

Vital Architectures:  
An Animistic Approach to Socio-Ecological Healing

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2025



# Vital Architectures:

## An Animistic Approach to Socio-Ecological Healing

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Architecture (Professional).

MArch (Prof)

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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.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Drayton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B' and a stylized 'D'.

Benedict Drayton



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Figure 2. Hole in rock, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

## Project Introduction:

### Project question

How could an animistic approach to holistic healthcare architecture remedy disruptions from modernism and enhance the health and wellbeing of human and more-than-human communities through the introduction of reactionary and biophilic architecture that focuses the connection between wider communities and the environment mutualistically?

### Abstract

The material world is alive and agential. Indigenous ontologies and contemporary more-than-human theories describe the world as a living community or system, comprised of many different connected entities who are kin. This research on animistic architecture highlights the interactivity between human and more-than-human communities and explores how such interactivity can mutually enhance social, cultural, and ecological wellbeing. Modernisation has affected the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples and the ecosystems they relate to. Returning awareness to the symbiotic relationship between human and more-than-human communities is a healing action in itself. Exploring the epistemological works of academics such as Jane Bennett, Arriane Conty, and Amanda Yates provides this project with context and a basis for further methodological development through physical forms of vital craft. Designing architecture to improve the wellbeing of the more-than-human community we live amongst will in turn improve the health and wellbeing of human communities. Through a holistic health and wellbeing architecture situated in Titirangi, in the heart of the Waitakere ranges, this project aims to explore how architecture can heal both human and more-than-human communities synergistically.



Figure 3: Titirangi stairwell, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 4: Anawhata view, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

## Introduction:

This research project explores concepts of animism, more-than-human agency, and mauri ora or holistic wellbeing in an architectural context. The coexistence of Human and more than-human communities is inherent to a planetary ecosystem, but this relationship has become strained as a consequence of colonialis ation and modernisation in Aotearoa and around the world. Vital architecture, gui ded by the works of scholars such Jane Bennet, Amanda Yates, and Arrienne Conty looks to remedy this and reconnect this strained relationship between humans, their natural environment and all vibrant entities, from molecules, to whales, to plants, and insects, to water and more, known as more-than-human which co-inhabit it.

The aim of the research is to explore how architecture can act as a catalyst in the regeneration of the human and more-than-human relationship, improving the wellbeing of both human and more-than-human communities . The current architectural and social landscapes associated with it are contributing to a socio-ecological crisis, with modern rapid architecture demanding cheaper but more ecologically harmful materials. The current project aims to create an architecture which reverses the problems and damages done by modern architecture.

Influenced by indigenous conceptualisations of living systems wellbeing as well as contemporary Western theorists such as Jane Bennett, the project aims to identify architectural strategies, systems, and interventions that enact environmental connection and agency in order to improve socio-ecological wellbeing. This approach has multiple stages. I begin by identifying ways of understanding the larger expanded building site and the local socio-ecological systems. I then develop small scale architectures, models, that are interactive and engage with the environment and/or people in various ways. These explorations then form the base for the generation of more developed architectural strategies and interventions.

## Te Wero / The Challenge

Through colonisation and modernism, the ancient connection between human and more-than-human has been lost and a disconnect has become apparent. Guised as protection from the elements, modern architecture has been used as a tool to facilitate this disconnect and isolation from the environment. The declining symbiosis of human and more-than-human has led to a decrease in the wellbeing of both communities as estrangement has occurred. This project uses architecture, a tool once used to create a barrier between the two communities, as a catalyst to create a connection between human and more-than-human beings to enhance the wellbeing of both communities .

The expansion of capitalism, and its drive for profit and mass consumption has forced the creation of cost focused architecture that neglects the impact on the occupants, the impact on the site, and the impact of the materials and where they are sourced. This kind of architecture certainly does not consider the after-life of buildings. While this new form of sterile and hermetically sealed architecture may lead to the creation of comfortable spaces, this is achieved at the expense of so much more.



Figure 5: View to Manukau Harbour, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

## Chapter 1: Contexts

### Introduction:

Chapter One, divided into three parts, examines and explores key global, political, theoretical and architectural contexts for this research project. The contexts and the crucial ideas and theories explored and expanded upon in this chapter form the basis of this project, outlining current issues, schools of thought and solutions. The chapter starts with an exploration of current global contexts, touching on the current climate emergency that is driven by the increase of greenhouse gasses and hydrocarbons in the atmosphere, causing the rise of global temperatures and extreme weather events. The second part then explores political and theoretical texts, traversing critical ideas of vitalism, mauri, and animism through the works of Jane Bennett, Amanda Yates, and Arrienne Conty, where the theoretical meets the physical. The texts from the mentioned academics highlight the importance of the agential world around us, one that may seem inert at first. Part two starts to contextualise and realise the significance of chapter one and its effects to us humans and the more-than-humans we coexist with. Part three of Chapter One explores the built environment and provides current examples of buildings which embody, consider, or react to ideas discussed in parts One and Two. The critical analysis of the projects presented in Chapter Two are used to generate the final design outcomes of this project in the form of suggestions for how architects can better adapt to the rapidly changing environment around them, which aim to enable them to contribute to positive ecological regeneration while facilitating the positive wellbeing of both humans and more-than-humans.



Figure 6: Iron sand, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

## Part One – Global contexts

We are now in a complex socio-ecological emergency where an extinction crisis is intersecting with climate-change and with wider social inequities. The impact of humans' hubristic attitude towards worldwide development and expansion has had a devastating effect on the environment, destroying multiple habitats, from deforestation to the extraction and use of polluting hydrocarbons in everything from plastics to fuel and energy in the strive for human-centred advancement. This anthropogenic destructive conquest on the environment has raged since the industrial revolution. The use and release of hydrocarbons has led to the doubling atmospheric Carbon dioxide causing a  $+0.2^{\circ}\text{C}$  per decade increase in in global temperatures (James Hansen, 2006). The rise in average global temperatures of  $1.53^{\circ}\text{C}$  since the preindustrial period is one of the leading causes of extreme weather events (Kristie L. Ebi, et al., 2021). Extreme weather events have calamitous effects on both the wellbeing of people and the environment Thus, the average annual death rate for weather related was found to be 76,500 worldwide, with a further 199.2 million people otherwise affected (Ahmadiani & Ferreira, 2021).

A 2012 article in *Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for Global Change* explains as greenhouse gasses take full effect, and the planet warms, thermal expansion of the sea and land-based ice continuing to melt is leading to the supercharging of the volume of water entering the ocean. Rising sea levels have become a point of major concern for coastal communities (Jeremy Martinich, 2012). Since the 1990s, the sea level rise has been recorded at a median of 3.1–3.3mm a year (Cazenave & Cozannet, 2013). While this may not seem like an extreme change, the compounding effects start to become alarming as “glaciologists have suggested that the sea could rise five to seven meters (approximately twenty feet) over the next several centuries from the resulting disintegration of the West Antarctic ice sheet” (Titus & Barth, 1984, p. 1) the minor yearly changes begin to add up to a total ecological disaster.

Globally, the construction industry contributes to 37% of greenhouse gasses, making it the single biggest contributor (United Nations environment programme, 2023). In Aotearoa New Zealand the products and processes of the construction industry contributes 15–20% of the total greenhouse gasses produced, predominantly carbon dioxide (BRANZ, 2024). Moreover, 40–50% percent of our total waste that is being sent to landfill comes from the construction industry (Branz, 2024). Waste or pollution is endemic in the industry beyond the rubbish it creates. Most buildings are not designed with a view to disassembly, and many designers do not actively apply adaptive re-use principles in their designs that emphasise building re-use. Huge amounts of waste are generated during the building process and many buildings incorporate toxic materials that affect human health and damage the environment when dumped.

Most buildings and cities are still designed within a grey infrastructure model which relies upon technology rather than using ecological systems and infrastructures. The effect of hard infrastructures and buildings causes urban heat islands, creates a lack of resilience to heat and flooding events, and reduces the inherent biophilia of natural sites. The report water research (Xin Dong, 2017) thoroughly analyses how grey infrastructure contributes to such phenomenon and its effects. In order to counteract the effects of grey infrastructure, planted areas featuring trees and water detention systems can be employed to slow down, capture, or absorb water in the event of heavy rain. These planted, green spaces also have the benefit of lowering the ambient temperature, making a more comfortable environment for occupants.

It is clear from the evidence that radical change needs to be made in the way that we conceptualise and materialise the built environment in order to change the current course that we are heading down. An overhaul on multiple scales, personal, local, and government needs to be made if there is to be any change in the wellbeing of humans, and the more-than-humans and that inhabit this planet more broadly. This project adopts a range of regenerative strategies to shift the status quo of architecture in Aotearoa in order to design to serve human and more-than-human communities together, improving wellbeing for all. These regenerative strategies are first discussed further in Part Three of this chapter, where the why and how of each of these strategies are explained, and then in Chapter Four, where the implementation of the architectural approach to these strategies are highlighted.



Figure 7: Titirangi Carpark, Benedict Drayton, 2024

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## Part Two – Vitalism & Vitality

In the book *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things* (2010), the author, Jane Bennett, spoke to the agential and vibrant nature of matter: matter that is our environment, the things that surround us, and the objects we refer to as inanimate. Inspired by the writing of philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, particularly in their works that explore Assemblages. Assemblages can be defined as the collections of human and more-than-human elements that are agential. Jane Bennett introduces assemblages as:

The sentences of this book also emerged from the confederate agency of many striving macro- and microactants: from “my” memories, intentions, contentions, intestinal bacteria, eyeglasses, and blood sugar, as well as from the plastic computer keyboard, the bird song from the open window, or the air or particulates in the room, to name only a few of the participants. What is at work here on the page is an animal-vegetable mineral-sonority cluster with a particular degree and duration of power. (Bennett, 2010)

This thinking explores the idea that everything around us is agential, not just humans.

Bennett described how all matter is vital, whether we understand it to be so or not. For instance, she pointed out that “our trash is not “away” in landfills but generating lively streams of chemicals and volatile winds of methane as we speak” (Bennett, 2010). Methane and other chemicals released into the atmosphere aids in supercharging the climate emergency currently facing the world. Bennett’s introduction simplifies a complex subject into layman’s terms, aiding in her goal of a perspective shift from a world where humans are at the centre to a view where humans are a part of a complex ecology; an ecology where all matter is agential and vibrant. With a perspective shift comes a shift in the way we live and consume,

leading us to be more ethical and sustainable. Bennett (2010) prefaced this text as follows:

Why advocate the vitality of matter? Because my hunch is that the image of dead or thoroughly instrumentalized matter feeds human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption. It does so by preventing us from detecting (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling) a fuller range of the nonhuman powers circulating around and within human bodies. These material powers, which can aid or destroy, enrich or disable, ennoble or degrade us, in any case call for our attentiveness, or even “respect”. (Bennett, 2010)

Bennett framed her discussion around material or ecological vitality and agency as a political ecology. She asked “how would political responses to public problems change were we to take seriously the vitality of (non-human) bodies?” (Bennett, 2010). Taking this theory to the political level begins to assign responsibility to councils and government to implement radical change to how matter and its vitality is approached and managed, with a view to preventing the types of ongoing adverse effects we are currently seeing. Without change in cultural perspectives and practices, we will see an increase in ecological turmoil resulting in ongoing mass extinctions and the increased frequency of extreme and destructive weather events. The acknowledgement of the necessity of change by political leaders and by the public as a political body would be the start of a cycle of positive change.

Bennett’s theory on vibrant matter registers with particular currency at this time of ecological emergency. We can see how atmospheric carbon’s active presence is now threatening the balance of the eco living-system. Bennett’s work aims to level the plane between humans and non-humans, creating a more balanced or equal relationship (Bennett, 2010). Bennett’s line of thinking is especially influential to this project.

Arianne Conty, in her paper “Animism in the Anthropocene” (2022), proposed that humans are inherently animists. Building upon the work of philosopher Bruno Latour and Religious studies professor Graham Harvey, Conty suggested that humans are animists with an inherent connection and belief in environmental agency. Yet colonisation and modernisation has devalued indigenous and non-western cultures, colonising their

lands, bodies, and ideologies. More broadly, as Conty pointed out, in the West, we have lost or “unlearned” the connection to the natural and more-than-human worlds through modernist ideological hegemony.

“Orientalism and the idea of exoticness has seen animistic cultures depicted as subhuman since they have a relationship with the non or more than human world ” (Conty, 2022, p. 129). Conty suggested that, as a consequence of colonisation and the mentality attached to it, animism began to be seen as a primitive belief and practice, one only reserved for indigenous populations. The idea of animistic cultures being seen as subhuman arose from modernist Western movements which conceptualise the world as dualistic, human as superior to non-human. The idea of both humans and non or more-than-humans inhabiting the same ecosphere is an idea completely foreign to this ideology.

If animism has thus been repressed and unlearned, this is largely due to the modern categorization of animism as belonging to the primitive past of indigenous populations,<sup>3</sup> populations that would eventually accept the ‘mission civilisatrice’ of the West and the forward march of progress. (Rosengren, 2018)as quoted in (Conty, 2022, p. 129) .

Conty (2022) discussed the work of anthropologist John Bodley, who speaks to the lasting and destructive ideologies of colonisation. Bodley noted that Indigenous communities “are autonomous, self-reliant cultures who would prefer to be left alone. Left to their own devices, indigenous people are unlikely to volunteer for civilisation or acculturation” (Bodley, 2014) as noted in (Conty, 2022) . In this he is suggesting that Indigenous communities already have their own complex, place-based ways of knowing and being. Western conquest disconnects such cultures from their knowledge systems and from their foundational precepts around ecological connectedness and animism. Conty (2022) raised the point of how Bodley highlighted how Western culture has become fixated on the benefits of modernisation and fails to recognise that other cultures may have vastly different values and ontological frameworks. “Anthropologist John Bodley makes clear that Westerners have become so ethnocentric and arrogant that they cannot imagine another culture having value for its members, and readily assume that such members desire

Western modernization” (Conty, 2022). Conty (2022) suggested that, as a consequence of colonization and the mentality attached to it, animism began to be seen as a primitive belief and practice, one only reserved for indigenous populations: “If animism has thus been repressed and unlearned, this is largely due to the modern categorization of animism as belonging to the primitive past of indigenous populations, populations that would eventually accept the ‘mission civilisatrice’ of the West and the forward march of progress” (Rosengren, 2018) as quoted in (Conty, 2022, p. 129).

Conty further highlighted the importance of reversing the effects of colonisation and modernisation and implementing the return of animism and animistic ideologies, for both indigenous and non-indigenous communities. About the return of indigenous ideologies Conty (2022) noted:

Now that we have become aware that the problems of overconsumption, accumulation, commodification and appropriation lie with technologically advanced peoples, instead of forcing indigenous peoples to modernize, we should be pressuring modern societies to reduce energy consumption, de-grow their economies and, perhaps even, learn to reinhabit localities and re-form communities. (Conty, 2022, p. 132).

The present research is concerned with such a place-based refocusing.

In the text “Mauri-Ora: Architecture, indigeneity and immanence ethics”, (2017) Amanda Yates discussed the concept of mauri, which is a wellbeing lifeforce central to Māori culture that permeates through human, more-than-human, and broader contexts. Yates reinforced the importance of Mauri and highlighted its significance, proposing that mauri can be conceptualised “as a pervasive life-field present in all things—oceans, whales, birds, trees, mountains, people, architecture” (Yates, Architecture, Indigeneity, and Immanence, 2016, p. 263). Yates also discussed the key role of whakapapa, a genealogy concept central to understanding the interconnectedness of all entities. Whakapapa can be described as a multi-species genealogy of the living world and macro-account of interrelations that imbricates multiple entities (biotic, abiotic, material, immaterial, celestial, spiritual) within branching lines

of familial relationality (Yates, *Architecture, Indigeneity, and Immanence*, 2016). Whakapapa becomes important when talking about wellbeing and mauri ora as it is through whakapapa that the wellbeing of all is connected and effected.

When applying the work of Yates to a wider lens, we start to see the critical and vital multi-scale role of whakapapa and mauri in the world around us, highlighting the importance to develop designs that are in line with these concepts and promote wellbeing. Understanding the connection between individual entities and wider ecosystems is vital. Yates highlighted the importance of wellbeing-led systems thinking when designing and making architecture. The type of thought processes architects should engage in according to Yates is illustrated in the following quote:

If a standard arsenic-infused timber foundation is utilised, what effect will this have on local soil microbial communities (Te Uru Taumatua utilises MCA micronized copper azole to H5 [in ground structure] in place of CCA [Chrome copper arsenic])? How far may these toxins leach as groundwaters seep? May they mobilise, becoming feedstock for locally growing vegetation? May they manifest within locally grown bodies—of huruwhenua (ferns), tuatara (lizards), tui (birds), potatoes, tomatoes, humans? (Yates, 2016, p. 267).

This query highlights the importance of radical change in cultural systems when approaching architecture - at issue is not just the design of the building, but the kind of materials used, as well as its energy metabolisms, all of which have effects on the environment on a bigger scale. Yates developed a mauri-centred compass diagram to help designers think through the systemic change required and communicate the regenerative actions they are taking. The compass was designed to be co-created with communities, or by designers alone, and are meant to serve as a change tool to enable systemic change.



Figure 8: Anawhata vista, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



## Part Three – Regenerative frameworks and the Mauri Ora compass

This research, concerned with how to design for a vital world, has been aided by utilising a regenerative framework to help structure my design thinking. Given the limited time for this research, I have chosen to adapt an existing framework for positive regenerative design. I have worked with the Mauri Ora compass and have refined it to meet the aims of the site, and programme of this thesis project. Thus, the Mauri Ora compass is a theoretical guide which underpins this project in that it establishes the standard to which the different goals and outcomes of this project can be compared to.

This projects adaptation of the Mauri Ora compass consists of five criteria or goals for this project to meet, using different architectural, urban development and regenerative strategies to achieve this. My compass consists of an:

Ecology band with points such as Cool cities, Ecological restoration and Mana Wai. This point on the compass aims for this project to have a positive ecological response aiding in the wellbeing of the environment. This project considers this aspect of the compass in the fluid medium exploration, a method exploring the vitality of water. This ecology point is then later implemented into the project via move such as green rooves and urban community gardens at the Titirangi site or through rainwater collection and cleaning on both sites.

The Energy criterium involves the generation of zero carbon energy. The generation of zero carbon energy is vital to ensuring this project is ecologically responsible by avoiding the use of high carbon energy from the main power grid. The solar drawing method explores how zero carbon energy could be included in this project either through wind power or solar power. From the solar drawing method, we have already experienced the power and vitality of the sun. Zero carbon energy is then explored though onsite energy collection either through capturing power from wind movement or roof top solar panels.

The “Economy” criterium focuses on stimulating a local

economy with the use and production of local and renewable materials. The use of local and renewable materials creates a socially and ecologically responsible architecture and lowers carbon expenditure through the production and transport while creating more opportunity within the community. Using recycled native timber through this project models creates an example of local renewable materials in action. On both sites, wood and steel are used as main building materials as they are manufactured in and around the North Island. The Titirangi site also aims to create its own micro economy with its gardens and café.

The Urban point of this compass is connected to positive social regeneration through active multi-modal mobility which is known as Te Taiao – a connection to the natural world, socially connected, equitable accessible systems, and design for safe access. Both the Anawhata and Titirangi sites create a place for social connection and wellbeing.

The architecture criterium focuses on the built aspect of this project by examining its connection with living systems, Biophilic and environmentally connected designs, passive designs, and non-toxic renewable materials. This point of the compass ensures that the physical architecture of this project is ecologically responsible, taking the works of Yates and Bennett and considering material toxicity and its impact. This point is in line with the study's focus as it ensures that the architecture plays host to the reconnection of the humans and the more-than-human.

The points in this compass work to guide the creation of a holistic wellbeing architecture for the environment, human, and more-than-human alike. We see how the project is already working with his framework but the true test of the efficacy of this framework lies in the final architectural outcomes and how approaches each of these important challenges . Creating an architecture which successfully meets the points on this compass means and an architecture which successfully meets the brief and accomplishes the challenge set at the start of this project.

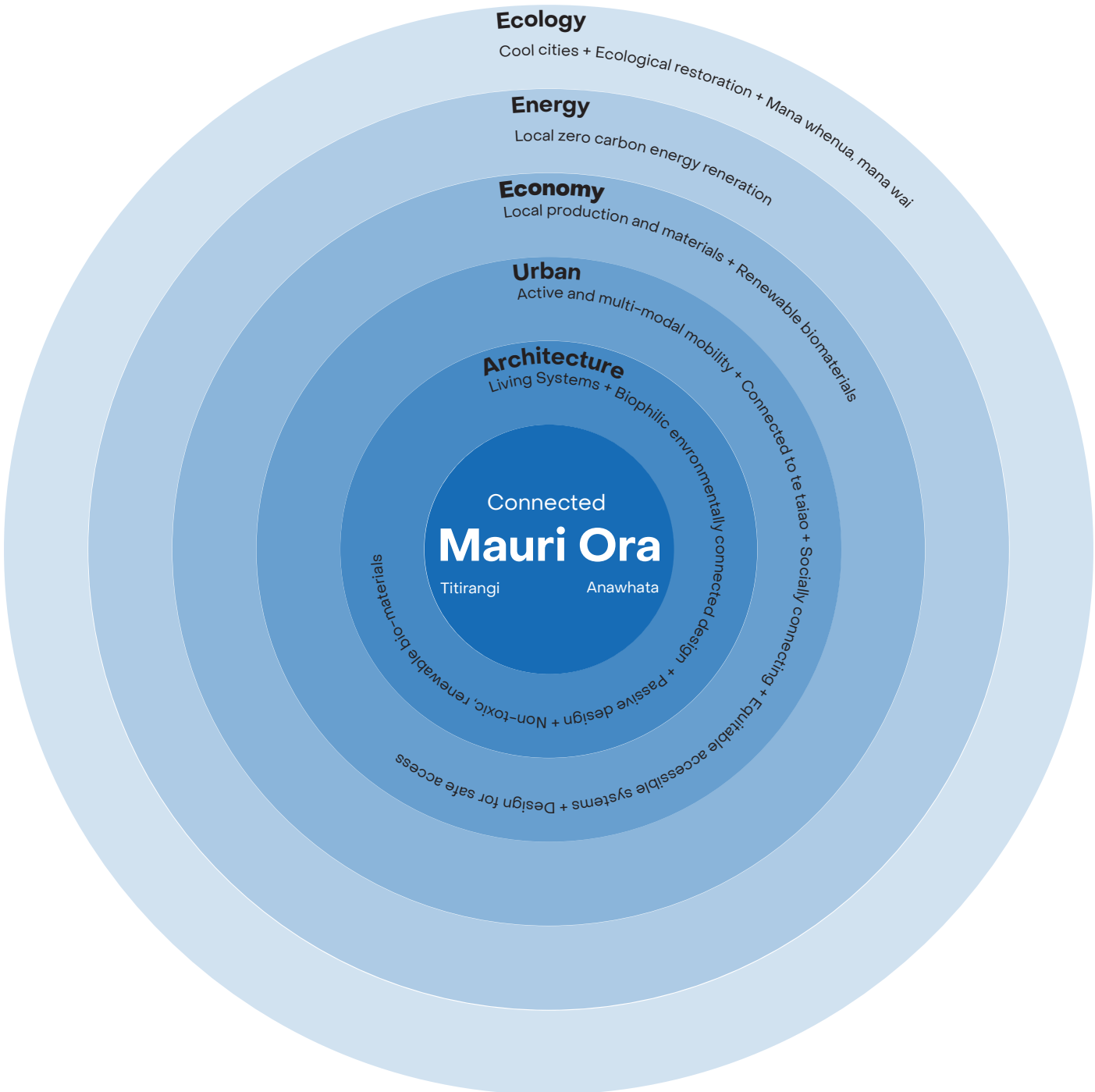


Figure 9: Anawhata vista, Benedict Drayton, 12 June 2024



## Part Four – Design precedents

In my own design practice during this project, I sought to engage and interact with the vitality and agential nature of the living environment and this engagement is focused on a set of key guidelines: The first aim I pursued in my design was to create architecture that “senses” its site and adapts to the changing environment, whether that be ephemeral, diurnal, or seasonal. The aim was to develop an architecture that articulates the fast and slow environmental changes that draw human attention to the agential environment around them and the wellbeing that comes from being connected to that environment. Secondly the architecture in this project is meant to actively enhance the wellbeing of the environment through the detention, control, and cleaning of rainwater or architecture which promotes plant and tree growth cleaning the air and cooling the surrounding environment. Both of these strategies were chosen as they have been found to aid in reversing the heat island effect . In this design precedents section, I have analysed a range of built architectural case studies that model the thinking that has inspired this project and offer valuable strategies to implement vital design principles to this project. I have separated these case studies into three key groups based on the building’s ability to transform, adapt, or be active; to actively sense or register the environment and changes in it; or to be regenerative by design.



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Figure 10: Titirangi site, Benedict Drayton, 2024



Figure 11: Hut on Sleds, *Crosson Architects*, 2012



Figure 12: Hut on Sleds, *Crosson Architects*, 2012



Figure 13: Hut on Sleds, *Crosson Architects*, 2012

*Hut on Sleds, Whangapoua, New Zealand*  
– Crosson Architects

Hut on sleds by Crosson Architects is a Bach project completed in 2012 (Crosson Architects, 2012), located in Whangapoua on the east coast of the Coromandel Peninsula. This project was presented with some challenges as it is a beach house, it will not have full time inhabitants and its habitual site faces imminent coastal erosion due to rapidly changing tides.

Crosson architects designed this beach hut to react to the environment around it. To avoid the dangers of flooding and coastal erosion, the architects took the problem literally and design the hut to sit on two wooden sleds, allowing it to be towed out of its oceanside site and away from any potential risk when needed. The addition of the sleds to this building allows it to be ecologically responsive, as with human intervention it can react to its environment changing around it.

The design of this building's doors and hatches allows it to transform and react when in use. The main doors and window hatches act as awnings or solar shade when the building is in use. These exterior covers are designed to retract and fold upward to shade inhabitants and the interior finishes from harsh solar rays as slots in these façade elements only allow delicate streams of sunlight through. When the building is uninhabited, these operable façade elements are lowered back into place to cover all fenestration and protecting, thus fortifying the building from the sun, wind, and rain.

Whenever this building changes the state of its façade, it also changes the feeling that the building gives off. When the building is fully closed and the hatches are battened, it has a cold, unwelcoming look due to its sand blasted castellation-esque façade, akin to an impenetrable fortification. The look and feel of this building changes drastically as the façade is opened, exposing the warm, soft and welcoming interior. As the building transforms, it changes into a space more familiar to human occupants (Crosson Architects, 2012).

In terms of the current project, the hut on sleds building illustrates how changes to the building's envelope and orientation in response to environmental factors signals to users a transformation in architectural programme or privacy levels. This transformative action acts as a reminder that buildings and spaces can establish a connection between humans and more-than-humans.



Figure 14: Captian Kelly's Cottage, *John Wardle Architects*, 2016



Figure 15: Captian Kelly's Cottage, *John Wardle Architects*, 2016



Figure 16: Captian Kelly's Cottage, *John Wardle Architects*, 2016

*Captain Kelly's Cottage, Bruny Island, Tasmania, Australia*  
– John Wardle Architects

Captain Kelly's Cottage by the Australian architect John Wardle is another building which utilises operable features to react and adapt to the environment and occupied status. Captain Kelly's Cottage is a renovated colonial sailor's lodge that is situated on an exposed section of shoreline in Storm Bay on Bruny Island in Tasmania. When renovating and modernising this lodge, John Wardle took many steps to enhance the interior quality and experience while trying to preserve much of the look and history of the building (The Local Project, 2021). Large concertinaing windows and window hatches open the interior of the building to become one with outside environment (Wardle, 2016). Sliding doors and walls are also utilised in this project to open and expand spaces with obstructing views or circulation. In a short video about the cottage, John discusses how he saved hatches from the renovation and reused them to cover windows, allowing users to easily change the mode and feel inside the building with a simple operable feature of the building itself (The Local Project, 2021). The smaller scale operable elements of this example offer an approach for creating connectivity through operable and considered fenestration. The smaller scale operable elements allow users to open portals into the surrounding environment.



Figure 17: *Kanagawa Institute of Technology Plaza*, Jun'ya Ishigami + Associates, 2021



Figure 18: *Kanagawa Institute of Technology Plaza*, Jun'ya Ishigami + Associates, 2021



Figure 19: *Kanagawa Institute of Technology Plaza*, Jun'ya Ishigami + Associates, 2021

*Kanagawa Institute of Technology Plaza , Kanagawa, Japan  
– Jun'ya Ishigami + Associates*

The plaza of the Kanagawa Institute of Technology is an experimental and experiential piece of architecture with an ambiguous programme. The plaza was designed by Jun'ya Ishigami + Associates to be a versatile space for relaxation and social interaction (Archimathon, 2024). The space succeeds at being a semi outdoor space with large fenestration in the roof, allowing the elements to enter and interact with the building and its occupants; users are often seen sitting in patches of sunlight, moving along as the sun travels across the sky. In the same way the space lets in sunlight, it also lets in the rain and wind, changing the dynamic and use of the space. The adaptability of this space with the changing of the elements draws attention to and animate the environment; for instance, on bright sunny day the roof casts crisp squares of sunlight onto the ground and as more clouds appear these casts of light change and the edges blur them into patches, constantly changing the feel of the in the plaza. The open fenestration in the ceiling works to frame the sky forcing users to focus on and appreciate it, as these are the only views to the outside in what is otherwise a clinically white space.

As this is an experimental piece of architecture, it does not take a traditional form but rather consists of a rounded bowl with the roof/ceiling structure resting on the edge of the building and sagging down in the middle, somewhat mirroring the form of the of the ground condition. The unfamiliar design of this building creates a heightened experience to one's surroundings; the space is described as "being experienced differently whether mentally or physically" (ArchDaily, 2021) In the context of my aim to develop an animist architecture paradigm, I see how this example of an environment sensing building can affect people's experience of the people and guide one's attention and connection to the surrounding environment and ecosystems.

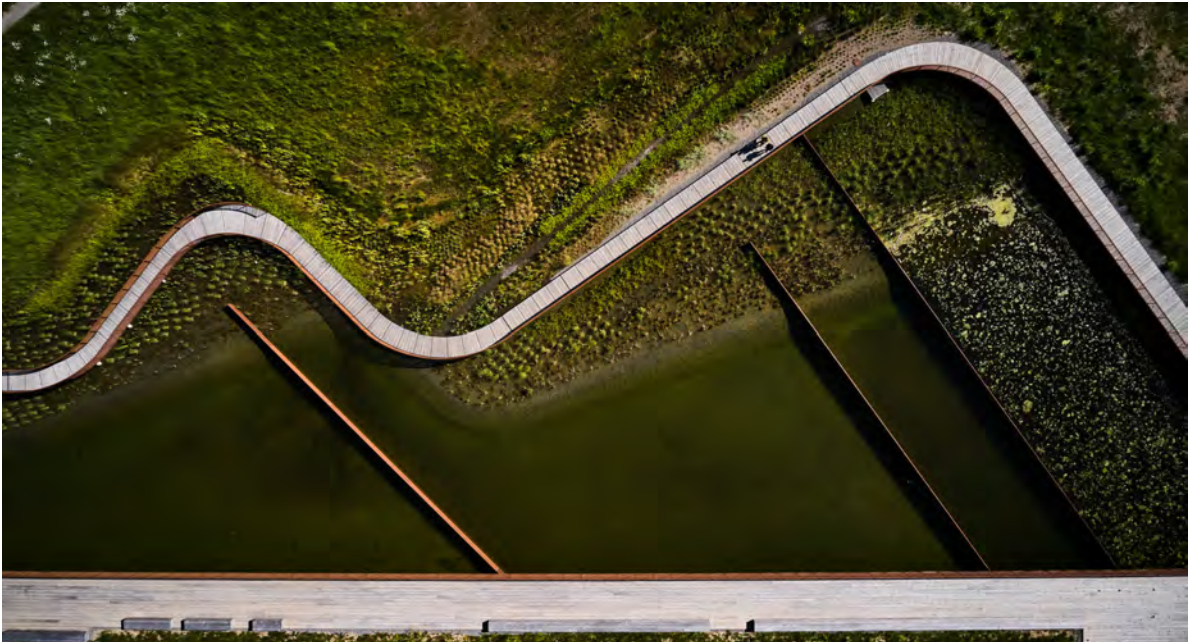


Figure 20: *The Stormwater Pond at Exercisfältet, White Arkitekter, 2021*



Figure 21: *The Stormwater Pond at Exercisfältet, White Arkitekter, 2021*



Figure 22: *The Stormwater Pond at Exercisfältet, White Arkitekter, 2021*

*The Stormwater Pond at Exercisfältet, Upsala, Sweden*  
- *White Arkitekter*

The Stormwater Pond at Exercisfältet in the city of Upsala, Sweden, designed by White Arkitekter and completed in 2021, is a storm water pond that functions as an overflow pond during extreme or severe weather events (Archdaily, 2023). The pond and surrounding are designed to flood and hold water to prevent flooding. The area around this pond has been transformed into a park, allowing residents to use the area for recreation. Part of this park is designed to flood during weather events due to the topography and ground condition of the stormwater pond and surrounding area. The pond's low level elevation in relation to the park allows for even extreme freak weather events to be contained and the boardwalk was designed to submerge as more water is being captured. When designing the pond and park, the architects employed the use of selected plant species for their water purifying properties, partially cleaning the detained water before it is released (White Arkitekter, 2022).

This park is an example of site sensing and adaptive architecture with the form and usability levels changing and adapting to the environment. The pond and recreation area provide an environment to play host to the Green/Blue space effect, an effect where occupants of areas or spaces containing green planted matter or water experience an increased sense of calm and positive psychological effects (Völker & Kistemann, 2011). The Stormwater Pond at Exercisfältet affords both human and more-than-human communities increased wellbeing through carefully considered regenerative strategies.



Figure 23: *Te Kura Whare / Te Uru Taumatua, Ngai Tuhoe, Jasmx, 2014*



Figure 24: *Te Kura Whare / Te Uru Taumatua, Ngai Tuhoe, Jasmx, 2014*



Figure 25: *Te Kura Whare / Te Uru Taumatua, Ngai Tuhoe, Jasmx, 2014*

*Te Kura Whare / Te Uru Taumatua, Taneatua, New Zealand  
–Ngai Tuhoe, Jasmx*

Ngai Tuhoe's building Te Kura Whare / Te Uru Taumatua, designed by Jasmx in partnership with the Ngai Tuhoe, the local iwi, has been designed as the centre of governance and meeting for the iwi. Situated in Taneatua in the North Island of New Zealand, this building stands as world leader in how to design an ecologically responsible building. Tuhoe agreed to design the building and comply with the living building challenge. The living building challenge is "a philosophy, advocacy tool, and certification program defining today's most advanced measure of sustainability in the built environment" (Living Future, n.d.), meaning this building had to be built from locally sourced materials that are non-toxic in both their production and final state and using local labour. "The Challenge assesses buildings in relation to conditions of place, water, energy, health and happiness, materials, equity, and beauty" (Yates, *Mauri-Ora: Architecture, Indigeneity, and Immanence Ethics*, 2016, p. 266). Surprisingly, in a modern globalised world, this constitutes a challenge; at the same time, it sets a precedent for all other new buildings to strive for.

This building and its construction are concerned with the life force mauri and therefore whakapapa(genealogy) as discussed by Amanda Yates (2016):

"The indigenous New-Zealand Māori concept of Mauri (life-force) is engaged here as an immanence for its inherent force within a living-world-assemblage, where sky, sea, mountains, trees, people are part of a relational whakapapa. Indigenous-Maori thinking (and practices) reveal immanence as a life-mesh, while mauri-ora presents as a care for this (mauri) inherent life force and reiterates variously, including through performative situated recitations such as whakapapa's expressed cosmogonical framework." (Yates, *Mauri-Ora: Architecture, Indigeneity, and Immanence Ethics*, 2016)

This quote Yates unpacks how mauri is an interconnected force this example starts to make connections to how the Te Uru Taumatua is situated within a living ecosystem and constructed from mauri containing materials from the same ecosystem. The building's construction method connected to mauri ensure that it is as ecologically responsive as possible, with Yates (2016) expanding on this while discussing the importance of material choice for this building as follows:

“What is a material or component composed of and what is the agential capacity of those materials? If a standard arsenic-infused timber foundation is utilised, what effect will this have on local soil microbial communities (Te Uru Taumatua utilises MCA micronized copper azol to H5 [in ground structure] in place of CCA [Chrome copper arsenic])?27 How far may these toxins leach as groundwaters seep? May they mobilise, becoming feedstock for locally growing vegetation? May they manifest within locally grown bodies—of huruwhenua (ferns), tuatara (lizards), tui (birds), potatoes, tomatoes, humans?” (Yates, *Mauri-Ora: Architecture, Indigeneity, and Immanence Ethics*, 2016, p. 267)

This is a prime example of how a considered architectural movement can create a building that is mindful of the needs of for both human and more-than-human and creates connections between all lifeforms that live in the environment.

## Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed a series of critical contexts in order to set a foundation and knowledge base for the wider research . This chapter explored the ecological problem humans have cause and how modernism has created a rift between human and more-than-human, followed by architectural examples which explore durational, site sensing, and regenerative concepts. In the following chapter on methodologies, I explore a range of crafts, documentations, and design thinking strategies to further bolster the theories and case studies explored in the previous chapter .



Figure 26: *Waters Edge*, Benedict Drayton, 2024



Figure 27: Anawhata Beach, Benedict Drayton, 2024





## Chapter Two – Methodologies

### Introduction

Chapter One discussed ontological ideas that are fundamental to this research. In chapter Two I build upon the writing of Jane Bennett, and indigenous thinking for mauri ora, leading to an exploration of a vitalist methodology, which provided the base for the practice-based enquiry documented in the following two chapters. Chapter Two consists of two parts. Part One – Mapping explores the practice of mapping through the work of landscape architect James Corner. Corner's work sets a precedent for creating socio-ecological maps, maps rich with information that paint a picture of the sites and surrounding land. Part Two – Makings then focuses on the physical craft of model making with construction of small-scale models. Part Three – Solar drawings takes a selection of models that were made in Part Two to conduct a time-based shadow casting drawing. This involved tracing the shadows of these models, documenting the sun's movement and the ever-changing form of the shadows. Part Four – Photography and site observation explores examining the site through a photographic medium, capturing a moment in time at each of the sites. Whilst taking photographs, a site walking and observation was done, exploring all aspects of the site through feel, sound, and smell. Part Five – Fluid medium exploration involved the exploration of water colour paints to investigate how the dyes in the paint run and forge paths across the damp paper. This exploration created a visual of the agency of water. Part Six- Paper folding explores origami and map folding techniques and their transformative qualities. Paper folding takes a planar material and imbeds a memory into it via folds, the folds transform it into a three-dimensional object but also adds an element of vitality to the craft.

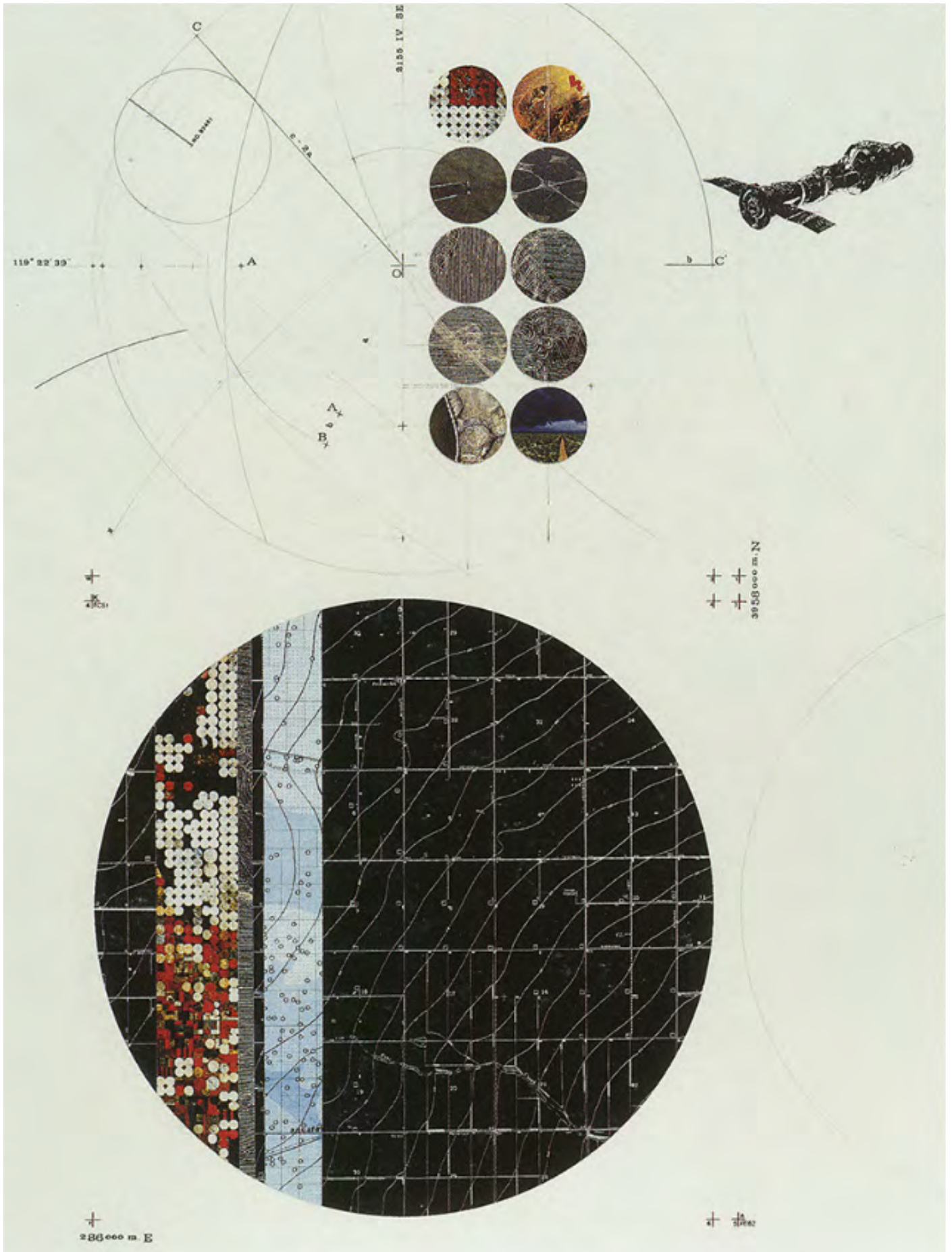


Figure 28: *Taking measures across the American landscape*, James Corner, 1996

## Part One – Mapping

Landscape architect and theorist James Corner's practice involves both the design of landscape interventions and the development of complex landscape maps and books which incorporate social, ecological, geographical, and other diverse information into a complex, composite image. Corner (2011) discussed the agency of mapping and how mapping is far more than a two-dimensional medium of aerial views and horizontal sections. In his essay "The agency of mapping: Speculation, critique and invention (Corner, 2011), he discusses how mapping as a process allows us to uncover and explore the world around us and its hidden potential:

These revisions situate mapping as a collective enabling enterprise, a project that both reveals and realises hidden potential. Hence, in describing the 'agency' of mapping, I do not mean to invoke agendas of imperialist technocracy and control but rather to suggest ways in which mapping acts may emancipate potentials, enrich experiences and diversify worlds. (Corner, 2011, p. 213)

I applied Corner's philosophy and practice to my own mapping exercises to reveal the connections and symbiosis between humans and nature, social factors, biomes, skylscapes, and geographies. These acts of mapping aim to build a picture of a more hidden or subtle world and particularly seek to communicate the complexity and connectivity of the living world.

The 1996 project "Taking measures across the American landscape" by James Corner's and aerial photographer Alex S. MacLean serves as a precedent of a series of maps that go beyond what would traditionally be displayed in cartography. This series of essays and drawn maps explores the different types of American landscapes and alternative methods of displaying those maps. The maps in this book are a fantastic example of how to present more than just aerial photography and map markers, as these maps contain wide range of data and images that capture the whole context of the area.



Figure 29: *Taking measures across the American landscape*, James Corner, 1996

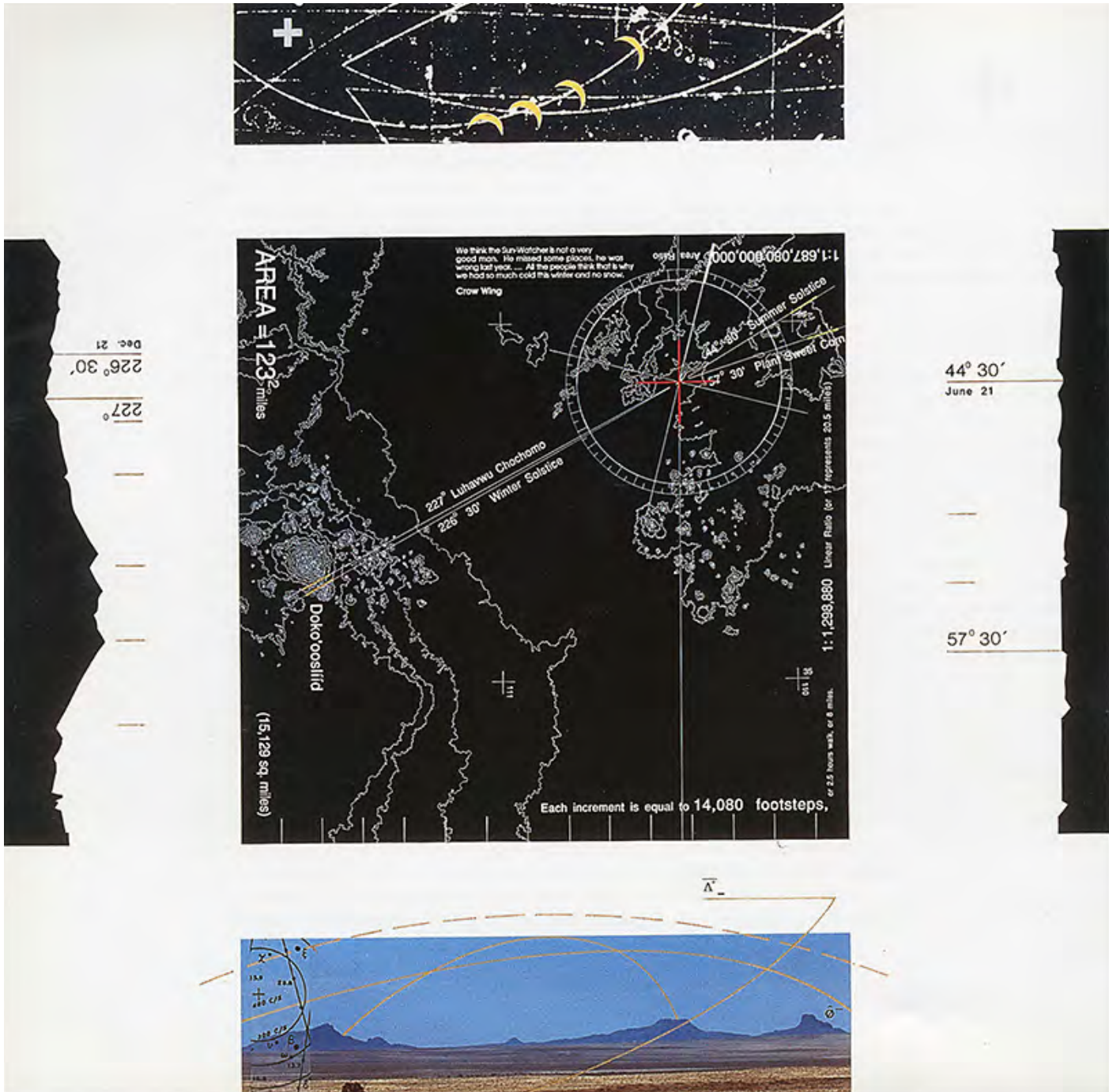


Figure 30: Taking measures across the American landscape, James Corner, 1996



Figure 31: *Native Bush*, Benedict Drayton, 2024

## Part Two – Makings

The Makings section of this project started with the making of abstract small-scale models. These models sought to explore and investigate animistic and vital qualities in both the forms themselves and the environment they inhabit. Each of the models had a unique mechanism that displayed their agential nature. Mechanisms included rocking, movement, transformation, shadow casting, light distortion, or a combination of mechanisms.

Where possible, the materiality of these models was considered and designed to reflect the purpose of these forms. Recycled Native Rimu timber, a large evergreen coniferous tree endemic to New Zealand, was selected as the main construction material for these models because of its origin and inherent connection to Tane Mahuta, the forest, and Papatūānuku, the land, from which it was harvest from. The use of recycled materials meant that materials were salvaged from what would have otherwise been thrown out to decompose. Australian architect John Wardle commented in an audio interview with Karen McCartney that “rather than using fabulous materials we work fabulously with rudimentary materials ” (Wardle, 2023). This quote from John Wardle resonates with this practice of making with recycle materials, although the timber if not perfect, by reusing the material in such a method it continues the vital life force, the Mauri of the material (Yates, 2016), one from the earth.

Using subtractive construction techniques allowed me to sculpt these forms from larger rough sawn blocks of timber; each cut, scallop, and surface sand of this material worked in unison to create these models in a considered process to highlight the quality of the wood. As I worked with the material, each cut uncovered the history of the material, where an insect had burrowed, and the tree had repaired itself with sap or where a nail was once driven into it, forming a stained hole from where the oxidation reaction had taken place. The reaction between the nail and timber that had stained the material is a similar reaction to what Yates (2016) unpacks in *Mauri-Ora: Architecture, Indigeneity, and Immanence Ethics*, (2016) discussing material choices when constructing and the Tuhoe living building. A mixture of chemical elements forged into an alloy reacting with a natural material for worse, or the Bennett theorises between these two vibrant materials.



Figure 32: *Durational Drawing*, Amanda Yates & Gemma loving-Hutchins  
, 2015

## Part Three – Solar drawings

Solar (shadow) drawing is a key method utilised in this research. Shadow drawing is the amalgamation of two methods, model making and drawing, using considered and crafted models to cast a shadow from the sun, then tracing the shadows at different time intervals throughout the day. This method explores how the shadow forms cast by a model change and transform over time, thereby documenting agential moments of the environment. Tracing the sun's shadows using set intervals of time throughout the captures the sun's journey across the sky; as the sun moves, it continuously changes the forms of the shadows, allowing its liveliness to be documented.

This solar drawing method captures unique moments in time as the exact angle and size of the shadows cast will only ever be the same at the exact time of drawing on the exact date each year. This method introduces the idea of architecture being dynamic and animated. Gemma Loving-Hutchins described how she used models and drawings as durational tools that highlight architecture's continual vitality and change for her spatial design project. She noted that “modelling techniques and architectural constructions – a processual practice of fabricating shadowing structures, mapping shadow traces, and forming further shadowed spaces enables a durational design process that generates an eventual architecture.” (Loving-Hutchins & Yates, 2015, p. 5). Loving-Hutchins' approach has real relevance for this research as it draws attention to what design development and representational methods can engage with and be activated by the durational environment, offering concrete approaches to the exploration of what a vital, lively, and active architecture might be.



Figure 33: Titirangi, Benedict Drayton, 2024

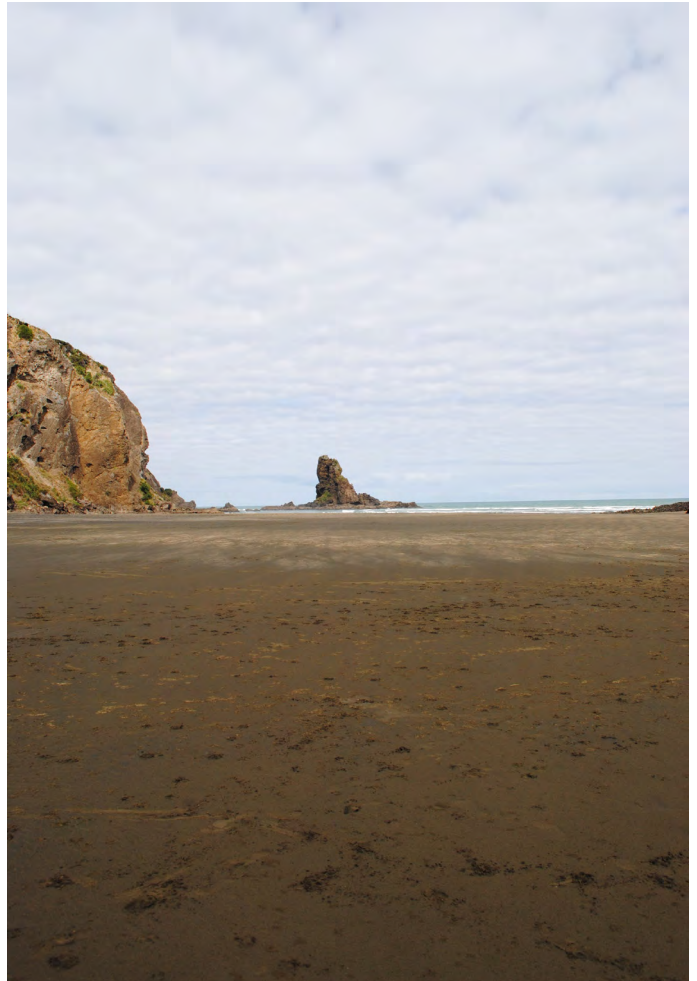


Figure 34: Anawhata, Benedict Drayton, 2024



Figure 35: Titirangi, Benedict Drayton, 2024



Figure 36: Anawhata, Benedict Drayton, 2024

## Part Four - Photography and site observation

Locating this project was a crucial step at the beginning of the project. Site observation and photography were two methods used to evaluate and observe the qualities of the two chosen locations. Both sites were observed using sight, touch, smell, and listening, as well as photographic documentation to visually archive the environment at the time of observation. The archiving and subsequent visual diary aided in locating this project and providing visual representations of the sites' surroundings and inhabitants. Having visual cues when designing ensures a cohesive architectural tectonic that becomes part of the site and environment. Key photos were subsequently integrated into the socio-ecological maps to capture the complexity and morphology of the sites.

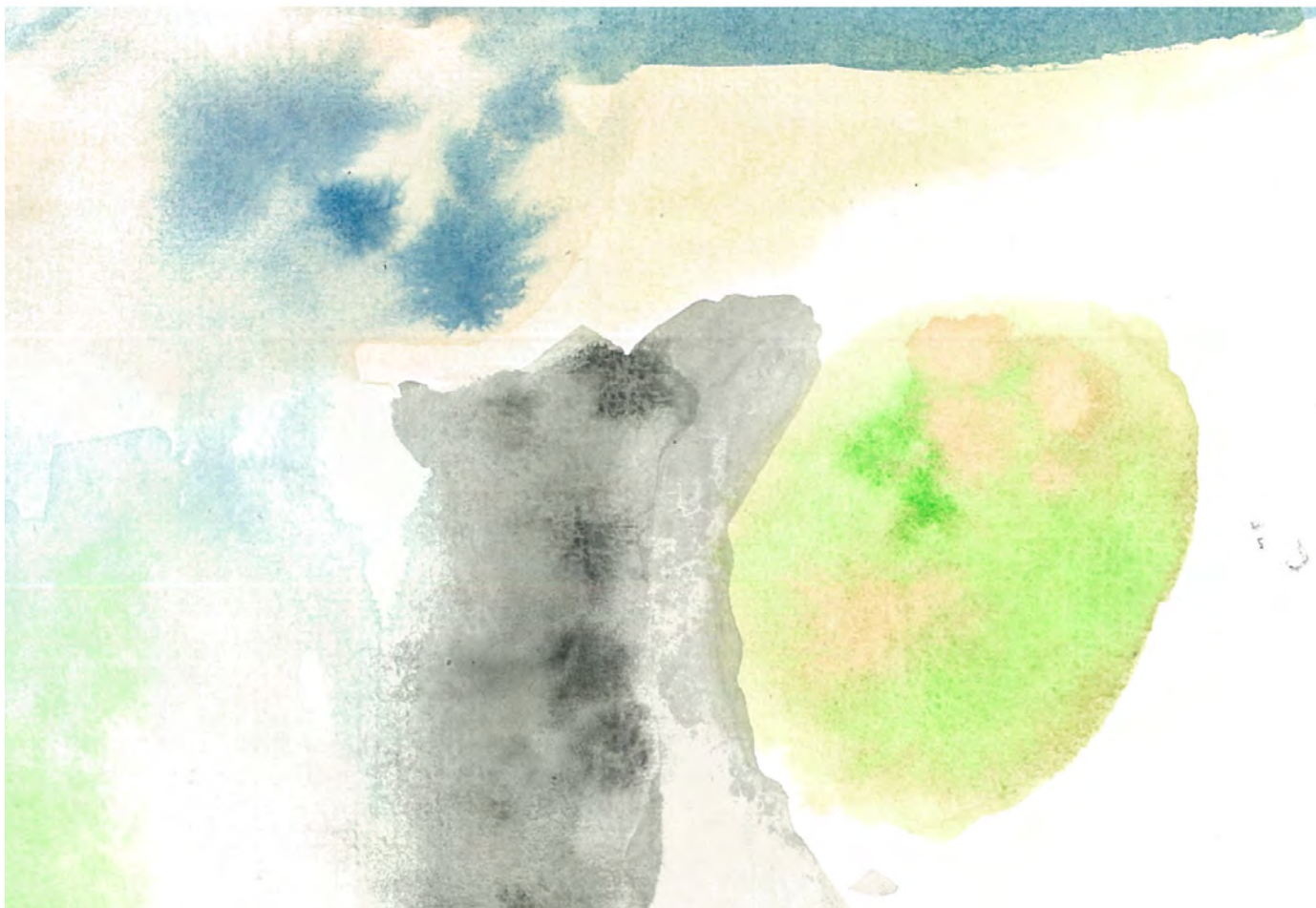


Figure 37: *Watercolour Experiment 1, Benedict Drayton, 2024*

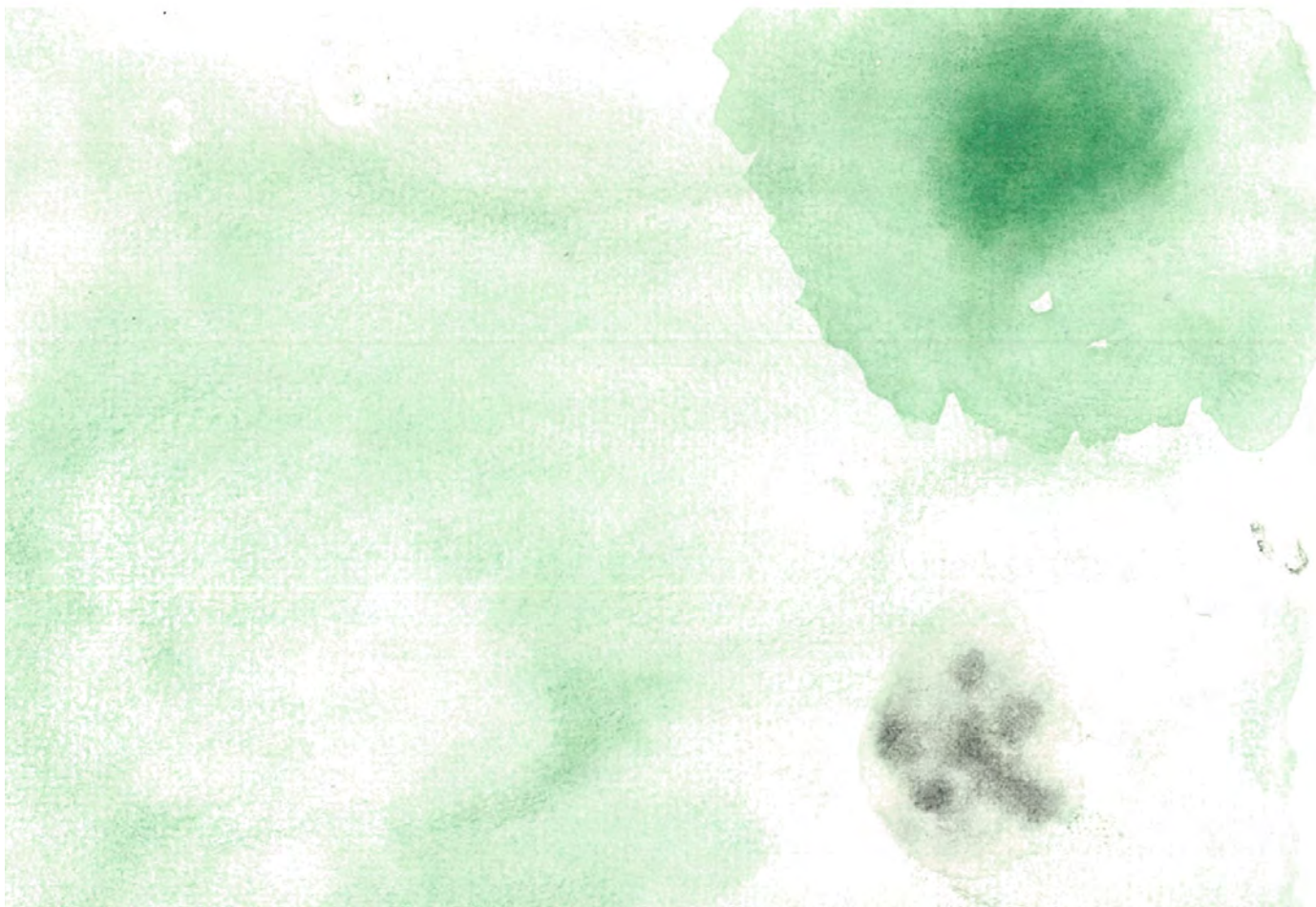


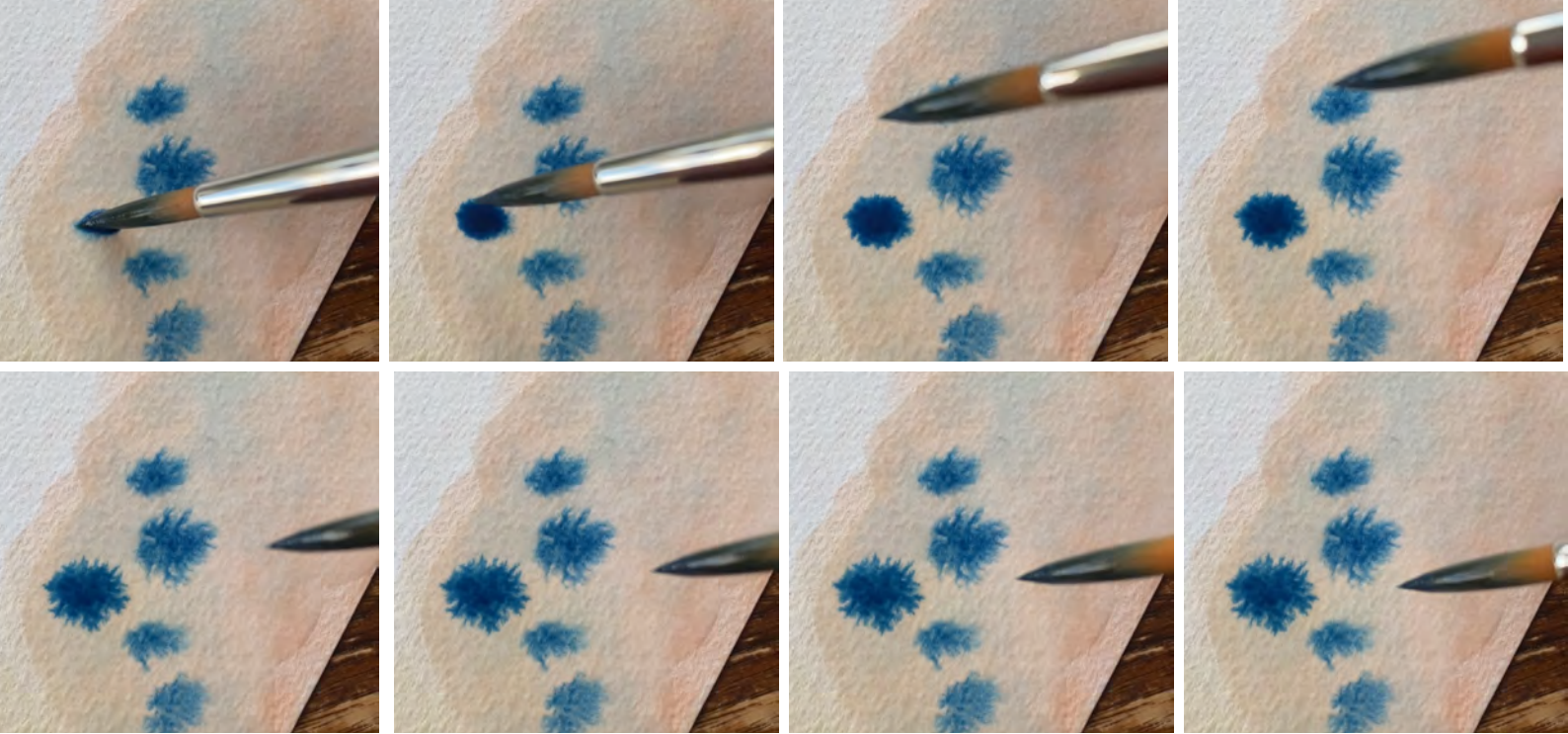
Figure 38: *Watercolour Experiment 2, Benedict Drayton, 2024*

## Part Five – Fluid medium exploration

Creating a series of watercolour experiments revealed the agency and vitality in water . When touching the saturated brush to the wet canvas, the colour runs and disperses across the page. The ink together with the water create its own path, running outward like tree roots; this movement is not controlled or manipulated and adds a new element to each of these paintings. Moving image photography capture each of the “explosions” of colour on the page. Extracting still frames from this video allows us to view frame by frame to explore how the water moves across the page, almost creating its own painting.

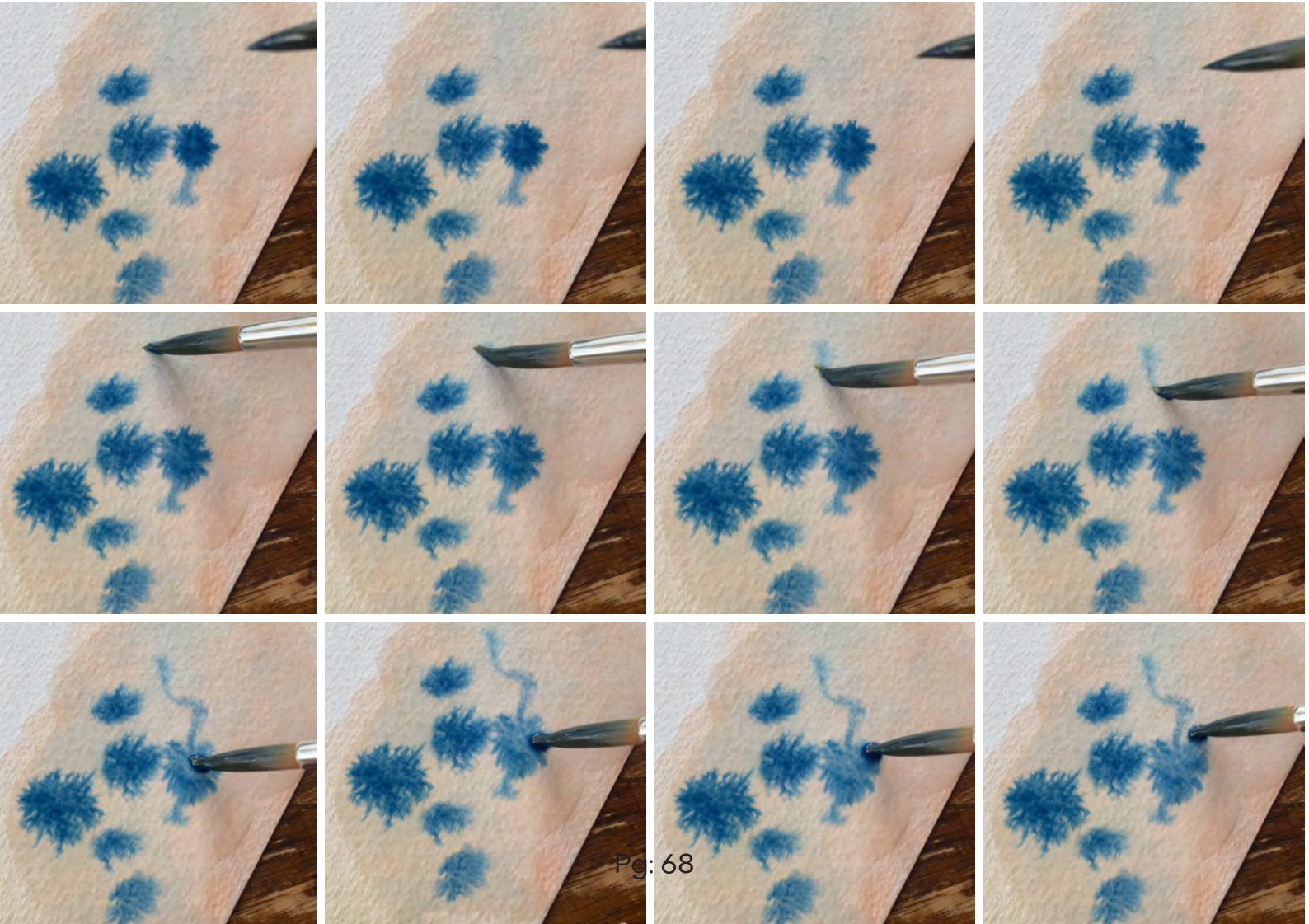
## Part Six – Paper folding

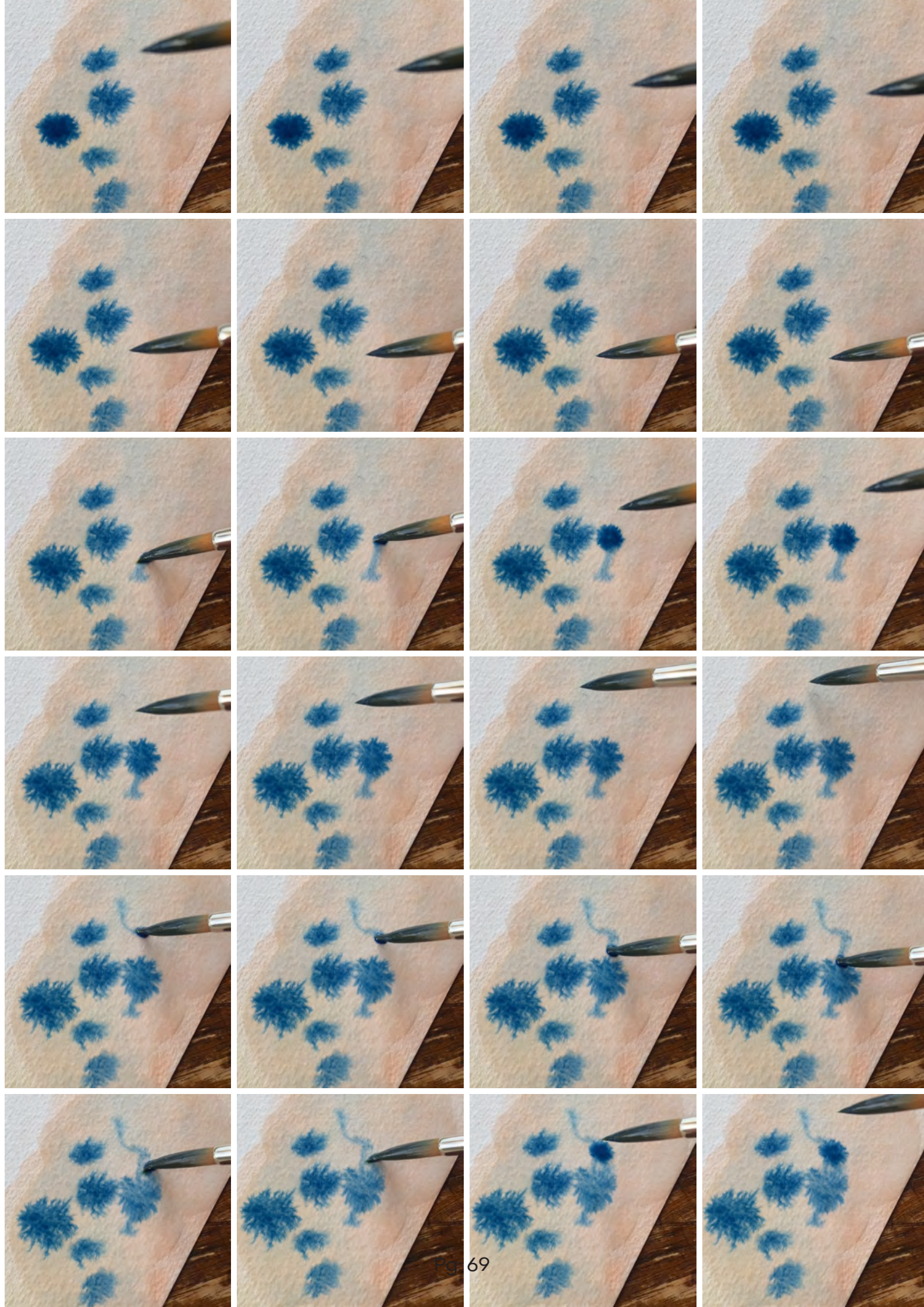
Part Six involved the use of an alternative transformative model making practice as origami or paper was used to explore new forms of making. Forms of making which contrast the subtractive fabrication method used on timber models. This method involves taking a planar medium and transforming it by folding it into a three dimensional and animated form and impregnating a memory into the paper. Folding the paper creates ridges and valleys, the building blocks of each of these makings. These building blocks create form, structure, and dimensionality, and thereby help create complex forms unattainable by other modelling techniques. The folds in these models worked as a live hinge by creating a degree of movement and action to the models. Once compressed these models retained a memory and return to their original complex form.



The vitality of water is shown here as the ink runs and spreads across the canvas with each 200ms frame of a film.

Figure 39: Vitality of Water (Film), *Benedict Drayton, 2024*





## Conclusion

Chapter Two documented how this project linked key theories or approaches around design and vitalism to a set of design action. The theories behind them were explained, enabling the exploration and documentation of the vital world we live in. In the next chapter, I document experiments and explorations into vital methods. The next chapter attempts to materialise and document a selection of ideas explored in a physical manifestation.



Figure 40: Anawhata Coastline, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 41: Tasman Sea, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



## Chapter Three: Concept Explorations

### Introduction

Chapter Three documents the application of the ideas explored in the theoretical context sections of Chapter One working with the methodologies and methods discussed in Chapter Two. Chapter Three starts with Part One – Vital models, which continues to explore and expands upon the ideas of the making chapter, but this time explores it in a tangible medium. Part Two – Solar Drawings is about documenting the performance of solar drawing, an amalgamated method using vital models to create sketches. Part Three – Socio-Ecological Mapping takes the ideas of the landscape architect James Corner discussed in Chapter Two and applies them to both sites as well as the broader region, generating a deep understanding of the site. Part Four – Sectional Perspectives then starts to experiment with spatial qualities and arrangements, taking and building upon the case studies explored in Chapter One. This section is where we see architectural ideas and moves starting to develop into what will be the final outcomes of this project.



Figure 42: Rimu Heart Timber, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 43: Axial Solar Model, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 44: Axial Solar Model, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 45: Solar Lense Model, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 46: Solar Lense Model, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

## Part One – Vital models

Building upon the methods discussed in the previous chapter, this chapter explores practice-based tests of those methods. I discuss here a range of models crafted from recycled native timber to explore durational forms, vitality, and transformation following techniques explored particularly within the Durational Drawing and Design: Shadow sketches, shadowing structures, shadowed spaces by Amanda Yates, and Gemma Loving Hutchins. These models have the potential to serve as a massing object or design-driver for further, more developed design iterations. The models did become foundational to the project, establishing a typology, language, and set of architectural strategies for sun, rain, and wind sensing buildings that enable transformation and ecological restoration and allow a rekindling of human and more-than-human connections.

The six models can be understood in relation to four categories: sun models, wind models, mobility models, transformer models: Sun models: The sun models were designed to cast or distort shadows from the sun, ever changing as the sun tracks across the sky. These two models included acrylic lenses specially designed to distort the light shining through them. One of the models pictured also doubles as a wind model. The model has a brass pipe acting as an axle which allows the lenses to spin as the wind passes around it. The wind spinning the lenses creates truly random shadows controlled by the forces of nature.

Wind models: The one, true wind model was not as successful as I had envisioned. My concept for the wind model involved a whistling noise when a strong breeze whips through it, serving an auditory reminder of the wind's agency. However, this did not eventuate, as the only thing to come from this model was allowing the wind to pass through it. The main outcome from this model came from making it and scalloping out the various parts of the model to create it.



Figure 47: Wind Model, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 48: Wind Model, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 49: Wind Model, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 50: Wind Model, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 51: Brass & Timber, *Benedict Drayton*, 2024



Figure 52: Shadow model, *Benedict Drayton*, 2024



Figure 53: Shadow model, *Benedict Drayton*, 2024



Figure 54: Shadow model 2, *Benedict Drayton*, 2024

Transformer models: The transformer models were created by taking a rectangular block of the timber and slicing it across varying angular planes, finally connecting the cuts back together in order but leaving a hinge with fabric. When folded together, the block takes its original form, a rectangle. However, when the block is being unfolded, it starts to take a new form made up of angular parts connected with a soft fabric. The form of the transformed block can change greatly depending on which way it is unfolded, creating a series of unique masses. The transformation of form via the hinges creates an interesting tectonic, with voids and negative spaces emerging the movement in this model.

Rocking models: the final model was created to balance on its rounded edge and rock back and forth after having a force applied to it. Due to a modelling error or happy accident, as the model rocks back and forth, it also creeps forward, manifesting an agency of its own.



Figure 55: Rocking Model in motion 1,  
*Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 56: Rocking Model in motion 2,  
*Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 57: Rocking Model in motion 3,  
*Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 58: Rocking Model in motion 4,  
*Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 59: Transformer Model 1, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 60: Transformer Model 2, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 63: Transformer Model 5, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 64: Transformer Model 6, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 61: Transformer Model 3, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 62: Transformer Model 4, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 65: Transformer Model 7, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

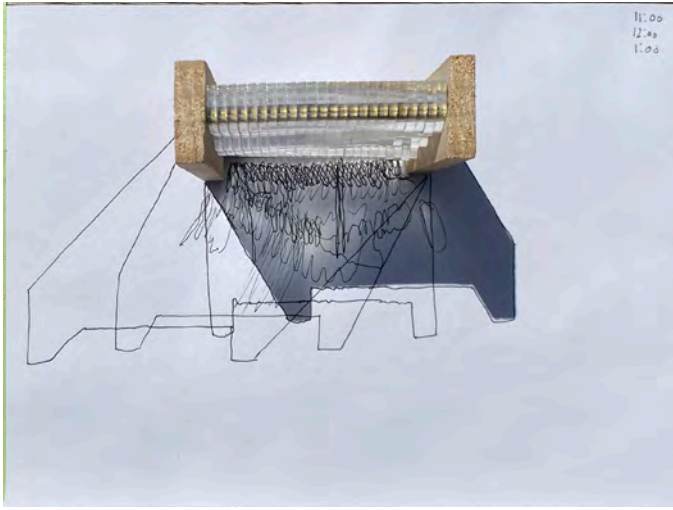


Figure 66: Transformer Model 8, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

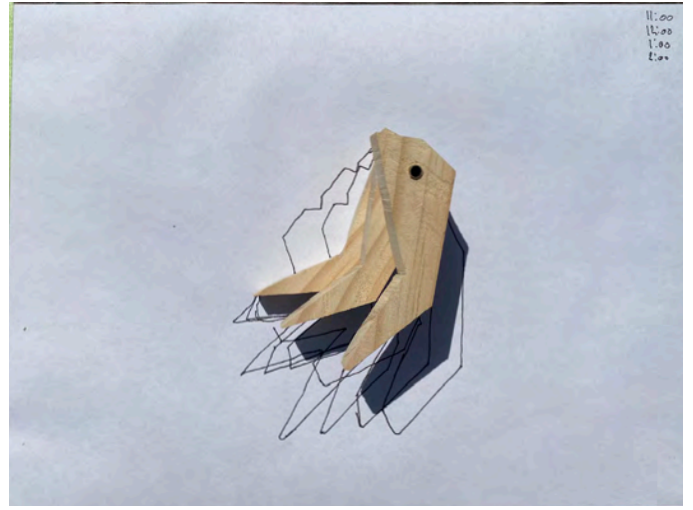


Figure 67: Vital Models, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*





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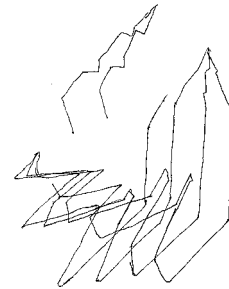
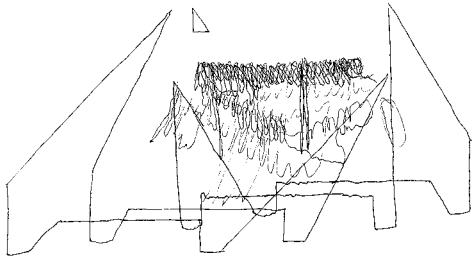
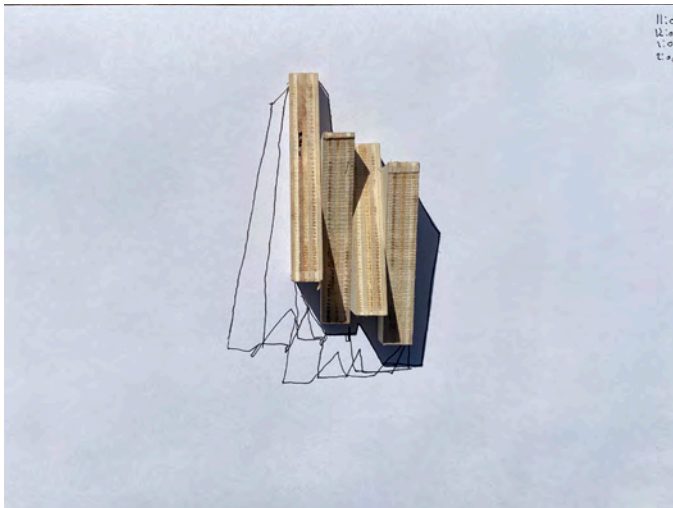
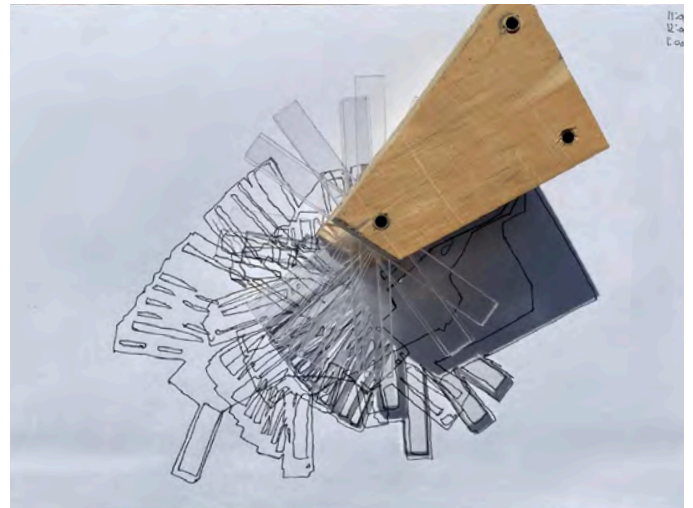


Figure 68: Solar Drawing 1, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

Figure 69: Solar Drawing 2, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



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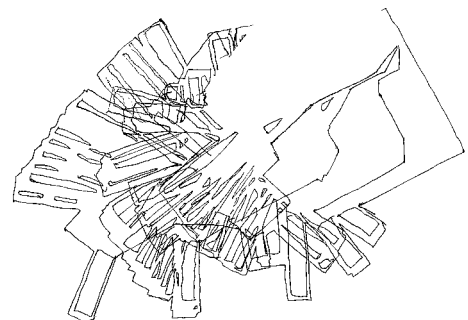
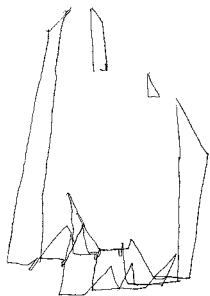


Figure 70: Solar Drawing 3, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

Figure 71: Solar Drawing 4, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

## Part Two – Solar drawing

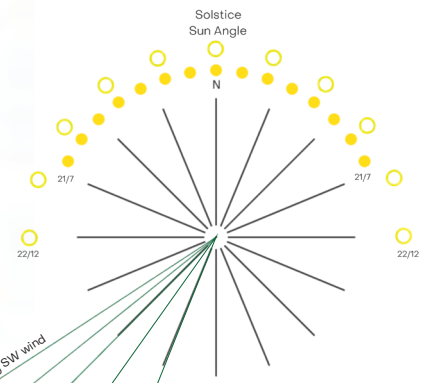
*The act of conducting the solar drawing and production of the drawing set started with taking four of the sculptural models from the range I had previously crafted and subjecting them to the sunlight over a four-hour period. Each model was placed on a piece of paper which acted as a canvas for the sun to cast its shadow across and as the medium to draw upon. Throughout the performance, a trace of the cast shadow was taken every thirty minutes, resulting in eight unique outlines on the paper canvas. As the wind was persistent during the performance, one of the models designed to spin in the wind would unpredictably and continuously change its shadow, allowing me to capture the agential and vital nature of two elements at once, the wind and sun.*

*As the sun cast its shadows onto the paper, a dyeing effect of the paper could be observed. The changing of paper colour is an example of Jane Bennett's *vibrant matter*(2010) in real time: the reaction between two vibrant entities, the sun, an elemental force, and paper, a material composite of hundreds of compounds and organic elements. Because of the staining of the paper by the sun, this exercise invertedly became a shadow drawing with both human and more-than-human entities taking part in the documentation.*

*This method explores the agential, vital, and animated ecosphere we inhabit and works as a catalyst to visualise these attributes. Small scale modelling and exploration becomes an example of how these concepts can be included in full scale architectures, highlighting the active world on a larger scale.*



"ANAWHATA, PILLOW LAVA AND GLASSY BRECCIA"



**Geology**  
 Pillow lava  
 Manukau Breccia  
 Andesite  
 Black sand (titanomagnetite)

**Anawhata**  
 Population: 0-33  
 13.3 people per km<sup>2</sup>

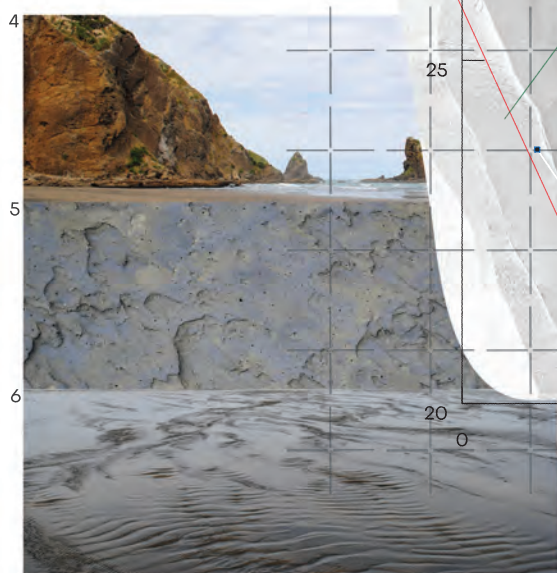
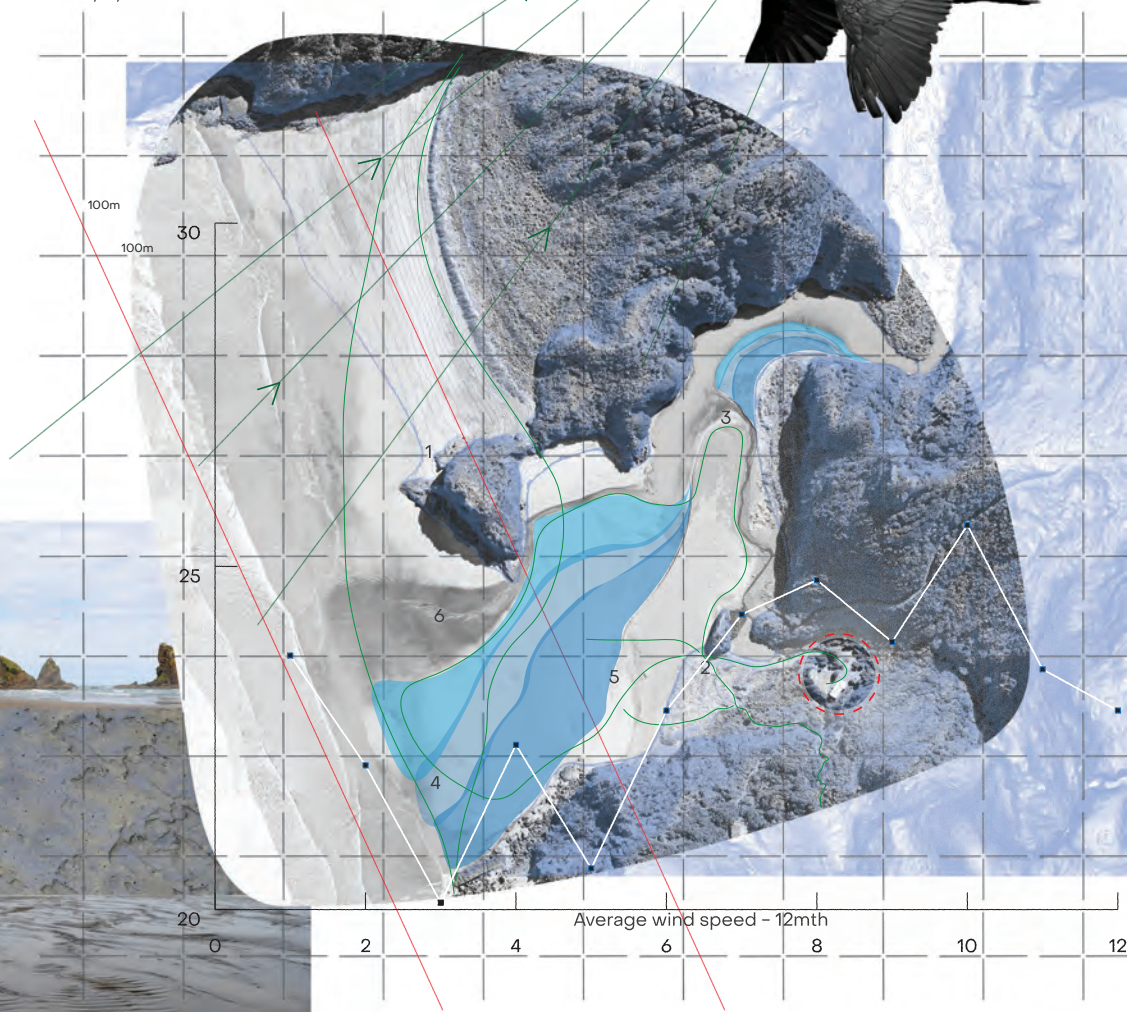
36°55,15,S  
 174°27,18,E

**Fauna**  
 Kāruhiruhi / Pied Shag  
 Pivakaweka / Fantail  
 Mātātā / Fern bird  
 Rirorio / Grey warbler  
 kererū  
 Koekoēā / Long-tailed cuckoo  
 Ruru / Morepork  
 Pipiharuroa / Shining cuckoo  
 Tū  
 Tauhou / Waxeye  
 Kōtare / Kingfisher

**Flora**  
 Toe toe  
 Round-leaf cotyledon  
 Huruwhenua  
 Shore Kowharawhara  
 Purua grass  
 Sand Sedge  
 Kānu, Matau-a-mau  
 Pīngao



Kāruhiruhi / Pied Shag



4  
 5  
 6



Te Kawerau ā Maki

Figure 72: Anawhata Socio-Ecological Map, Benedict Drayton, 2024

## Part Three – Socio-ecological mapping

Continuing from the works and ideas of James Corner as discussed in Chapter Two, a triptych of socio-ecological mappings of the Waitakere ranges and the two sites in Anawhata and Titirangi were made. The drawings layer multiple mapping styles, keys, and observations to create dense but rich mappings. The socio-ecological maps provide a glimpse into the geological, historical, ecological, and social contexts of the sites and adjacent areas. Three maps have been created as part of this project, one for each site and one for the wider Waitakere ranges area which locates each site in relation to each other and the city.

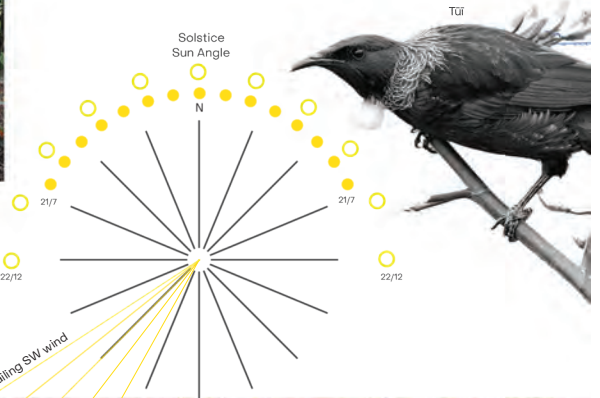
### *Map One Anawhata:*

The socio-ecological map locating and visualising the site at Anawhata depicts a traditional satellite map view with layered topographical lines and measurements, giving the viewer an idea of the precipitous hills surrounding the site. The use of traditional mapping media such as aerial photography and topographical lines familiarises and orientates the viewer to the site. A series of photographs of the site and surrounding landscape give the viewer an idea of the ground and the environmental conditions of Anawhata at the time of photographing, which offers a deeper understanding and experience of this location on the harsh western coastline. Data points on this map such as elevations, tidal activity, mean wind speeds and vectors, sun angles, and the summer and winter solstice's paint a technical or analytical picture of the dynamic, active, and agential ecosphere which is Anawhata. The more-than-human communities inhabiting the area are documented, providing a catalogue of the native flora and fauna. This catalogue gives us an idea of how vibrant and alive the seemingly harsh and barren site at Anawhata is.



*Map Two West Auckland:*

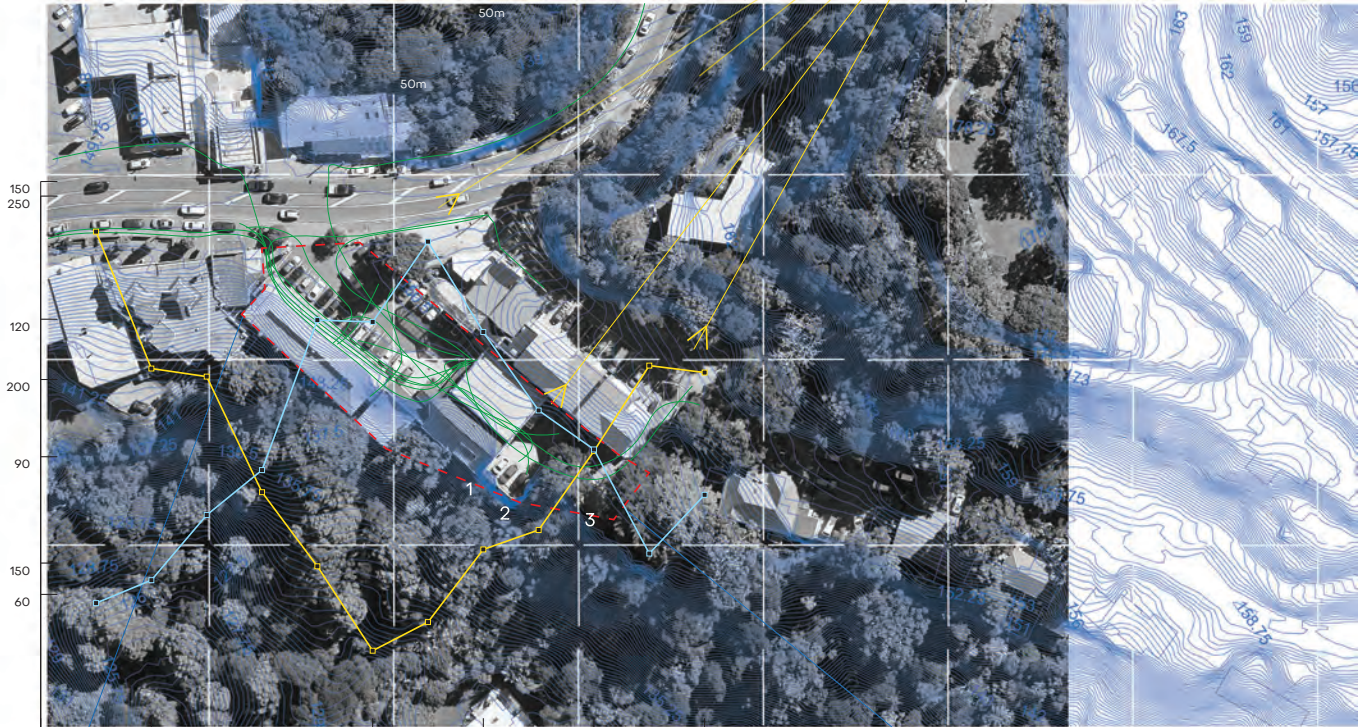
The second map in the triptych shows a broader view of West Auckland and its active ecosphere from the ancient Waitakere Ranges to the vast Manukau harbour. The West Auckland map, again based on satellite imagery, provides a brief look into the history of the area with the four major dams in the area outlined. The Waitakere Ranges dams are a vital part of Auckland's water network, providing 20% of Auckland's clean water to the city (Watercare, n.d.). A line drawn through the Manukau Harbour shows where an ancient waka portage would have been, allowing Māori to travel from the east to west coasts without circumnavigating Cape Reinga (Taonui, 2008). This map shows the broader environmental and celestial movements of the area, such as wind, massive tidal shifts, and the stars above. The West Auckland map also highlights the path or portage between the two sites; the proposed route one would take on a healing journey through the ranges.



## Titirangi

Population: 7420  
1,247 people per km<sup>2</sup>.  
European: 90.3%  
Māori ethnic group: 7.1%  
Māori descent: 9.2%  
Activity limitations: 2.9%

36.9383° S,  
174.6540° E



Geology	Fauna	Flora
Kerurū	Kerurū	Titoki
Manukau Breccia	Kōtare / Kingfisher	Necklace fern
Andesite	Ruru / Morepork	Kōwharawhara
	Miromiro / Pied tit	Tawa
	Pipiwaharaua / Shining cuckoo	Karamū
	Tui	kahikatea
	Tauhou / Waveye	Rimu
	Piwakawaka / Fantail	Kauri
	Mātātā / Fern bird	Kiwikwi
	Rirorio / Grey warbler	Whēki-ponga
	Koekoeko / Long-tailed cuckoo	Whēki
		Hinau
		Pōkākā
		Kakaha



Te Kawerau ā Maki



Figure 74: Titirangi Socio-Ecological Map, Benedict Drayton, 2024

### *Map Three Titirangi:*

The final map in the set is of Titirangi, situated in a semi urbanised context. The satellite imagery of the base map instantly provides context of the site and its relation to native bush as well as a highly trafficked main road. Using the same strategy as the Anawhata site, topographic lines have been layered over the top to reveal and accentuate the hilly terrain of the site perched in the Waitakere Ranges. Monthly sun hours and rainfall totals provide key information about the site, which is essential for when designing around green and blue infrastructure. As this site is in an urbanised context, population data on the map, such as ethnic make up, density, population, and movement paths, give the viewer an idea of the people who live and call this area home as well as data on how they currently interact with the site on a given day. Along with human population information, this map also catalogues the more-than-human communities co-inhabiting the site: information on bird and plant life at the site provide an idea of how diverse and teeming with life this forested mountainous site is.

The series of three socio-ecological maps created for this project provide a rich range of information in data, photographic, and graphical forms, allowing viewers to step into each site and become familiar with each world. These information rich maps also work to inform and guide design decisions and processes throughout this project, ensuring that each building is appropriate and suited for their respective sites.

Corner (2011) noted that maps “emancipate potentials, enrich experiences and diversify worlds” (Corner, 2011, p. 213). In this research the mapping method provides a richer, more nuanced, and inclusive understanding of the expanded site of the research and the buildings.

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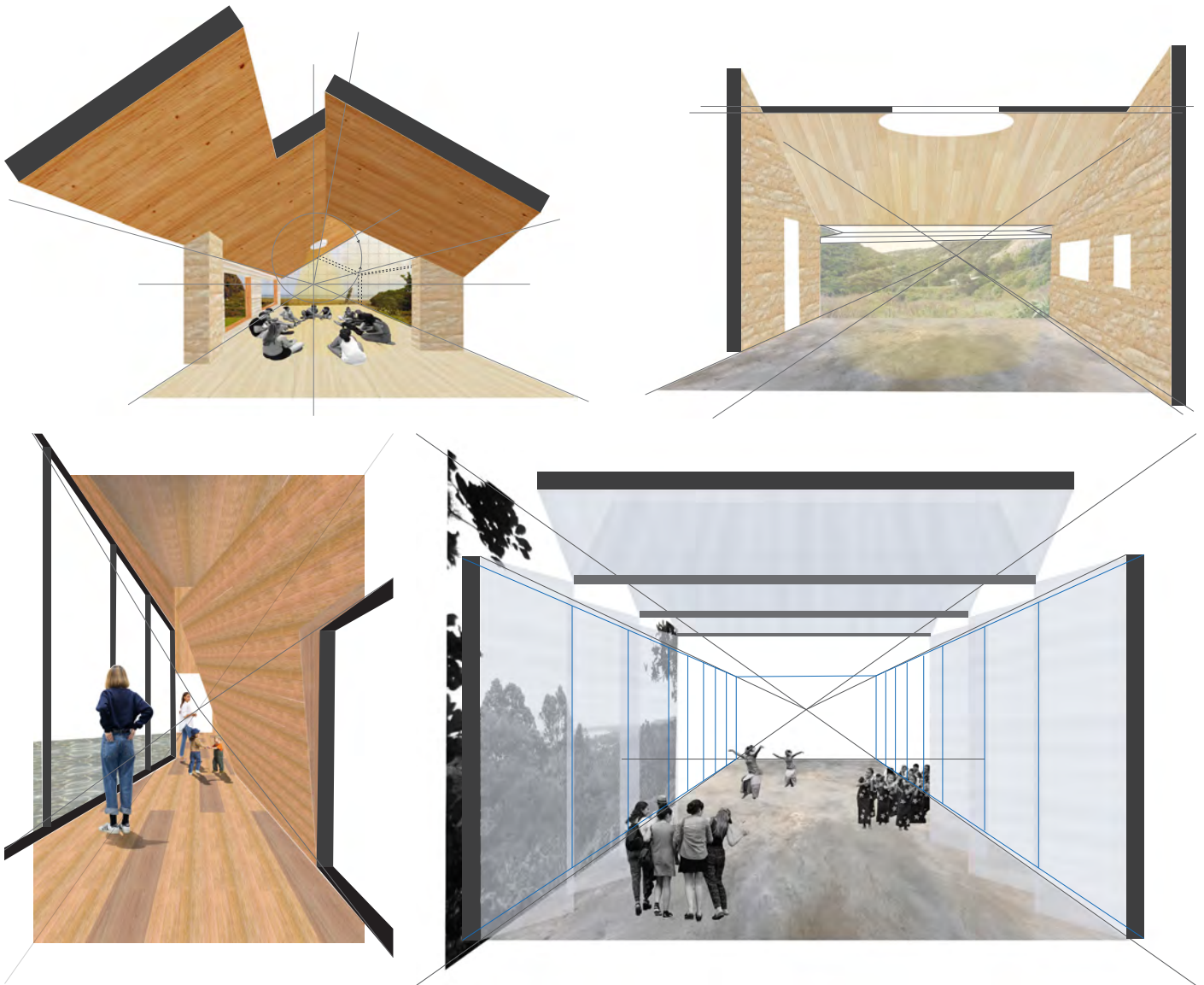


Figure 75: Sectional Perspectives, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

## Part Four – Section perspectives

From the vital modelling, initial massing, programming, and site observation a series of sectional perspectives were created to provide an indicative view into the spatial arrangement and quality of both the main site at Titirangi and the satellite site at Anawhata. These sectional perspectives provide a material palette and chance to experiment with surface finishes based on the programming of the space. The perspectives also serve to explain how the programme of the space connects, interacts, and adapts to the environment and the more-than-human. Positive ecological regeneration starts to come into the conversation with this adaptation and hosting of the more-than-human on site.

## Conclusion

Chapter Three described a range of works and experiments that were conducted to explore vitality, agency, and site sensing techniques through craft and documentation, materialising the methodologies explored in Chapter Two. The next chapter, chapter Four – Final design continues to explore and build upon what we have done so far but does so in a more architecturally focused manor leading to the development of the final outcomes for both sites.



Figure 76: Vista from Titirangi, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



## Chapter Four – Final design

### Introduction

Chapters One, Two, and Three explored critical contexts, methodologies, and methods for this vitalist research. Chapter Four – Final design synthesises the first three chapters by applying the findings to an architectural context. The current chapter describes how an animated vital architecture arose from early design explorations that sought to establish a language and architectural strategies for sun, rain, and wind sensing buildings that rekindle human and more-than-human connections.

Chapter Four starts with Part One – Site, Locating the Project. This section explores physical location and history of both sites at Anawhata and Titirangi, providing a context for the project. Part Two – Programmes then explores how to effectively arrange the spaces in the building allowing quality spaces for wellbeing to be created. Part Three – Concept Development discusses how the design process intersected with site to create initial architectural outcomes. The final section addresses the final design in detail.



Figure 77: Rimu Model of Titirangi, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

## Part One – Site, locating the project

The Waitakere Ranges is a forested mountain range that shoots up to 474 meters above the Tasman Sea on one side and Auckland on the other. The ranges and national park area span 25km from Whatipu on the southern end, next to the Manukau harbour inlet, up to Muriwai (Diamond, 1955). The Waitakere Ranges is the area the Kawerau people called home, building Pā sites and farmland in the area until European loggers arrived in 1859. Industrial logging in the area decimated patches of dense kauri forest. Trip dams were employed to transport the felled logs to sawmills in the surrounding areas. Major logging in the area can to an end in 1925 (McClure, 2007). From its inception till the end of the logging period, 23 sawmills harvested around 120,000 trees (McClure, 2007). This paints a picture of the impact of early European migration to the area. The Waitakere Ranges became and still are today a significant catchment area for Auckland with higher than average annual rainfall (2000mm) compared to central Auckland (1268mm) (McClure, 2007). The Waitakere Ranges are an area of immense importance to Auckland, and it is a place where the agential world is ever-present and where the human and the more-than-human live next to each other, though maybe not symbiotically yet.

### Titirangi

As I intend for this project to serve a community, it needs a community to be situated in. The site I have selected for this project is situated in the heart of Titirangi, on the fringe of the Waitakere Ranges on the western side of Auckland. The site, located at 402 Titirangi Road, is currently an uninspiring strip mall and car park, with the only exception being a somewhat popular café at the time of observation. Bordering the proposed site is a section of dense native bush. Tragically, at the time of observation, any views of this bush were blocked by the dated set of shops inhabiting the site. The only view and access to the bush were through portal like gaps between the buildings or from the rare

carpark with full exposure. As this project aims to improve the wellbeing of both the human and the more-than-human, it was crucial that the site had the ability to hold both communities symbiotically. The socio-ecological mapping of this space discussed in Chapter Three discloses the complex relationships of this site.

### Anawhata

While the Titirangi project is focused on creating an architecture that intersects and contributes to the urban life of the village by forming rich social and ecological spaces, I sought to also create a space for deep nature immersion. A satellite site in Anawhata, a remote and uninhabited beach on the raw yet beautiful west coast of Auckland, was chosen for this programme. The site at Anawhata represents a beautiful crossroads of dense native bush, a calm flowing stream, a barren and exposed beach and sand dunes, and the roaring and churning Tasman Sea. Anawhata is a place where the agential and vibrant world is illustrated and where you feel life and action in the environment. Historically, Anawhata has been an important place for Māori inhabiting the area with caves high in the surrounding cliffs being used as shelters or defensive positions (Diamond, 1955). In more recent times, Anawhata has been the site of many trips by the Auckland tramping club. The socio-ecological mapping of Anawhata discussed in Chapter Three shows how this site changes over the time of a year, mapping also geological and ecological patterns and niches.



Figure 78: Titirangi Site Collage, Benedict Drayton, 2024



Figure 79: Anawhata Site Collage, Benedict Drayton, 2024

## Part Two – Programme

Dividing the discussed architecture into a spatial arrangement and applying a programme or purpose to each space can be quite a challenge, as arranging public, private, and intermediate spacing correctly can take many attempts. In a healthcare and wellbeing programme, it is especially important to be able to provide patients with privacy and anonymity. In a Ted Talk, Joshua Prince-Ramus of REX and formerly OMA discusses the challenges of programming and how they approached the design of the Seattle public library.

“very dumb approach: Simply compartmentalize out things whose evolution we could predict, and we don’t mean that we could say what would actually happen in the future, but we have some certainty of the spectrum of what would happen in the future put those in boxes designed specifically for it, and what we can’t predict on the roof tops” (TED, 2007).

In this excerpt, Joshua Prince-Ramus highlights the importance of good planning and programming as the way we use spaces and our requirements for them evolves over time. Therefore, having spaces which can easily adapt is essential for the longevity of this proposal.

### Titirangi

The building on the Titirangi site is split into multi programmes with varying levels of privacy. The open and public spaces will be situated towards the front of the site providing easy access to members of the public, creating an open feeling for all. The spaces located at the front of the site will include a café, hall, and theatre space as well as public recreation spaces. As we step back on the site, access to the bush with increased, intermediate or interstitial spaces will be implemented here to create physical transitional spaces between the public realm

and sensitive private spaces. Spaces such as waiting areas, receptions, and hallways will be implemented to achieve these spaces.

Transitional spaces are important to give occupants reassurance that they are no longer in eye or earshot of other members of the public. The idea is to create a journey transitioning through space to increasingly private and sheltered conditions. As this architecture unfolds further into the site and is exposed to more of the surrounding native bush, becoming progressively more secluded, these spaces will be programmed to be the most private spaces. The rear section of this building uses the transitional spaces to take patients to consultation and healing spaces, quiet spaces away from the public but with a connection to the more-than-human around the site.

#### Anawhata

The main programme for the satellite Anawhata site will be a hall and pavilion. The hall will be used for a range of activities such as yoga, meditation, and spiritual healing/connecting. The idea behind having these activities held in such a location is to make use of the solitude and allow a sense of calm while being connected to the environment and the more-than-human through the building. The architecture will focus on establishing strong connectivity with the surrounding site, through glazed walls, open porous boundaries, and its radical wind-driven mobility that aligns the building with the prevailing wind.



Figure 80: Rimu Model of Anawhata, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



## Part Three- Developed Design

Throughout this year long project, I have developed a range of site-sensing, vitalist architectures that kindle human and more-than-human connections. The building at Anawhata and a community wellbeing centre In Titirangi were developed considering the users and programmes, the site, connection to the theoretical framework, and how the buildings respond to the ever-changing environments.

A 1:500 scale of each site, using recycled Rimu timber, helps to communicate the site. Once I had both sites in a physical form, I was able to rapidly prototype scale massing models, allowing me to analyse them in an in-site context. The models of both sites provided an idea of how to navigate the challenging terrains. Modelling the sites and building from the same recycled timber as the vital models ties in with the making methodology but also brings through the mauri of the material further into the project. Sketching and further modelling with wood took the 1:500 models and expanded upon the form but also the spatial arrangement and floor plans, taking it from blocks to buildings. Sketching allowed a rapid iteration process, pushing the concepts further and further. Once sketching became limiting, I changed the method of exploration and switched back to wooden models.

During the second round of timber modelling, I looked back at the vital models I had created earlier as discussed in Chapter Three. The long corridor like site at Titirangi played host to my transforming models well. As I would unfold the rectangular blocked forms of the transformer models onto the site, the massing for a building seemed to appear, with the cuts and hinges creating interesting negative space between the solid forms of uncut timber. The concept for the Anawhata site took inspiration from the wind model used to create a solar drawing. Experiencing the ever-present powerful winds coming off the ocean at Anawhata sparked the exploration and development of

this concept. The use of virtual computer aided design software then let me push these concepts further and allowed me to continue to develop them into architectural outcomes. At this stage, initial and more refined concept development work sought to replicate or activate the agency and vital transformative qualities of the living world. Key aspects for this included a reactionary mechanism to physical forces such as the wind, oculus' focusing, and casting the sun and rain, as well as systems to explore and observe the vitality of water. While these key aspects were explored in chapters Two and Three on a macro scale, the development of these architectures explored them on a physical human scale.



Figure 80: Rimu Model of Titirangi, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 81: Titirangi Massing Test, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 82: Titirangi Massing Test, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 83: Rimu Model of Anawhata, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 84: Anawhata Massing Test, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 85: Anawhata Massing Test, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

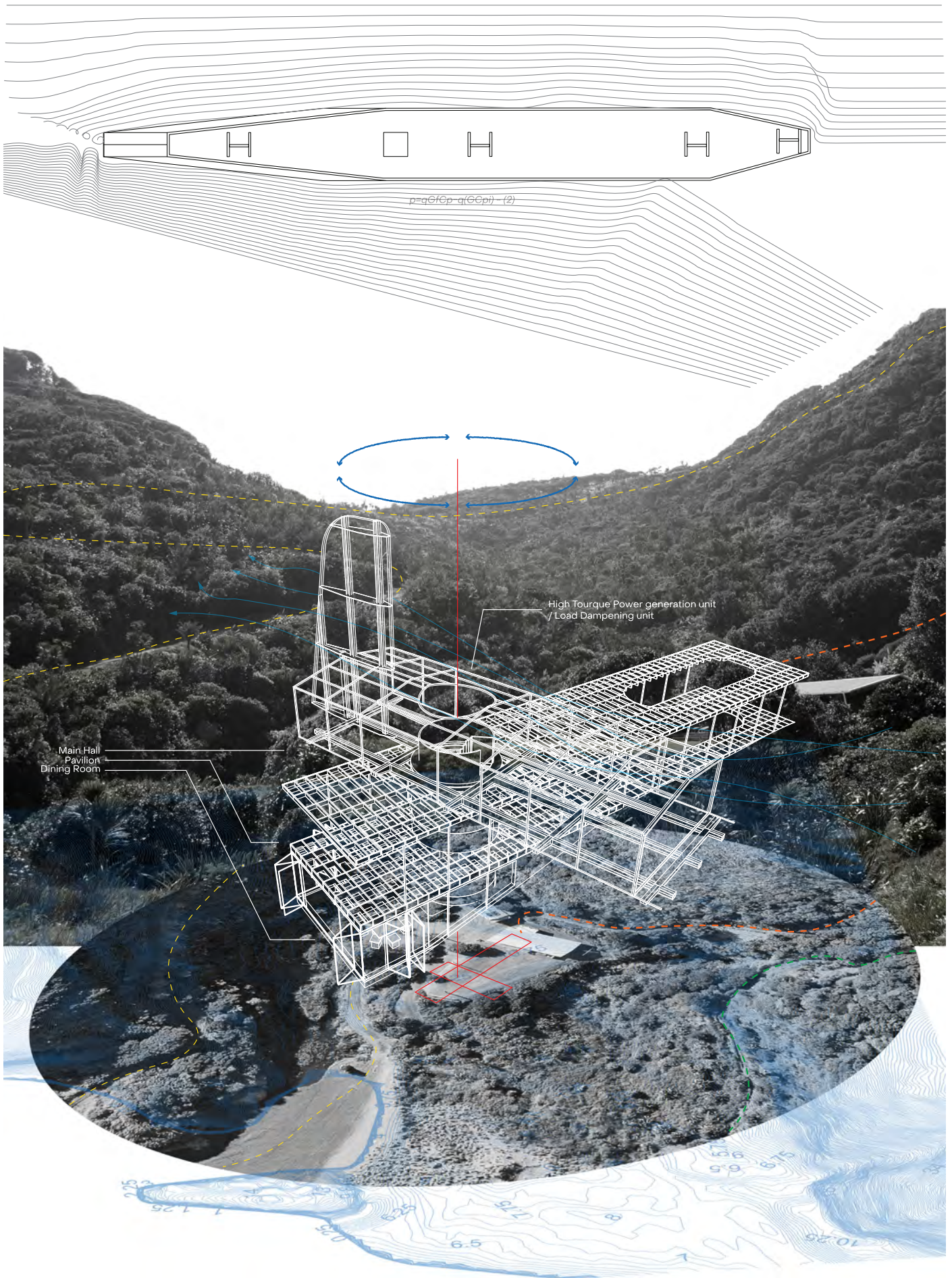


Figure 86: Collage Diagram Anawhata, *Benedict Drayton*, 2024

## Anawhata: Hau Ora

As the site of the folly at Anawhata is such a rugged and remote location, the building itself has to be robust and able to stand up to the weather and the forces it is subjected to. The same weather which poses as a challenge to the building also offer an opportunity to connect the building and its occupants to the site, allowing them to become one with the site.

Inspiration was taken from Hut on sleds, Coromandel Bach and Captain Kelly's cottage that were explored in the case study section. The coastal houses discussed in the case study section have been selected as precedent projects for this building due to their durable and long-lasting constructions. These homes are able to withstand the harsh saline environment while providing a place of comfort and calm. Operable features on these houses allow them to be completely connected or shut away from the environment. Ideas of operable or transformative features were explored in Anawhata site through the use of permeable timber shutters that allow the upper space of the building to be opened and transformed by removing physical boundaries from the surrounding environment.

The concept for the Anawhata folly consists of a basic gabled roofed hall that sits upon a roller bearing system with a sail/fin attached to one end that allows the building to change directions with the wind. As the wind direction changes over time, just like a sailboat or windsock, the building will change position in response to the direction of the wind. This feature of the building allows it to become wind sensing. This wind reactive element of the building was inspired directly from the vital wind model created earlier in the project.

When the orientation of the building at Anawhata changes, the main view from the hall will also change. The wind rushing around the sail and changing the orientation of the building together with the towering hills and crashing surf surrounding the site will create a deep sense of connection to the environment and to the more-than-human. Underneath the folly is a basic pavilion, which props the moving elements of the building up off the ground and allowing a place for people to enter the building.

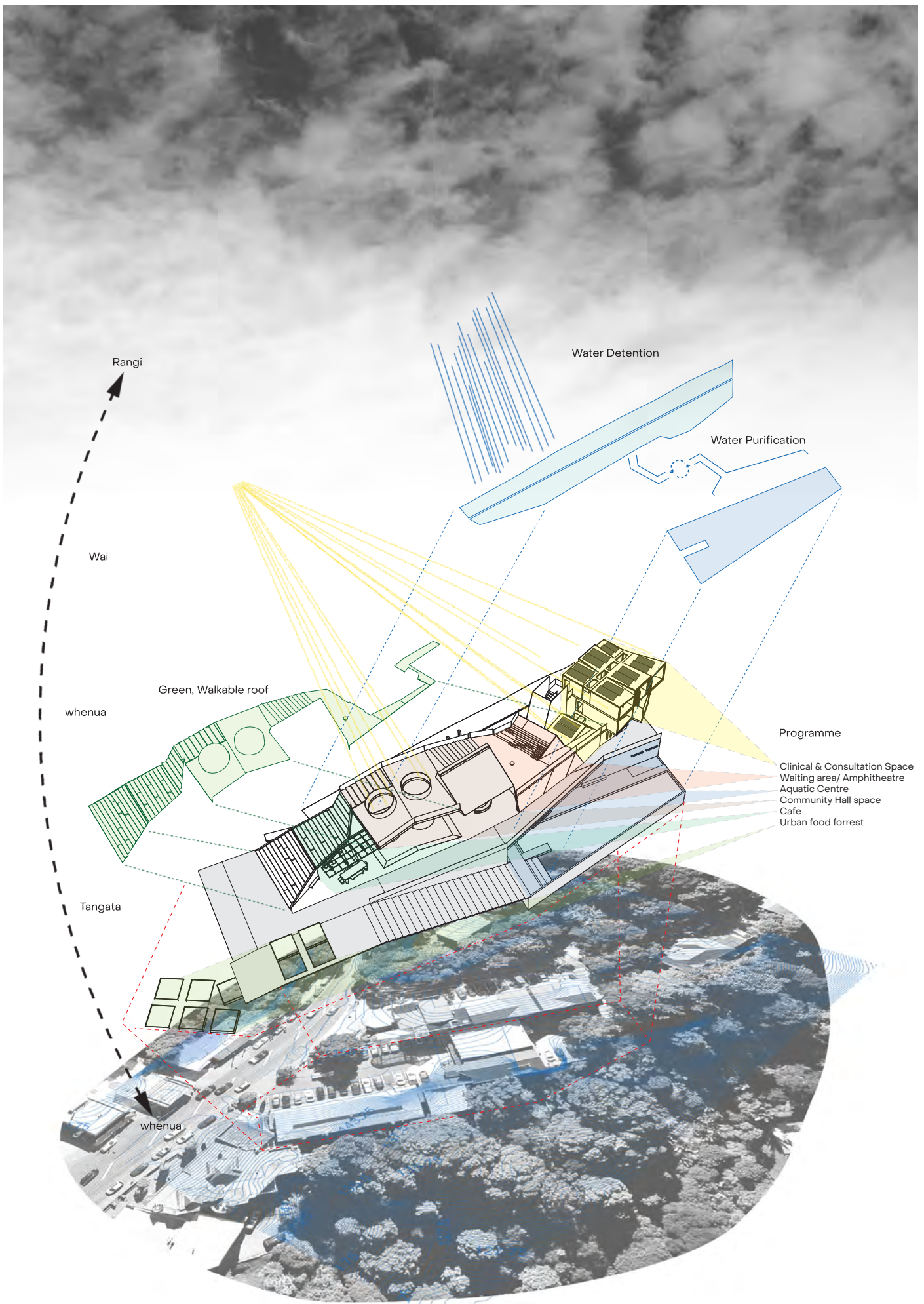


Figure 87: Collage Diagram Titirangi, *Benedict Drayton*, 2024

## Titirangi: Ra Ora

If the challenging site to contend with, it made the approach to landing the Titirangi wellbeing centre more difficult. Along with the site, the building's spatial requirements added to the complexity of the planning process. With the site sitting adjacent to thick native bush it was imperative that, where appropriate, the main public and patient facing spaces had a connection to blue and green spaces that have "an increased sense of calm and positive psychological effects" (Völker & Kistemann, 2011, p. 449).

Site sensing or reactive architecture was a main precedent for these spaces. The way that site sensing architecture allows a connection between humans and more-than-humans is vital for the wellbeing of both communities. The Kanagawa Institute of Technology Plaza was an interesting precedent for this project. As the plaza is open to the elements, the users become hyper aware to changes in the environment and thus change the way they use the space. The interaction between the human and more-than-human becomes one of coexistence. The stormwater pond at Exercisfältet also became a key precedent because of the way this regenerative piece of architecture was designed and incorporated into an urban context.

The wellbeing centre in Titirangi came to fruition through the development of the transforming vital model method. Taking a basic building form which I had developed using sketch and a 1:500 prototype, I applied the same process of slicing it through angular planes and unfolding it to create the final form. The unfolding of the form created spaces for a café and public spaces at the front of the site with clinical and consultation spaces towards the secluded back end of the site. During the unfolding process of this design development strategy, the negative spaces and pockets opened to become spaces with a unique spatial arrangement. The unorthodox form of this building creates openings and windows orientated at different angles; this forces users to focus on that one specific element or part of our environment. Having oculi that open and close

or adapt to changes in the environment creates a conscious connection between the human and the more-than-human, aiding in the wellbeing both. The oculi create a sun/shadow casting effect where beams of light from the sun are cast onto the walls and floor, changing hourly and daily with the movement of the sun, creating an experience akin to the solar drawing method discussed in Chapter Three. The blue and green effect is further explored with an onsite rainwater pond and a wetland area, creating rain responsive landscape architectural feature which changes its water level and in response to increased rainfall.

## Part four – Final design

The completion of any design project comes as a result of the selection the best elements, features, and orientations from a long and arduous journey of trial and error. In Part Three, I have discussed how I have arrived at a final design from an exploratory vital model to sketching and remodelling. I have discussed where my inspiration has come from and the effects and outcomes I have tried to achieve. Now it is time to discuss what I have selected as my final design and how it achieves improved wellbeing and remediates a lost fragmented relationship between human and more-than-human populations.

My final drawings utilise the connective language developed in the early socio-ecological mapping of the sites in an architectural context. Hence, my final drawings link between site, section, perspectival view, and context information in order to build a complex interconnected and relational vital architecture.



Figure 88: Anawhata Building 1/3, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 89: Common Area in Anawhata, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 90: Hall Space Anawhata, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

## Anawhata – Hau Ora

The building at Anawhata was designed as a meditative, spiritual, and retreat space where the building itself physically connects occupants to the environment around them. The building is entered through a ground level pavilion. Thin steel columns support the roof, allowing occupants to be exposed to the site and surrounding vistas. The pavilion was designed to be a journey whereby travelling down it you enter a place to heal, meditate, or reconnect. The thin stainless-steel columns, lack of walls, and exaggerated oculus in the roof create a sheltered yet environmentally connected walkway. The pavilion engages with the elements via the wind whipping around the columns and under the roof, and rain and sunlight are able to pour through the oculus, exposing users to these elements forcing occupants to adjust their paths accordingly.

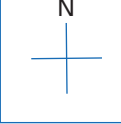
To enter the main space, occupants must enter a cylindrical tube, ascending a spiral staircase open to the elements via the oculus above. The open oculus allows light and water to gather in the stairwell, creating a connection to Ra, the sky, and Wai, water. The water that is collected in the stairwell is treated before being used or returned to the environment. The main space sits atop of that tube, resting on a series of roller bearings and gears to work in unison with the sail on the back of the building. This structure allows the wind to change the orientation of the building. As the wind direction changes day by day and season by season, occupants are put in touch with the immense force and power of the wind and the environment in which they inhabit. As this space rotates with the wind, gears situated within the bearing system engage and harvest the kinetic energy from the wind, turning the power generators connected to them and creating green electricity for the building. The gearboxes and generator system also work to slow and stabilise the rotation of the building. As the building rotates through its sensing of and reaction to the wind, the shadows cast are constantly changing, hour by hour and day by day, creating a visual representation of the movement of the sun and wind.



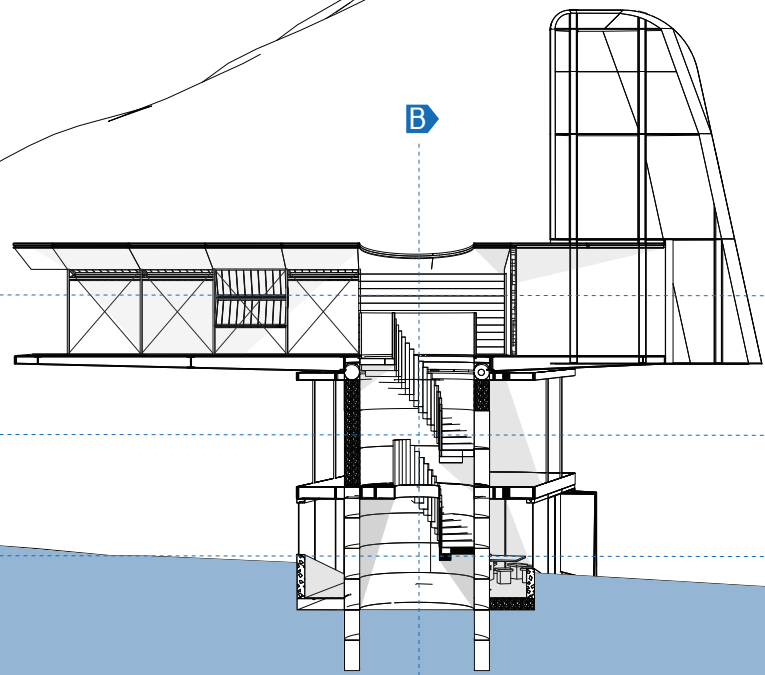
Figure 91: Yoga class in Anawhata, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 92: Anawhata Building moving with the Wind, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Hau-ora  
 Anawhata  
 North Section A



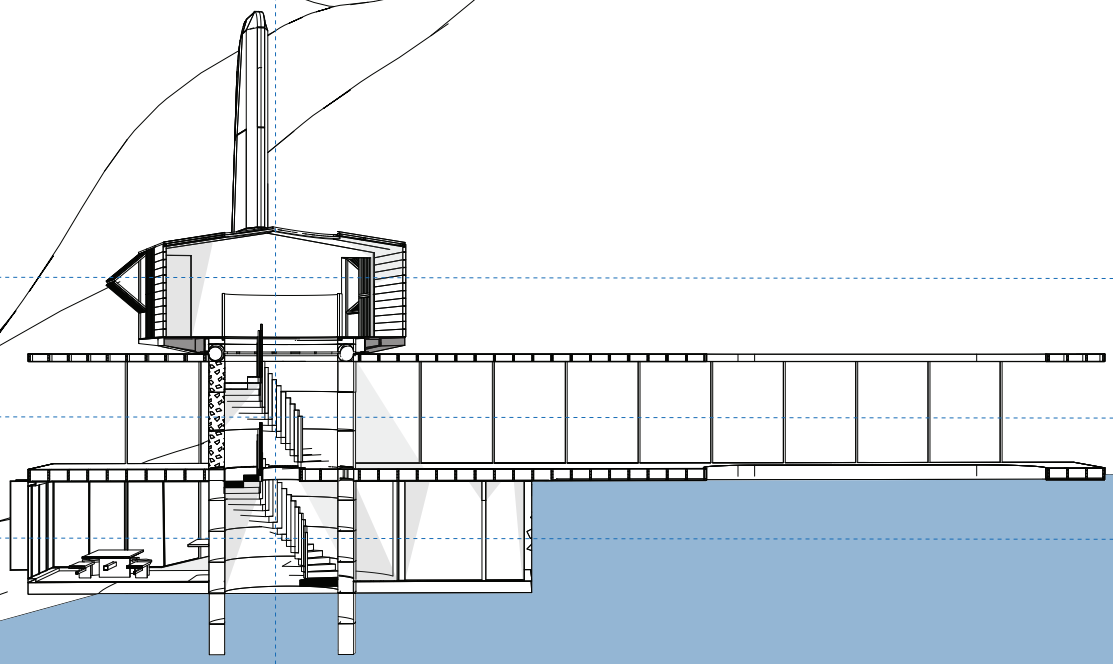
6000mm  
 2800mm  
 3  
 400mm  
 2800mm  
 2  
 0mm  
 1  
 -2800mm

1000 2000 3000 4000 MM  
 0 10000  
 1:100

Figure 93: Anawhata Building: Section A, Benedict Drayton, 2024



Hau-ora  
 Anawhata  
 West Section B



2800mm  
 3  
 400mm  
 2800mm  
 2  
 0mm  
 1  
 -2800mm

1000 2000 3000 4000 MM  
 0 10000  
 1:100

Figure 94: Anawhata Building: Section B, Benedict Drayton, 2024

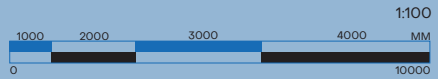
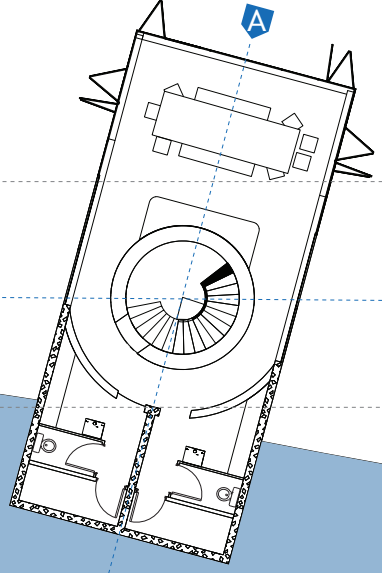
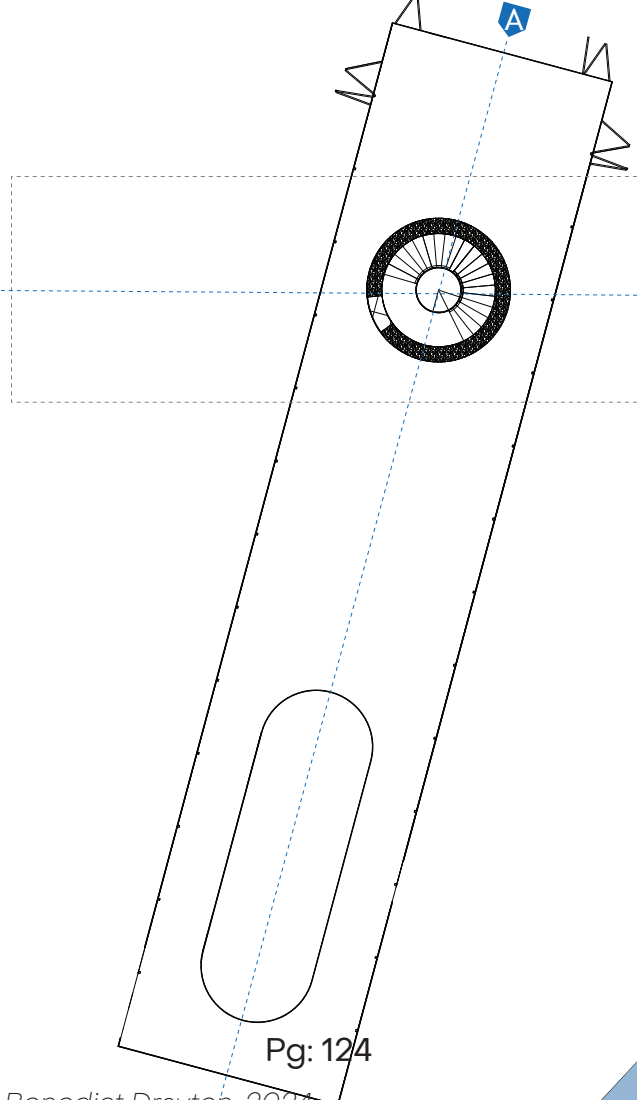


Figure 95: Anawhata Building: Plan 1, Benedict Drayton, 2024



Pg: 124

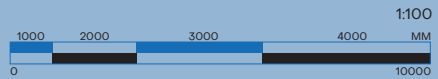


Figure 96: Anawhata Building: Plan 2, Benedict Drayton, 2024

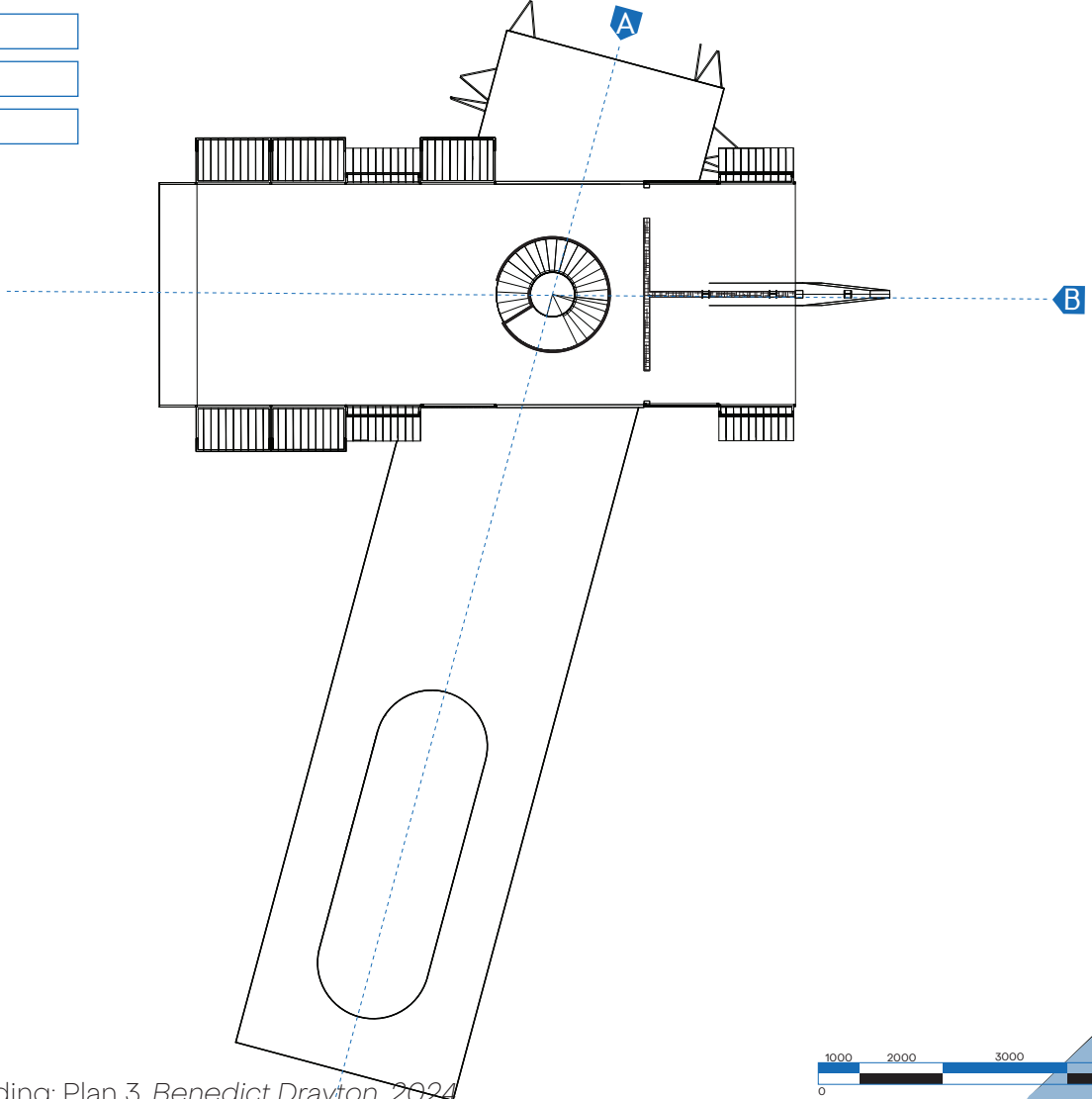


Figure 97: Anawhata Building: Plan 3, Benedict Drayton, 2024

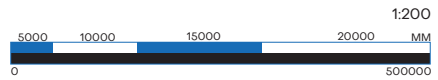
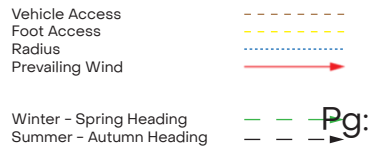
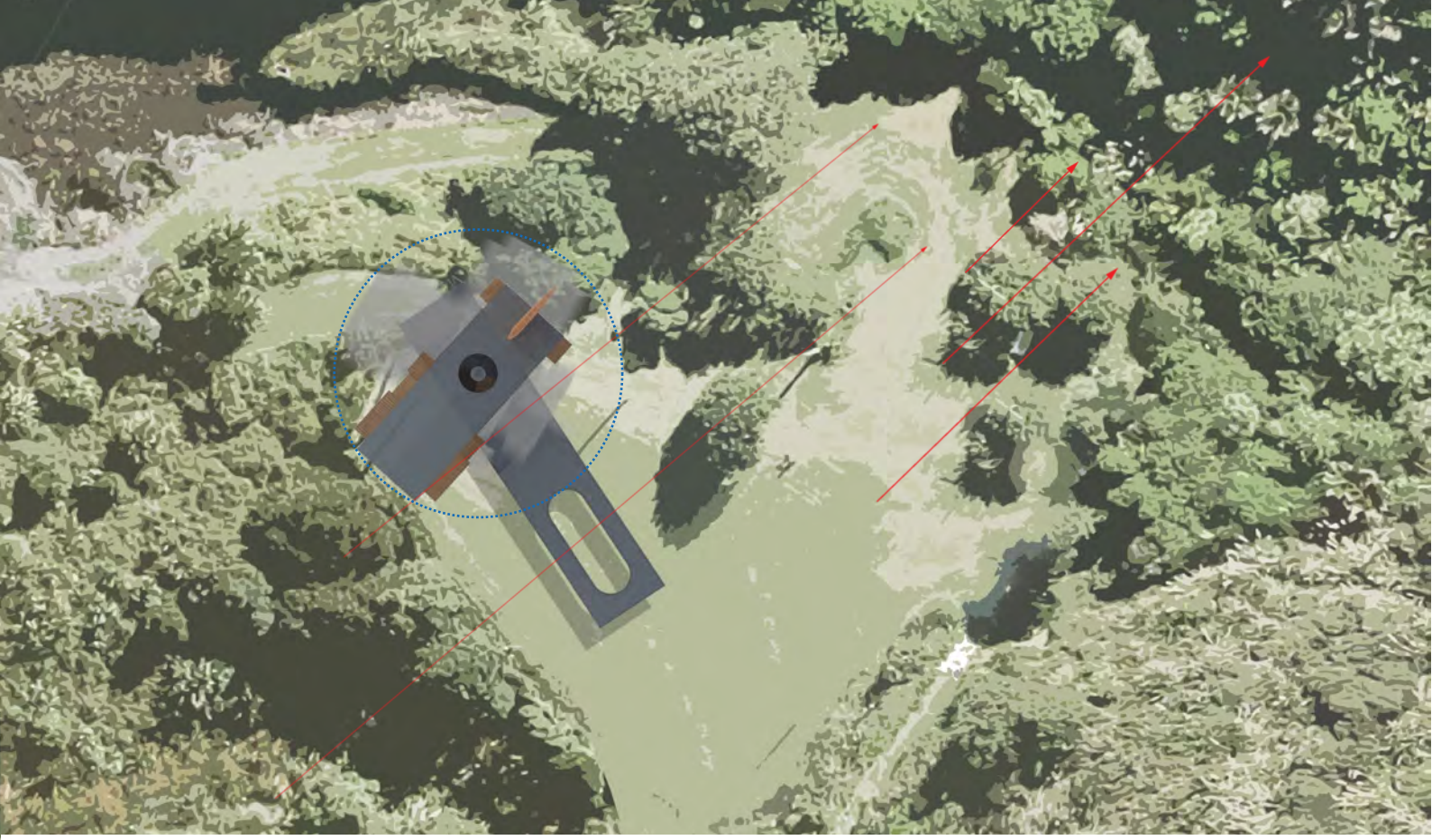


Figure 98: Anawhata Building: Site Map, Benedict Drayton, 2024



Figure 99: Titirangi Cafe, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 100: Titirangi Clinical Spaces, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 101: Titirangi Stormwater Pond, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

## *Titirangi, Ra Ora*

The building situated in the heart of Titirangi takes a different approach to healing. As a community focused space, its orientation and design were crafted to improve accessibility and useability, catering for the whole community. When entering this site, you are greeted by two paths. The first leads to a ground-level courtyard with an open hall space and a café. The courtyard, hall, and café area was designed as a place for the community to gather, host events, and connect. Planter boxes arranged in the courtyard aim to supply the café with fresh fruit and vegetables whilst also creating community programmes to tend to them. Community gardens are evidenced to enhance human wellbeing as they bring social connection and can improve nutrition as evidenced by Hume's (2022) study on community gardening initiatives which showed that "community gardeners tend to consume more fruit and vegetables, are healthier and participate in civic settings more frequently than non-gardeners" (Hume, 2022, p. 63) . Steps lead down to an outdoor pool. The pool is linked to the healing programme of the project which seeks to promote aquatic rehabilitation, physical activity through swimming, as well as a place for community gatherings.

The second path takes occupants up onto a green roof that acts as an elevated courtyard and to a corridor that connects to health care spaces at the rear of the site. The green roof snakes around operable oculi in the roof, creating a vertical connection between users as well as a physical and visual environmental sensing connection. The green roof operates as a viewing platform, creating a visual connection to the surrounding native bush as well as the Manukau Harbour. The green roof also works to absorb and slow the speed of running water from rain, aiding in the prevention of surface flooding. As water is collected on site, it is directed to an urban wetland and detention pond situated on site. By collecting water in this pond, excess strain is taken from the city's storm water system, and the water is also cleaned and reused. Water from the detention pond passes through a series of filters, and the water is then pumped around



Figure 102: Titirangi Community Pool, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Figure 103: Titirangi Community Wellbeing Center, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

the building or into the community swimming pool, creating an effective onsite water supply. The wetland, pool and water filtration mechanisms turn the site into a regenerative water system, where excess water can be processed in the winter months and stored for the summer to then be distributed across the site and community.

Consultation rooms are situated in the most private end of the site that looks out at neighbouring native bush. This allows a high level of privacy to these spaces while letting the wind, birdsong, and the smell of the bush pass through. The consultation rooms are located at the back of the site where the building shoots up three stories, creating ample space for consultation and therapeutical services such as a GP, therapists, physiotherapists, and a gym. This section of the building focuses on the physical, therapeutical and clinical wellbeing of the community. This taller section of the building holds solar panels on the roof, allowing the photovoltaic cells to receive an uninterrupted connection to the sun on clear days. The solar photovoltaic array on the roof creates a source of green renewable energy for the building, aiding in reducing its reliance on fossil fuel driven power from the city's grid.



5700mm Circulation      8200mm Cafe      10900mm Public Hall      8150mm Main Hall

900mm  
7100mm  
4000mm

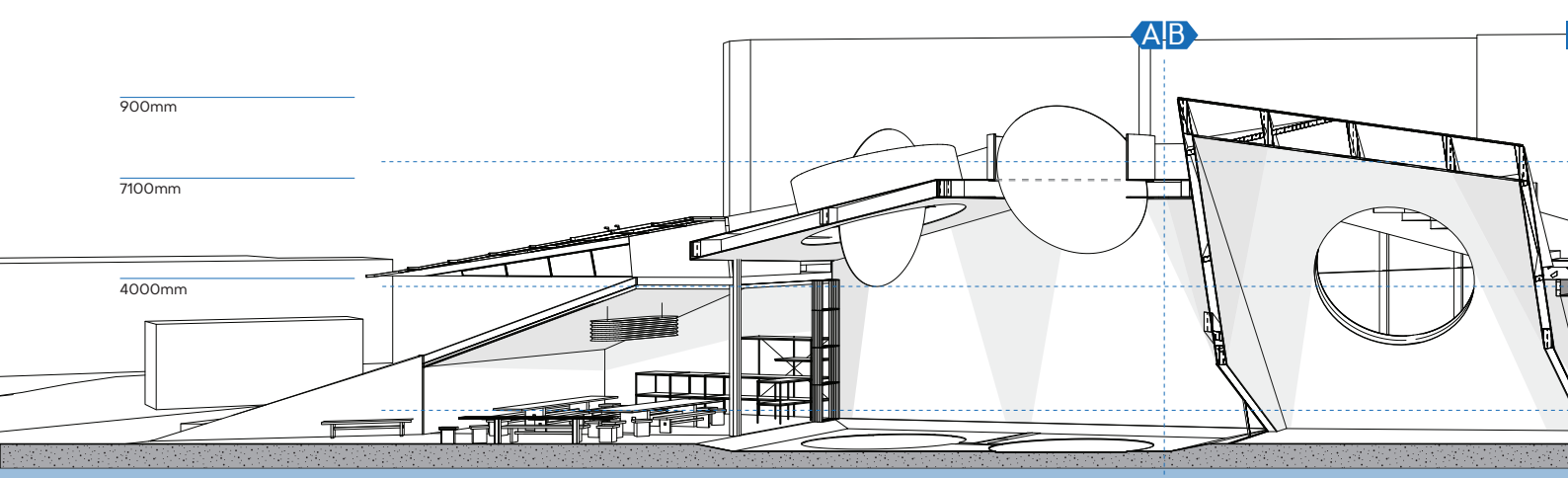


Figure 104: Titirangi Community Wellbeing Center: Section 1, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

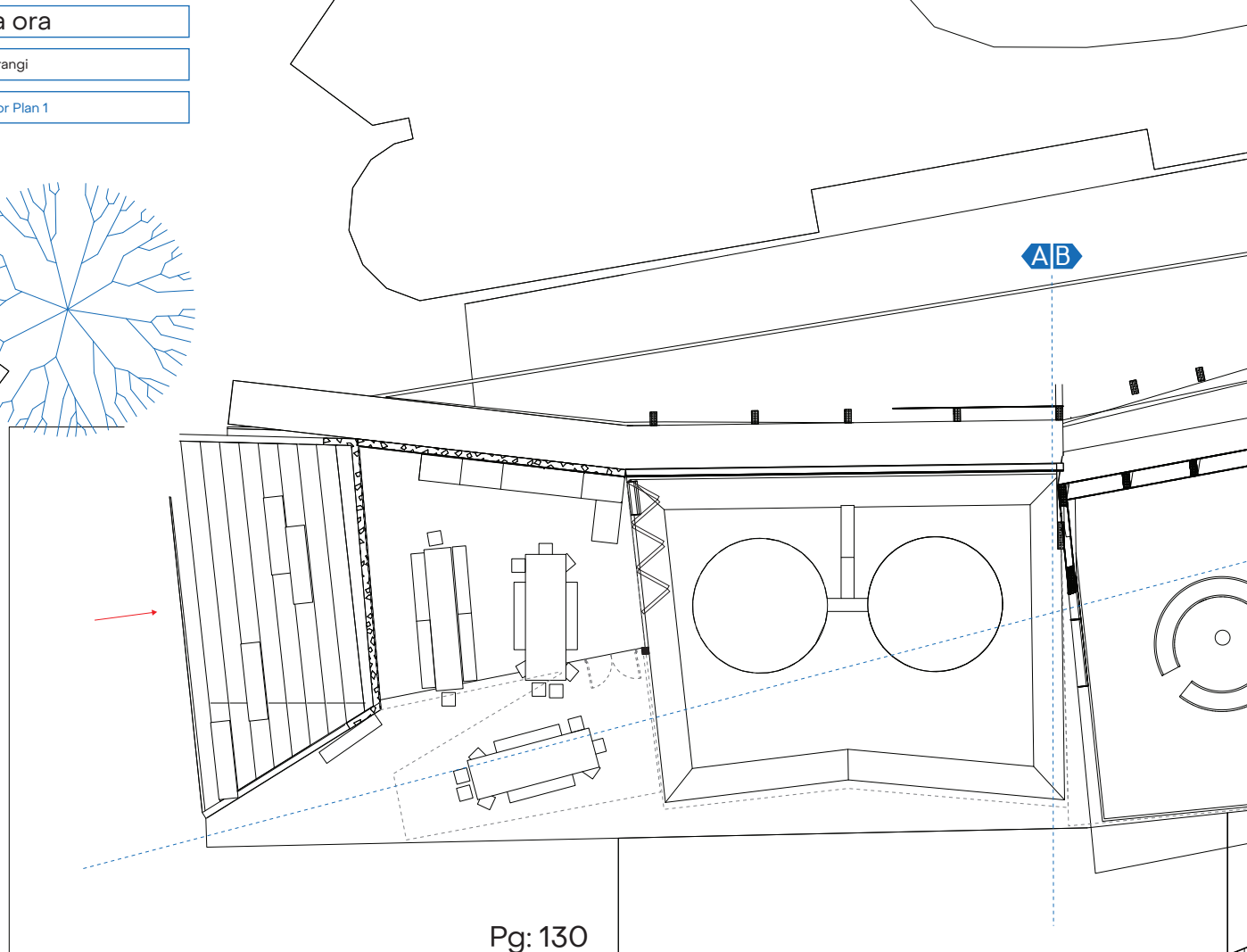
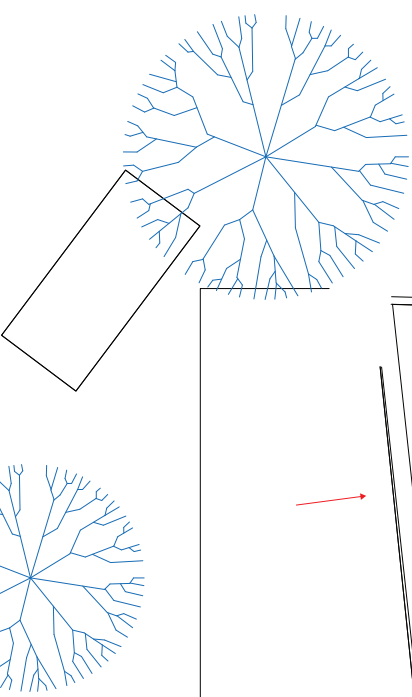
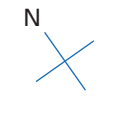
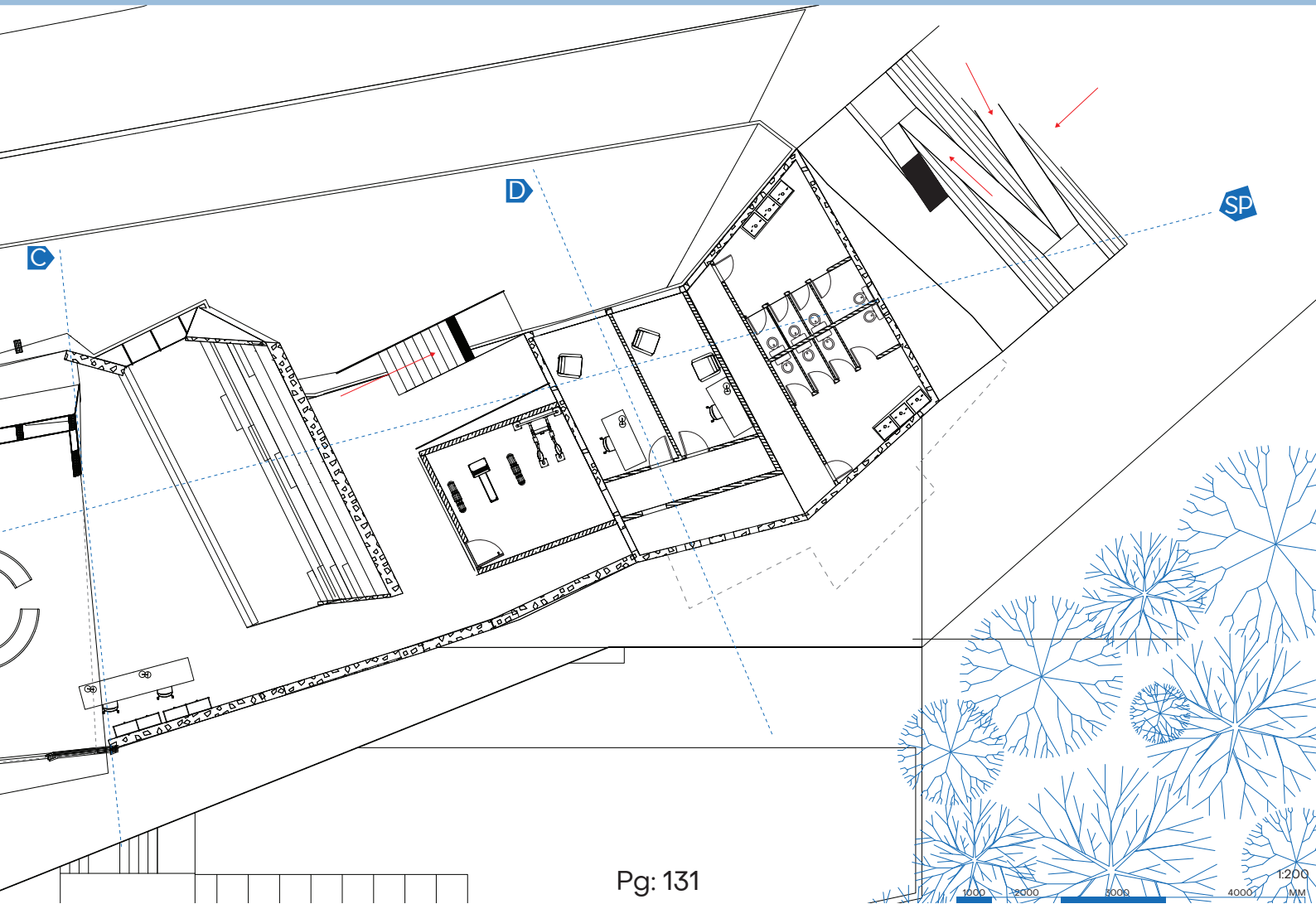
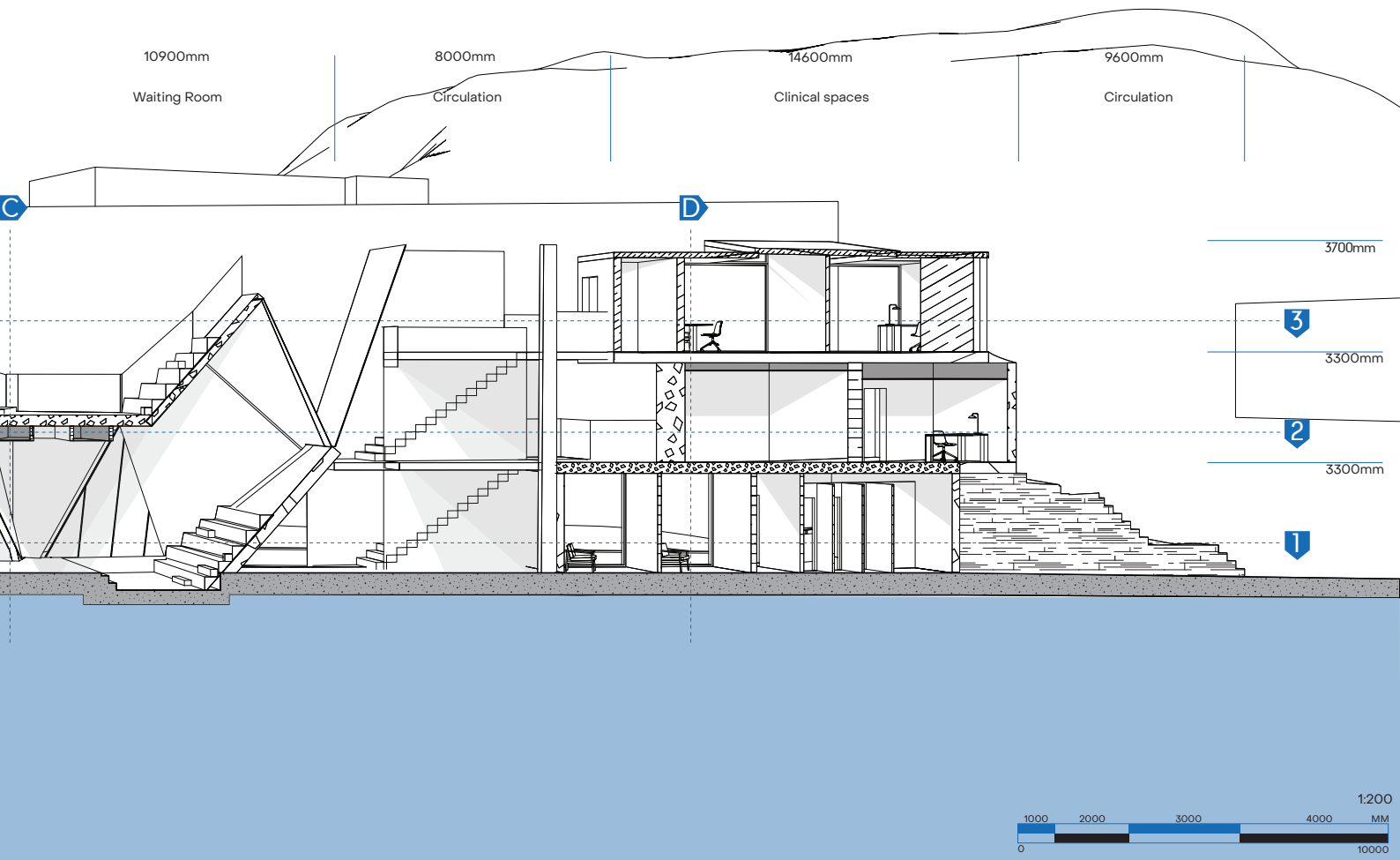


Figure 105: Titirangi Community Wellbeing Center: Plan 1, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



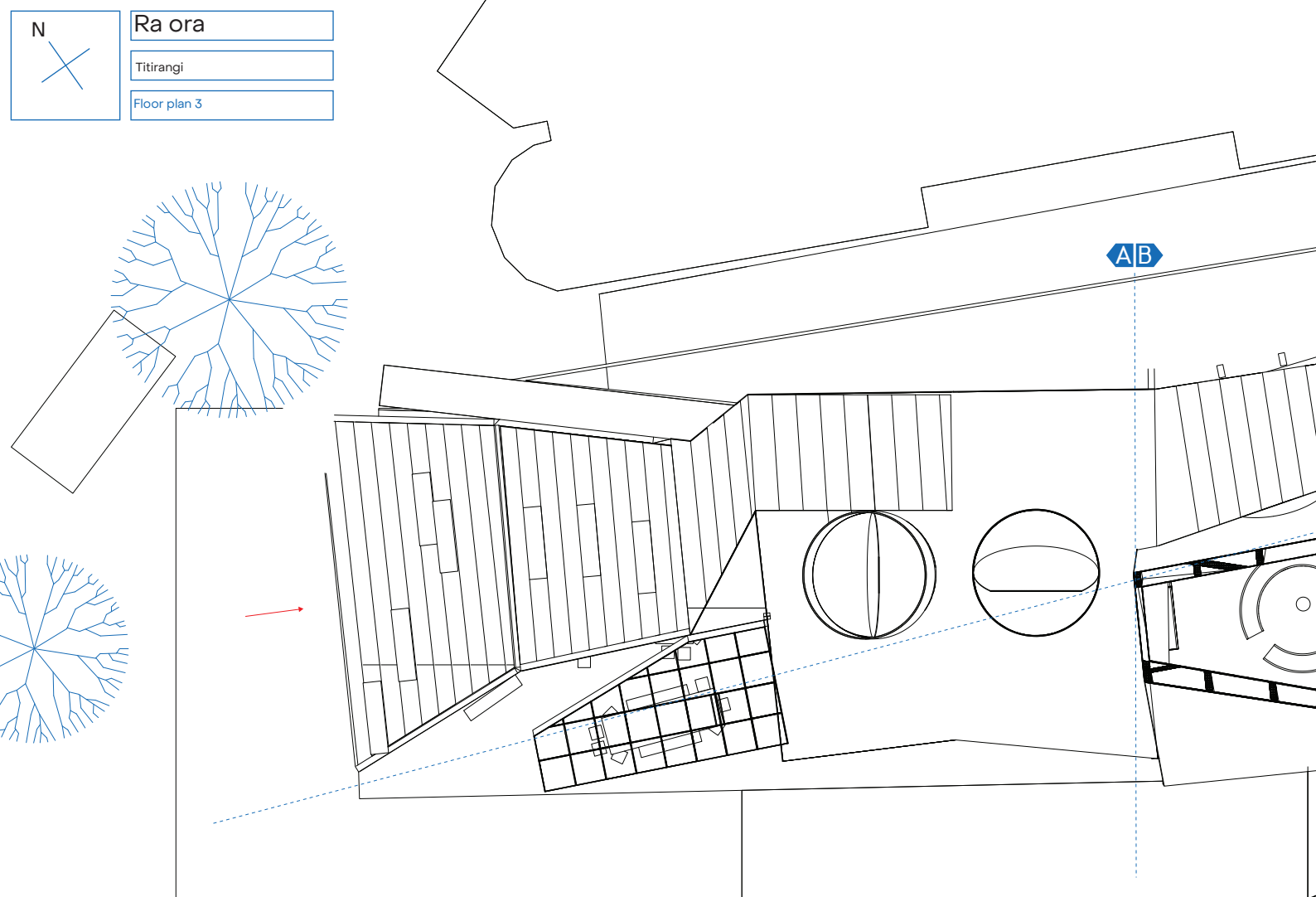


Figure 106: Titirangi Community Wellbeing Center: Plan 2, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

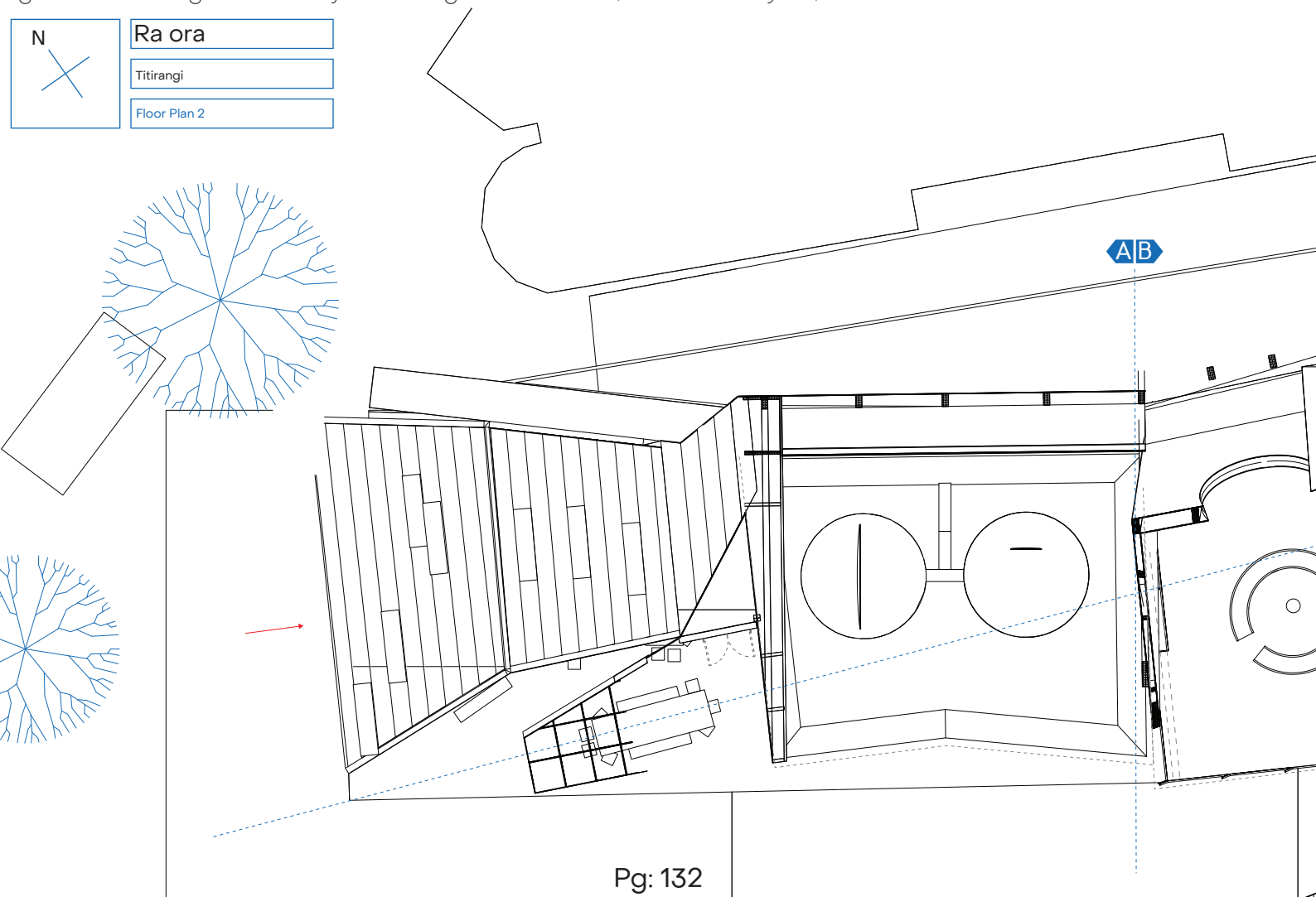
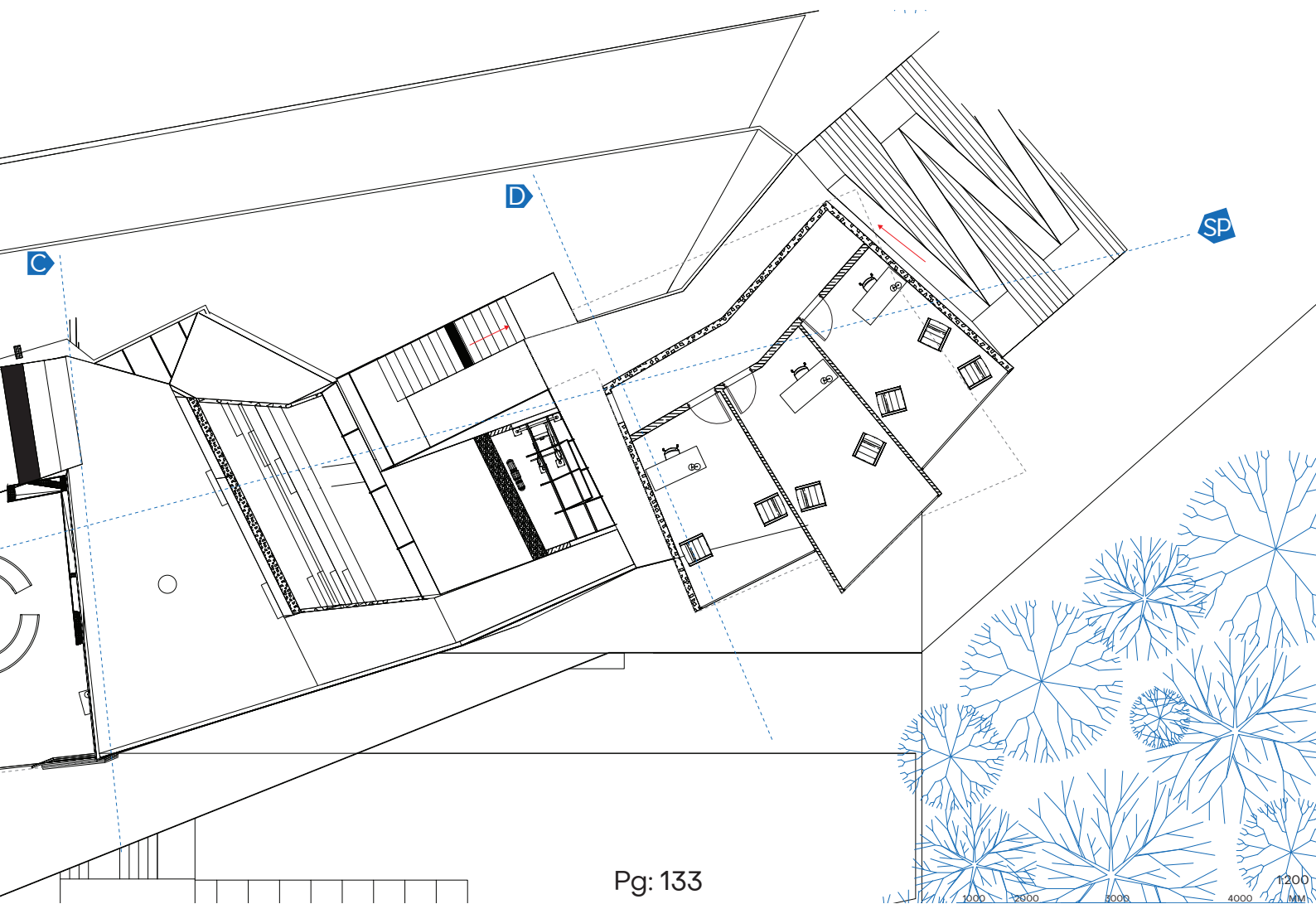
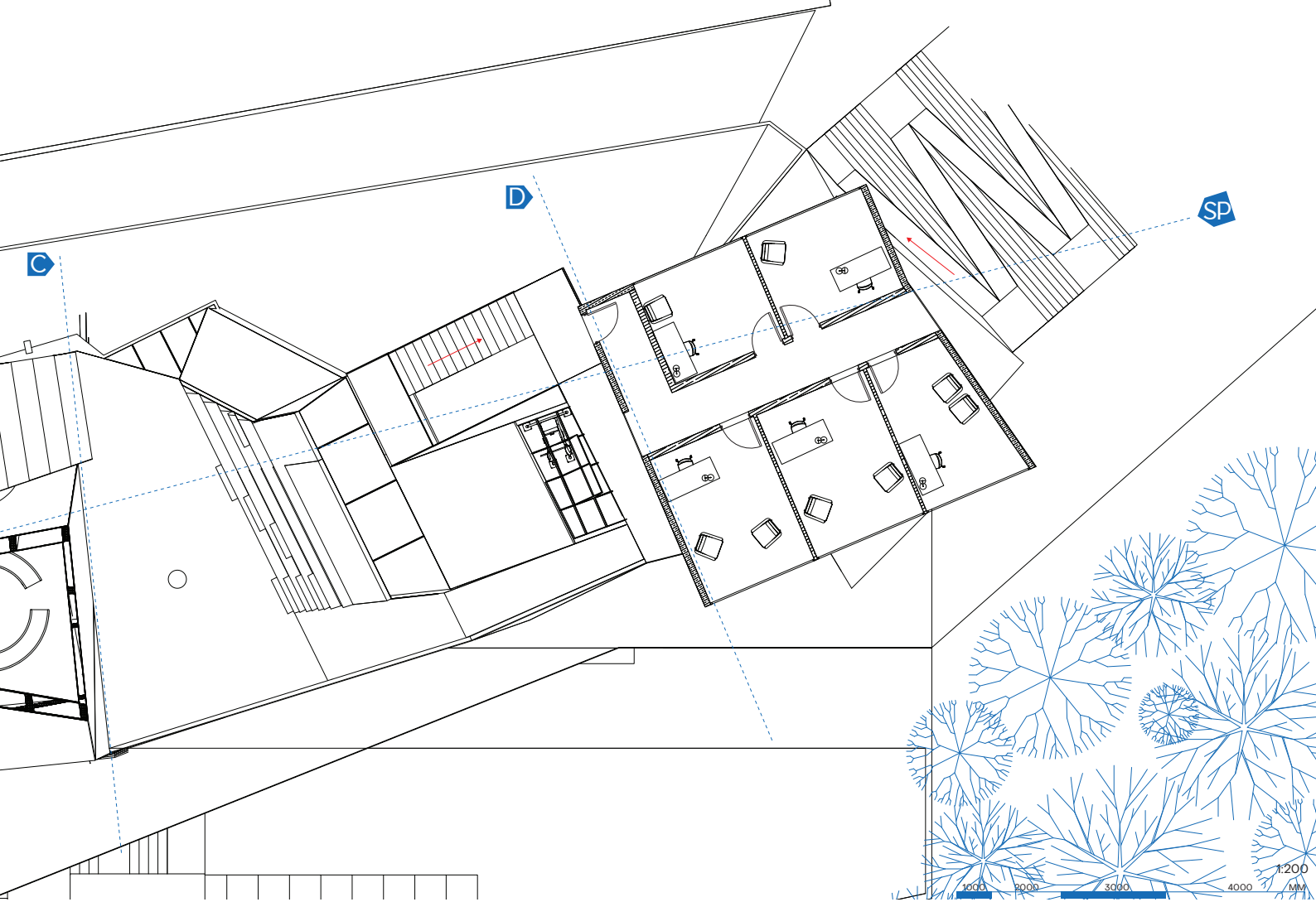


Figure 107: Titirangi Community Wellbeing Center: Plan 3, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*



Ra ora  
 Titirangi  
 C-Waiting area

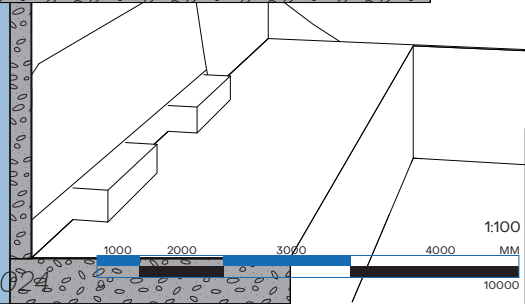
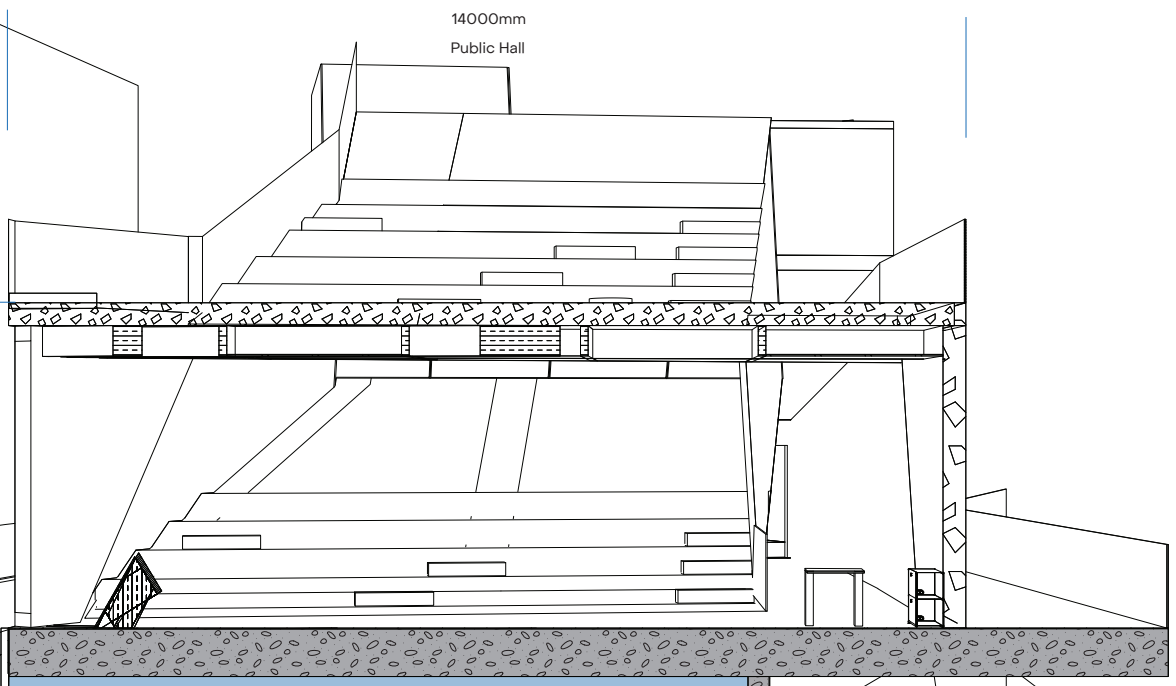
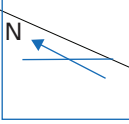


Figure 108: Titirangi Community Wellbeing Center: Section 2, Benedict Drayton, 2024

Ra ora  
 Titirangi  
 A-Hall and Cafe

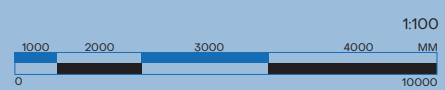
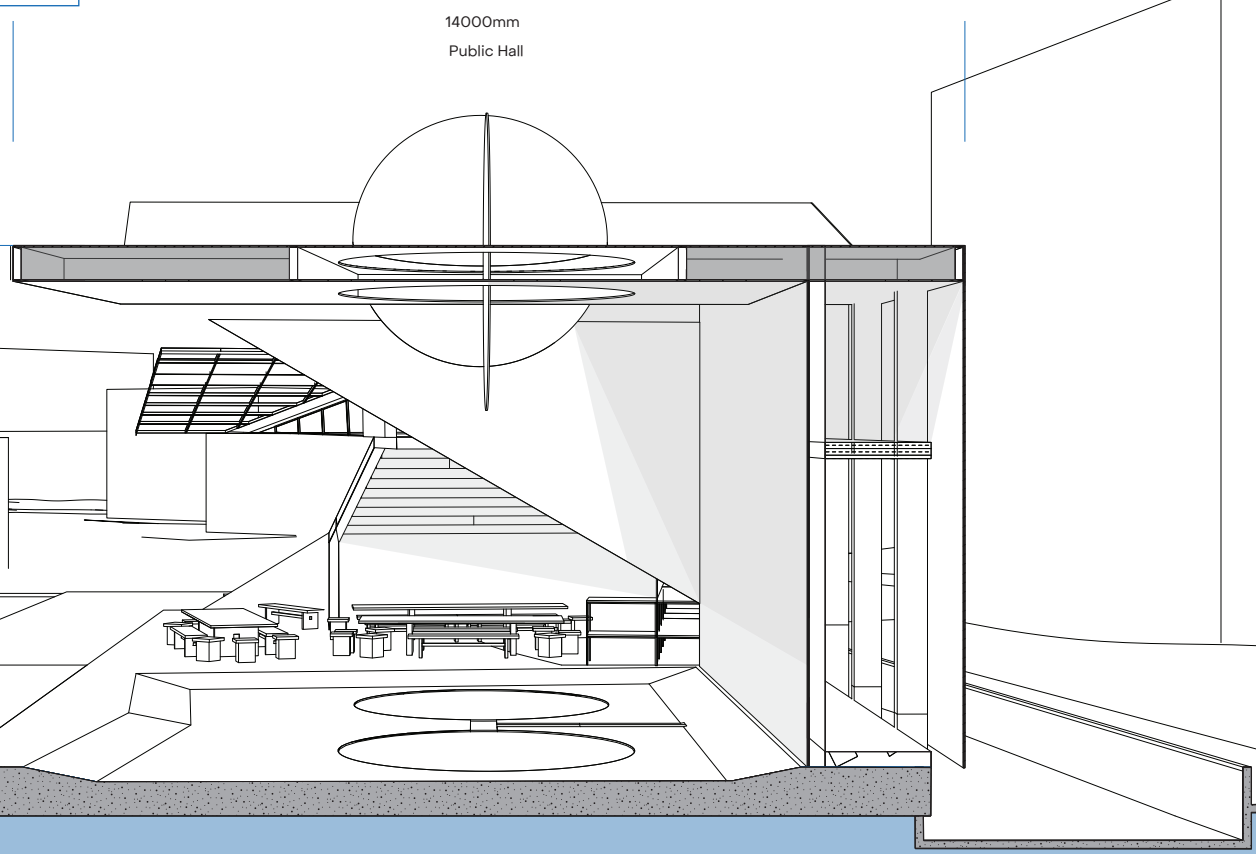
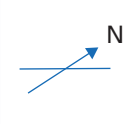


Figure 109: Titirangi Community Wellbeing Center: Section 3, Benedict Drayton, 2024

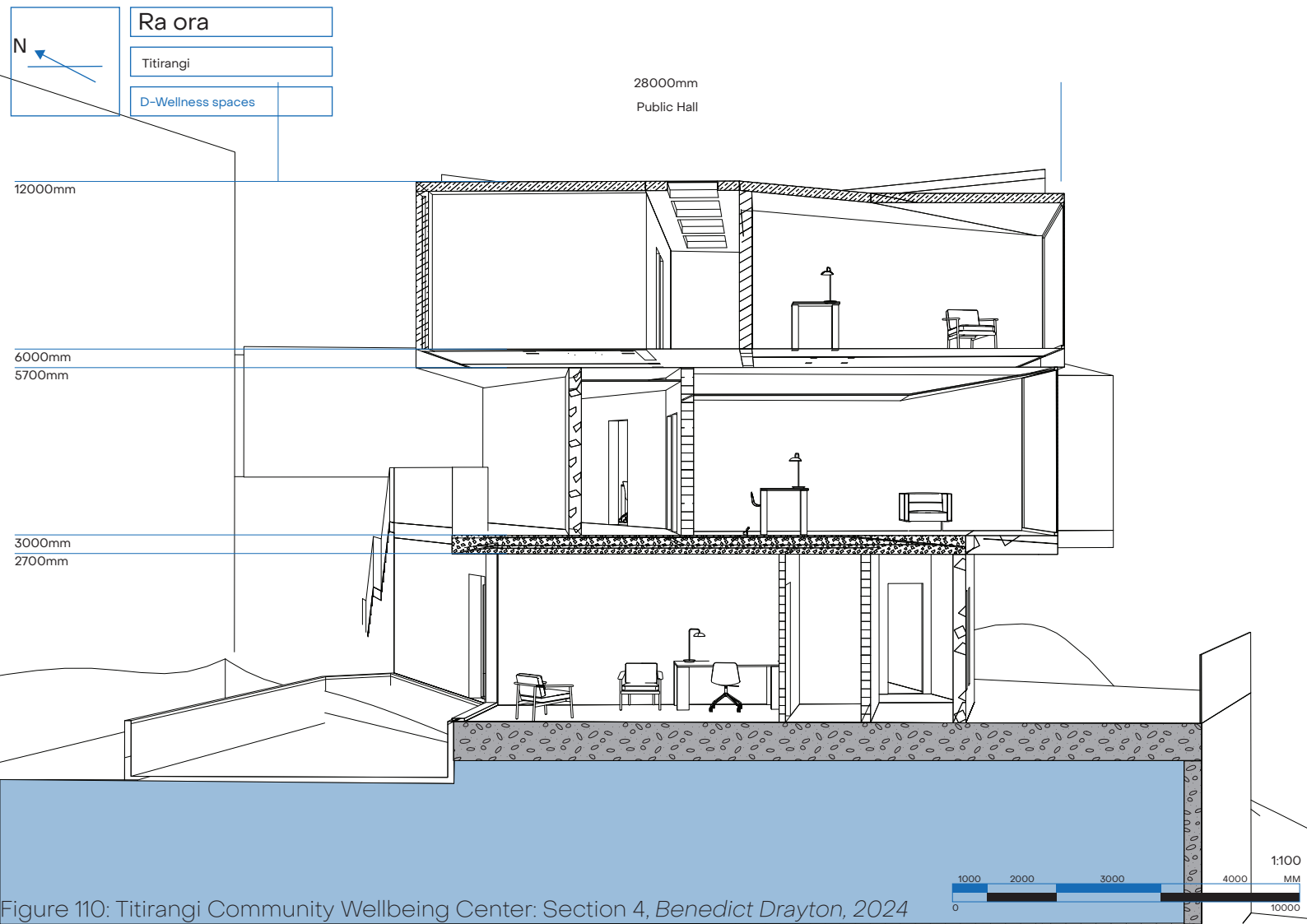


Figure 110: Titirangi Community Wellbeing Center: Section 4, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

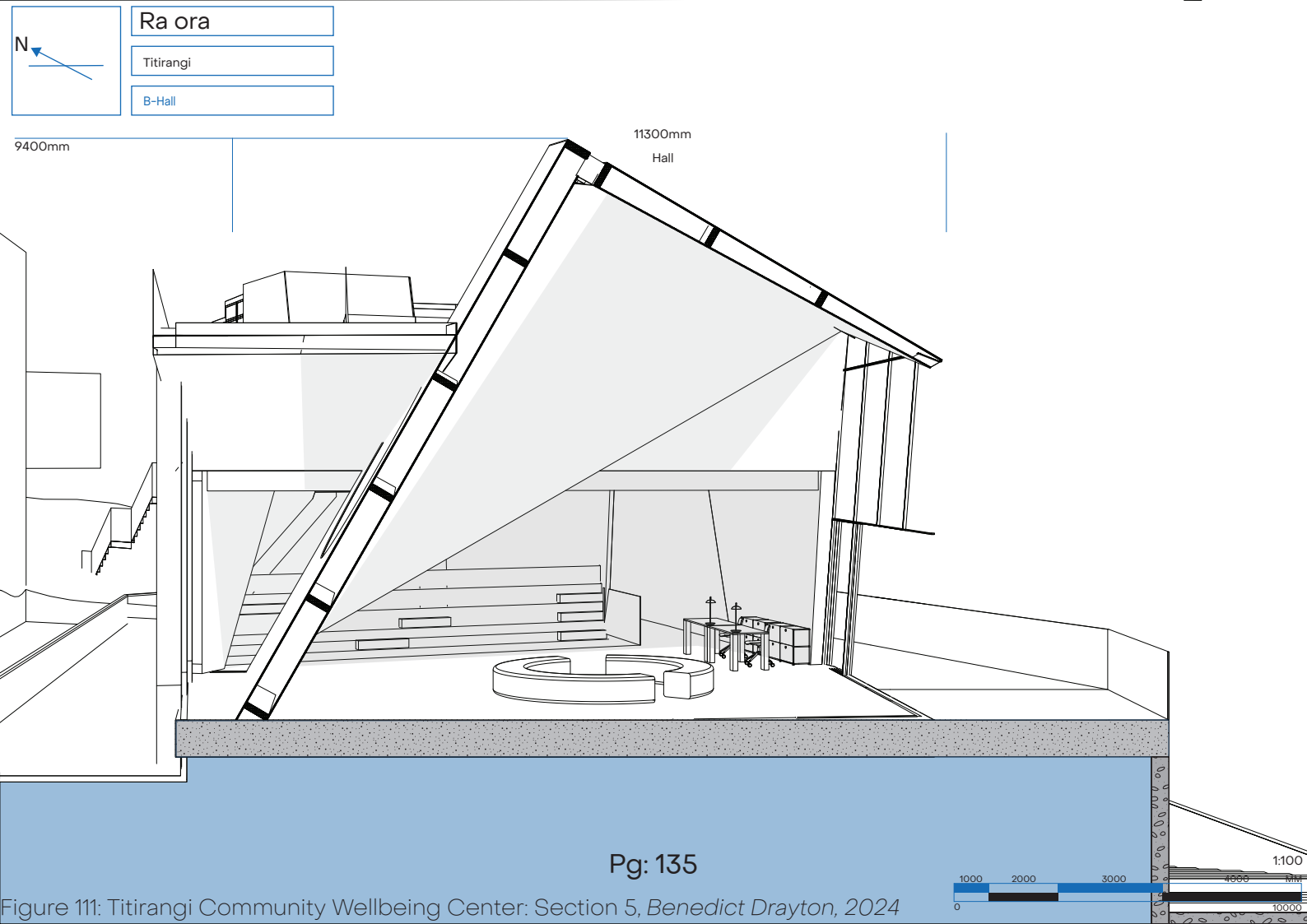


Figure 111: Titirangi Community Wellbeing Center: Section 5, *Benedict Drayton, 2024*

## Conclusion

This design-led research project set out to explore how an animistic approach to holistic healthcare architecture might remedy modernist reductivism and enhance the health and wellbeing of human and more-than-human communities. This research aimed to explore whether architecture could be a catalyst for positive ecological and humanitarian change, changes which works to remedy and rekindle an ancient, symbiotic connection between human and the more-than-human. The connection between human and more-than-human and its acknowledgement has been largely lost in the West through complex cultural shifts including the rise of Cartesian dualities that conceptually separate humans from nature. Animistic and vital concepts came to be seen as undeveloped or uncivilised. The reconnection of the human and more-than-human relationship allows both communities to live synergistically, both thriving off and providing for each other. For humans especially the cognition of this relationship exposes the vitality of everything in our surrounding environment.

The project started with identifying the cause of the problems facing human and more-than-human communities. By engaging with the works of academics such as Jane Bennett, Arriane Conty, and Amanda Yates the origin and wider contexts of the nature-culture disconnect were identified, providing this project with an ontological and conceptual foundation from which different, more vitalist design approaches could be generated. Upon reflection a more critical and in-depth review of these texts would have helped to focus this project and deepen the ontological base.

A series of experiments sought to explore these ideas in physical form by producing iterative makings that sensed their way towards a more responsive, regenerative, and vitalist architecture. A selection of these models worked distinctly well in projecting, highlighting and capturing the energy and agency of the world surrounding us. These models propelled the project forward and gave it a positive heading. Secondly the socio-

ecological mapping exercise was successful in this project, it provided a window into the site and surrounding context, allowing for a highly context responsive design. The fluid medium exploration during this project had the potential to be incredibly informative and guiding to this project, but it needed further exploration and development to become something of substance. The paper folding method similarly had significant potential. This method did in the end inform the tectonic of the Titirangi based design but could have been communicated more successfully.

A key concept for this project was environmentally responsive architecture, architecture which changes and adapts as the natural or human environment evolves or changes around it. The activating and adaptive approach to the project was used as a physical and metaphysical cue for inhabitants, signalling the massive power and vitality of the environment with an aim to rekindle connection between human and more-than-human. The final design, comprised of public garden spaces, café and health care programmes and regenerative ecological infrastructures, is comprehensively attuned to the wellbeing of the living world within which it is sited and with which it is formed. The project tests out an architecture of wellbeing as it brings communities – human and more-than-human – together in a way that enhances resources and capacities. The project actively explores, communicates, and proposes pathways to socio-ecological connection and mauri ora that are so necessary at this time.

This research is significant as it addresses contemporary socio-ecological crises and proposes vitalist architectures as entities that can bridge people with their environments. It is timely in an increasingly digital world where the human and more-than-human divide can seem greater than ever. If architecture, where we spend most of our time, can become a catalyst for human and more-than-human reconnection then both communities will reap the benefits.





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*our-dams*

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