victoria Theatre.

These policy processes are not worth anything without understanding strands of existence that led to decisions and policy planning for cultural well-being. An important strand for cultural well being is in identifying the complexities associated with aesthetic appeal, and understanding the aesthetic appeal was the aim of this thesis.

### **Discovering a unique sense of place**

The push for the protection of Victoria Theatre did not come from public policy, it came from people power, community power. Key Informants commented that some councillors “don’t give a stuff” and “do not have the imagination to see beyond what there is”, “Some architects don’t help much either because some of their ideas are so bad”. Comments made by key informants claimed that there is not much older heritage left, so “why get rid of something when there is only one left”. “Heritage is not taught or well understood, but the tide is turning”.

Motivation for the love of heritage was facilitated through aesthetic experience. However, it was through the notion of heritage that the aesthetics were galvanised.

Heritage concerns were valuable because they were easier to identify which made building a case for heritage more solid, a winning combination when supported by the emotional response based on the aesthetic experience. Subjective aesthetic experience combined with identifiable heritage elements won the case for protection of Victoria Theatre.

There is a danger in defining policy based on aesthetics when it is not well understood, in making a decision about heritage protection based on the way a building looks. Complexities arise in judging the heritage value of old buildings which maybe historic but not aesthetically pleasing. Yet old buildings maybe completely aesthetically appropriate. “Not understanding this may show lack of imagination” (Key Informant). The problem is that these heritage decisions are not rational decisions, “they are more about positions being taken” (Key Informant). Although the word ‘aesthetic’ is used in policy documents, how can policy be good if a decision is made on aesthetic judgements because ‘beauty is in the eye of the beholder’. How is policy defined when aesthetic judgment comes into play? Classical buildings which look good might be easy to judge aesthetically, but a lot of heritage buildings don’t have these qualities.

Kiwis can be careless, by just “bunging” things up, but a most interesting part of history is what ordinary people did, explaining how cities and mass took shape. New Zealand history is not made up of just the beautiful things. We have a distinct flavour, “our buildings are *our* buildings”. It is our heritage, but distinctly unique to New Zealand style. Our heritage provides a sense of place, our sense of heritage is “about the way we (New Zealanders) made our buildings which are not repeated in England” that “the rest of the world thinks is wonderful” (Key Informant). “Heritage is about form, scale, size and consistency” which has a comfortable human appeal and quality about it, “not like the glass and steel skyscrapers”.

Key informants also pointed out that understanding heritage is important for spatial planning. Spatial planning is not just about old buildings, new buildings are still part of our heritage. Urban aesthetics is hugely important as it explains the aesthetic of townscape. Aesthetic is made up of topography, buildings, landscape a product of

decisions made a long time ago. The collective effect of buildings, landscape and the texture of streets is the broader view of aesthetic. These provide aesthetic patterns. Spatial planning is aware of these things. Auckland has done this before when it did a thing called thematic heritage.

## **Retaining Authentic Character**

One of the key findings in this exploration is that *fundamental aesthetic and heritage values are based on respect for the original and authentic character* of a heritage building. For example, the Victoria Theatre's principal interior space and auditorium may have had its intrinsic character slightly diminished when it was revamped in the 1980s when one theatre was split in two, but the Victoria Theatre's original appearance of the 1920s is capable of being reversed back to one auditorium.

Originally the VTT hoped to follow the original vision and re-open the theatre as a multi-purpose performing arts centre and cinema. A 300 seat single auditorium development for the theatre would fulfil the need for a medium sized venue for the North Shore.

Commercially there were arguments against these plans (for heritage protection), but for the building's historic value it's the way to go. If we were in Italy we wouldn't even be having this conversation. It's just another example of Auckland losing part of its heritage. Issues surrounding the theatre survival had boiled down to culture versus money (Key Informant)

## **Spirit of Place**

Aesthetics is better defined when viewed through the lens of heritage. Based on international best practice and in conjunction with section 58 of the HPA (1993) a key finding is that heritage should be protected in such a way that "*ensures the spirit of the place is maintained*". Changing the heritage building from the original to glass and aluminium does not ensure the spirit of place. Making a radical change like that tells

people that “as New Zealanders, we don’t care about old buildings or what they represent”. What does that say about our values, out with the old, in with the new, consume, consume, consume.

The common values that were shared by both heritage and the aesthetic values identified are about being true to the original idea and this attitude demonstrates respect. By being true to the original idea we can ensure that the spirit of the place is maintained. Culture is developed in this way and through understanding the value and significance of ‘a unique sense of place’ we begin to understand who we are, by understanding where we came from. These values demonstrate appreciation and being *careful* about how we view our society, not *careless*.

Appreciation for our culture and understanding our uniqueness and how we came to be here are values that give a lovely harmonious homogenous feel that is welcoming and simply demonstrates good manners. These values tell us a lot about our character and nature. Is it something that visitors would like to return to, or not?

The most wonderful discovery about identifying, protecting and promoting our heritage is that we have built a world that is our own world. These values are at the heart of the aesthetic, and provide a sense that we have arrived home, that we are at home, because we are surrounded by beauty and heritage and appreciation demonstrated around us. These are values that are carried along the passage of time and across borders. These are values that are recognised everywhere by everyone who understands them. This is how we find our nirvana, by sharing our sense of ‘feeling at home’ within ourselves.

### **Ticking the Boxes**

During the research process it became clear that the term ‘aesthetic’ was a difficult concept to describe. Policy documents used the word ‘aesthetic’ consistently however there was no specific definition provided for its meaning.

As the research progressed and I continued to explore the word ‘aesthetic’ to find its meaning, I began to realise that the definition for aesthetic was not specified in policy

documents because there is actually no defined meaning for the word. This finding was reinforced when key informants were also hesitant to explain the specific meaning of the word 'aesthetic'. The literature too reported difficulties and controversies over the meaning of the word 'aesthetic' and this notion is prevalent throughout the western world and dates back to the great Greek philosophers such as Plato.

Therefore it was extremely important to continue to focus on the heritage values in terms of the aesthetic, because when it comes to 'ticking the boxes', heritage values, although still complex are easier to identify.

### **Heritage as a Conduit**

The common values of heritage and aesthetics provide an ontological perceptual link to 'being in the present' but one that has a connection to the past. A key finding is that '*heritage acts as a conduit for the aesthetic*'. The meaning of 'heritage' has to do with being transmitted from the past, handed down by tradition, that which may be inherited. Fundamentally ontological, the aesthetic perception when viewed through the lens of heritage, constitutes body and world in the present moment (O'Cluanain, 1979). Put another way, the enlightenment of 'our self world' might occur through the recognition or resonance with a work of art, theatre, music, nature, words or beauty. This identity of 'Being', like all classical ontologies, elevates certain properties of *being* into a structure of 'Being' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 10) "What I am trying to convey to you is more mysterious; it is entwined in the very roots of 'Being', in the impalpable source of sensations (Cezanne cited in Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 1).

### **Ideal Association**

Shared values between heritage and the aesthetic might be actualised in the notion of tradition. For example, walking to the theatre with the anticipation of seeing a moving picture was a tradition that occurred a hundred years earlier. This tradition is an experience that still takes place in the same street with the same building and the same sensation that the village of Devonport provided one hundred years ealier. Patrons walk

up the same staircase, or enter the theatre from street level as they did 100 years ago. This is a unique tradition that will remain for the generations to come. People still gather in a *'place'* for entertainment when going to the pictures was a special event. The subjective world of the aesthetic experience does not have a shape in the world, yet “it is an inexhaustible matrix of signification, but only because it has no significance of its own” (Dufrenne cited in O'Cluanain, 1979, p. 251). In this case the aesthetic experience acts as a conduit for tradition. ***“Aesthetic values provide an ideal association with the sense of tradition and is manifested through an appreciation of cultural and historic heritage”.***

Marrying heritage and the aesthetic, forming a strong association where one supports the other, was the single most important key factor for the success in protecting Victoria Theatre. Many descriptions were identified during the interview process revealing the strength of this union.

Historical value was revealed through the aesthetic, based on respect for original and authentic historical study. For example strip classical verging on art deco gets you close to what aesthetic is. Art deco might not be considered beautiful, but it is striking. For that reason it would be a shame if it was all knocked down. Aesthetics is not just about what it looks like, but about what it represents and these ideas are presented through heritage values. By providing the ‘old feel’. The further back you go the more you’ll find “I love going back to the old times, hearing stories”, “I love old buildings, I haven’t analysed why, it’s just an emotional response – I think that is the sense of aesthetic”

When you know you are going somewhere special when there is an emotional link to the past “kind of thing”, “you can’t specifically say what it is”. The strength is that it, the Victoria Theatre, goes back 100 years. When you begin to understand the roots, you can create something more timeless. Cultural heritage is more about stories that make up the history of a place. Therefore at our peril, city fathers ignore the cultural value in connecting with the past.

Victoria Theatre provides a fullness of bringing the past into the present, through the raw look, feel, history and architecture that is integral to the building. These factors provide a personal experience, a deeper meaning and richer appreciation. When you walk into the theatre you feel a sense of coming home. When performing in the old theatre there is magic, real magic. Victoria Theatre “warms the cockles of my heart”.

Expressions for the aesthetic experience combined with identifiable heritage elements were revealed through this research study. Even when the aesthetics was unidentifiable, unable to be measured, not well understood or appreciated. Yet the ‘aesthetic’ revealed itself and continues to do so through the heritage values that surround the stories and features that make up the Victoria Theatre. The old heritage building is looking after herself, as it always has, and we have so much to learn about appreciation for older buildings.

## **Appreciation**

This study pointed to strong values that were held for the aesthetic and heritage values that make up significant cultural identity, specifically in Devonport. Appreciation for heritage through the aesthetics emerged as a capstone for successful protection of built heritage as the project transitioned through each step in the policy process. Emotional responses were demonstrated during the six year struggle and challenge to protect Victoria Theatre. Emotional expression was the driving force that influenced policy decisions within North Shore City Council.

The thesis also led to identifying the value and significance of appreciation for arts, heritage and culture. Our learning encompasses many ways of viewing the world and these views are broadened by developing a variety of perspectives. At the same time appreciation for ordinariness was just as relevant.

Attributes leading towards appreciation stemmed from community strength and was supported through voluntary work. The Kiwi spirit came to the fore, such characteristics that were demonstrated revealed New Zealanders as being strong, determined, creative, caring and resilient. These characteristics in part, make up our

national identity and stems from past experiences. This is how heritage evolves to create our own unique society. Appreciation for heritage characteristics were identified. Characteristics demonstrated were consistency, continuity, craftsmanship, aesthetic perceptions and a deep understanding for spatial planning,

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Often it is through the great thinkers that we can learn about our past and these creative thinkers find their way into the heart of society through words, music, art, design and craftsmanship. Creative contribution is diverse and the embodiment of stories of all generations, culture, tradition and sense of community underpin the motivation and desire to think deeply about who we are as a nation, giving shape to our cultural identity. These concepts, understood at high level policy and research analysis, are values of such significance because they make up our national life.

Category One Heritage Registration for Victoria Theatre came about as a result of *'engagement with many groups of people who had local knowledge'*. The factors leading up NSCC decision to buy the theatre was triggered through the raising awareness for the cultural and historic significance and value of Victoria Theatre. Backed up by passionate emotions and motivations, local government, planners, funders were influenced in their decision making process. Stories, songs, poems, letters and submissions based on local knowledge painted a picture for council that was too difficult to deny. Members of North Shore City Council witnessed the aesthetic sense that the heritage story was telling. The aesthetic revealed itself through the submissions. *Motivation stemming from an appreciation of aesthetics demonstrated through the passion for a heritage theatre combined with local knowledge, met a standard acceptable to statutory authorities.* Likewise the NSCC decision to protect Victoria Theatre was received by locals, with emotional relief, joy and much surprise because, after a lengthy struggle with competing points of view, the decision was unanimous.

The Victoria Theatre is a useful case study in understanding why the community came behind the theatre in support for the protection and the preservation of a heritage theatre. The VTT and supporters were adamant in protecting Victoria Theatre. Not just for the sake of maintaining the character and cultural well-being for Devonport but also for the historical heritage of what the theatre represented. Preservation of the theatre as

a heritage building was important, and attached to that are the memories, stories, occasions, commemorations and celebrations linking the past with the present and gifting an appreciation for heritage and aesthetic values into the future.

The Victoria Theatre Trust and all those in support were driven by strong motivation, and factors influencing North Shore City Council to buy the theatre. The VTT demonstrated management skills leading to protection, promotion and preservation, as was necessary under the Historic Places Act. Devonport should be proud of its achievements, even long before the VTT, battles were fought to protect the character and cultural well being of Victoria Theatre.

Victoria Theatre has kept its integrity as a multi-purpose theatre and cinema, it continues to reflect traditions of the era from 100 years ago. The Victoria Theatre has not been compromised and continues to preside over the street in which it is located. Respect for the value and significance of this heritage theatre was demonstrated when category one registration was awarded under the Historic Places Act 1993.

This case study is a unique exploration into aesthetic and heritage appreciation. These happenings took place prior to changes made as a result of the earthquake in Christchurch in September 2010 and prior to the transition into Auckland as a super city, November 2010. A sense of aesthetics plays a big part in the way a place looks or feels that represent cultural values. However, it takes certain drive to stand up too and influence policy initiatives at this deep level.

It is difficult to understand the extraordinary power of history and cultural heritage without an appreciation, although often subliminal, of the aesthetic. Experiences reflected in this study demonstrate an appreciation that is valuably pleasurable, vividly felt, subjectively savoured but also objectively meaningful, (Shusterman & Tomlin 2008).

## **Recommendations for Further Research**

### **One: Review of Historic Places Act 1993**

In 2010 the Coalition Government reviewed the Historic Places Act 1993 to change the way that NZHPT operated. The Bill was passed in 2011. An exploration into the impact of these changes is required in terms of processes in the decision making on how heritage buildings are 'judged' against heritage and aesthetic measures. Specific changes to the review made under the HPA 93 are as follows.

The 2010 review of the HPA 1993 took place resulting in restructuring of NZHPT. The aim of the restructuring was to simplify administrative processes involving assessments that accompany heritage applications. Statutory processing times for authorities were reduced from three months to 20 days in most cases to simplify processes. Other changes were made to HPA 93 to bring greater alignment of the HPA with the RMA (NZHPT, 2010).

NZHPT provided leading advice on national policy initiatives and heritage assessment throughout the country. However, a move was made to disestablish NZHPT Branch Committees, which meant that NZHPT heritage advocacy work was to be continued by government representatives rather than Branch Committee members. The type of work carried out by Branch Committees was in assessing and implementing decision making processes of national identity in recognition of social, cultural environmental and economic well-being.

Government have since appointed all NZHPT Board Members, removing the rights of NZHPT members to elect the Branch Committee of 24. Rights of volunteer membership to elect three of the nine members on to the Trust were scrapped. Further analysis is required to assess how historic and cultural heritage protection, promotion and education fare under the changes in major restructuring from 2011.

## **Two: Continue Research within the new legislative environment**

Investigation into the value and significance of historic and cultural heritage from an aesthetic perspective within the new public policy environment may enhance the way we view heritage and especially since major restructuring of the

Historic Places Act (1993)

Local Government Act (2002)

Resource Management Act (1991)

Questions might explore how aesthetic and heritage assessments were made as to whether or not a building should be protected. Other questions might explore impacts of possible diminished local knowledge after decision making processes were centralised and made by government in Wellington. As interest in heritage surrounding concepts of national identity grow, it might be of interest to explore policy direction around heritage evaluation or assessment processes. A useful comparison in the future might be to research processes under the new super city structure with heritage protection matters pertaining to another case study, the St James Theatre in Auckland, for example. These are highly subjective and important cultural and historic heritage values pertaining to the sense of identity that is unique to New Zealand.

Mason and McEwan, (2005) recommended amendments to the RMA to “provide guidance in terms of the elevated status of heritage protection and the new definitions of historic heritage” p.76.

**Three:** Consider aesthetic values in spatial planning and explore aesthetics through ‘thematic heritage’ as recommended by conservation architects.

**Four:** For good governance in establishing cultural wellbeing, policy might be developed through an aesthetic lens to connect various Council Controlled Organisations which currently work as separate units

**Five:** Aesthetics philosophy has evolved since the Greeks within western tradition. Aesthetic philosophy from eastern traditions is perhaps not well understood within western culture. Exploration from an eastern perspective might present further opportunity for research.

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## APPENDIX ONE

### Timeline of Victoria Theatre

**1912** – The Victoria Theatre opened 26 October 1912 and is believed to be the “oldest purpose-built cinema building still standing in New Zealand” (Salmond & Reed, 2006, p. 1). John Benwell, from California, had the vision and capacity to build the theatre that would also house cutting edge cinema. Mary Benwell purchased the property for 1,340 pounds, the theatre was designed by John Walker to comfortably house 1,000 people and for 6,500 pounds the theatre was built. With a population of 7000, the community of Devonport was well able support this new form of entertainment and is “fondly remembered as a centre for fun, fantasy and romance, it is an object of some affection in the community” (p. 5).

Benwells Picture Palace, as it was called then, was built on the main road with a view over Auckland. People would come across the Waitemata Harbour in their droves on a Sunday afternoon to see silent movies. Foley artists produced sound effects and projectionists were constantly on stand -by with wet blankets and buckets of water to put out any fires created by the highly flammable celluloid movies. The Victoria Theatre was also used for entertainment such as beauty competitions, baby competitions, performing monkeys and opened with 40 performers from the A.M.R. Band (cited in NZ Herald 26.10.1912 Salmond & Reed, 2006, p. 8). The children’s matinee on Saturdays was a weekly event and Miss Precey played the piano loudly depending on the scene, like when the Indians were coming (p. 9)

**1914** – John Benwell sold the theatre to Fuller Haywards the day before the first world war. During the first world war the Victoria Theatre was used as a point of contact, to find out what was going on for the duration of the war.

**1929** – In 1929 the theatre went through a major restructure. The Art Deco theatre had been enlarged during the height of the talkie boom by Daniel Patterson. It was also the beginning of the depression which affected cinema-going. When the depression was over Fullers continued to operate the theatre.

**1945** – Fullers sold the theatre to Kerridge Odeon Corporation Ltd. The post war recovery gradually brought back the audiences who enjoyed two cinemas with the State Cinema across the road also screening movies. With the introduction of the motorcar people could access Devonport by road as well as by paddle boats and then later by ferries.

**1960** – With the introduction of television audiences slowly began to dwindle

**1976** – The State, a competing cinema across the Road from Victoria Theatre, closed

**1986** – The Victoria Theatre was put up for sale

**1989** – The Victoria Theatre Trust was formed with the aim to ensure the building's survival as a valuable landmark in Devonport.

**1990** – The Victoria Theatre was substantially reorganised after standing empty for 18 months, the building was converted into two cinemas and the new cinemas seated 280 each. The adventurous colour scheme was described as “Miami sea-side art deco” (cited in NZ Commercial Design Trends Salmond & Reed, 2006, p. 15).

**1992** – Due to a decline in audience numbers and poor management the theatre closed again.

**1993** – Victoria Theatre Ltd came into the possession of Derek Singleton and Jim Mason, further alterations allowed for a smaller theatre, the George.

**1996** – Sold as a going concern to Carl Rusher and Mike Steeneveld.

**1999** – The owners announced plans to convert the building into apartments

**2001** – New rehabilitation work on the cinema was back on the agenda to include luxury apartments, underground parking while retaining the three cinemas, but was hotly rejected.

**2002** – The cinema closed

**2003** – Save Devonport Cinema Group was formed. Kea property Group bought the theatre as they were sympathetic to the objectives to preserve the theatre, however the theatre stayed closed.

**2004** – The Real Theatre Company discovered the rundown old theatre, while searching for a venue for a live production of Jack the Ripper. The Real Theatre Company began enquiries into the potential use of the Victoria Theatre. The Victoria Theatre Trust was established and undertook many months of background preparation to launch the VTT and raise awareness for the project.

**2005** - Victoria Theatre opened to the public over two weekends during AK05 (Auckland Festival) with a full programme of events to bring awareness of the theatre and its potential. The VTT commissioned Salmond Reed to write the conservation plan with funding from a North Shore Heritage Trust grant. The objective was for Victoria Theatre's "preservation and continuing use as a cinema, and also to promote its adaptation for use as a live performance venue".(Salmond & Reed, 2006, p. 2).

**2006** - It was during the Special Consultative Procedure campaign that we discovered the theatre was not registered with New Zealand Historic Places Trust. We began the registration process.

**2007** – Movies became more regular over summer and autumn building business from a two days to a seven day a week operation. The VTT managed fund raisers for local schools and other local charities. The NSCC purchased the Victoria Theatre and closed the theatre for health and safety inspection. The warrant of fitness lapsed, and once again the theatre was left to sit and wait for the next round of activity.

NZHPT initially placed a category two registration on the theatre which was subsequently upgraded to category one registration. This meant that the theatre could not be pulled down or converted into apartments. Changes to earthquake strengthening laws meant there was further consultation required regarding the building's policy. NSCC requested applications for the tendering process and the VTT put forward an application. NSCC's first choice went to the Wellington based Light House Cinema

group. The Light House Cinema Group were intending to gut the inside of the building to construct four cinemas. However the NZHPT raised the theatre's heritage category from two to one to protect the proscenium arch. The change in heritage status significantly impacted on the business plan and negotiations with the Light House Cinema group came to an end.

**2008** - Again, the NSCC put the theatre up for tender. This time the VTT won the tender to govern, restore and manage the theatre.

**2009** – Fund raising began. The VTT raised \$50,000 before it could access a NSCC grant of \$150,000. This was achieved.

**2010** – Grand Opening of Victoria Theatre (October 26)

APPENDIX TWO

*Saving Auld Victoria*

*Victoria Theatre marks our past  
From days when things were built to last  
It means much more than mortar and bricks  
It's where we went to see the 'flicks'!  
Community spirit is its role  
It reaches out to touch your soul  
Its very structure plays a part  
In showing North Shore has a heart*

*Today – in modern city life  
There's so much pressure, too much strife  
Rushing here and rushing there  
We rarely pause to show we care  
The Vic can like a lighthouse shine  
Reminding us to take the time  
To use our talents for creating*

*And all the art forms celebrating*

*So now into the future stare  
Imagine that The Vic's not there  
With decades past there is no link  
What will Shore City people think  
When they at history want to look  
The Vic's but pictures in a book!  
What sadness, outrage, grief and pain  
Her like can never be again!*

*We pray you City Fathers bold  
Don't turn Old Vic out in the cold  
'Retain her grandeur' is our call  
Past – Present – Future – for us all!*

*Given this 23rd Day of February in the year 2006*

*cristoforus b'ard o'maolain*

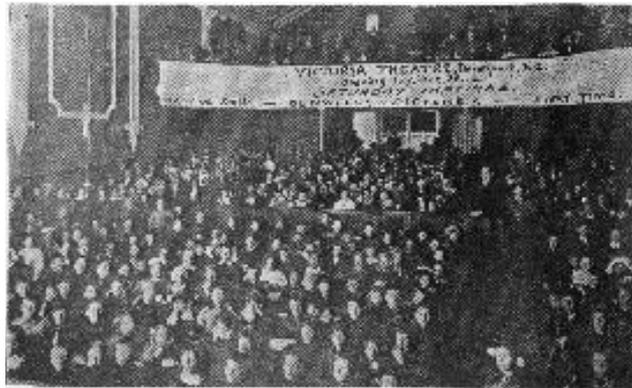
*The Druid of Devonport*

## APPENDIX THREE

[www.thevic.co.nz](http://www.thevic.co.nz)

The Victoria was a thriving entertainment centre for the community. In 1914 John Benwell wanted to return to the USA and sold the Victoria to a new picture company, Fuller-Haywards. In order to cash in on the 'talkies' boom, in 1929 the company transformed the building from a 'picture palace' into an art deco, up-to-date cinema. However the depression struck soon after, audience numbers plummeted and the company ceased operating in 1930.

From 1945 Kerridge Odeon took over the Victoria and ran it successfully for 43 years, but by the late 1980's patronage had dropped and



*Opening Day 1912*



*Victoria Theatre 1915*



*How the Vic Looks Now*

the theatre was closed and put up for sale. The Vic was transformed again in 1989 by publisher, Bruce Palmer who converted the Victoria into Charley Gray's Twin Cinemas Devonport, by separating the original stalls and circle.

The Victoria changed ownership several times during the 1990's and into the new millennium and operated with various degrees of success. In 2001 it faced being turned into apartments and there were a number of attempts by local groups to retain the Vic as a theatrical and cinema space.

Following the energetic efforts of the original Victoria Theatre Trust, the North Shore City Council was persuaded to buy the building in 2006. In 2009 the current Trust successfully won the tender to lease the Victoria for 33 years. The Trust has a long-term goal of extensive heritage restoration of the building.