

# FLESH OF FORM

REIMAGINING A BOUTIQUE HOTEL AS A  
MORTAL INTERIOR

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## ABSTRACT

Between the routine of everyday life and the dislocation of travel, the hotel space sits on a threshold “out-of-time” or “out-of-place.”<sup>1</sup> It is not uncommon for hotel interiors to be stripped out and replaced every decade to keep up with their competition.<sup>2</sup> While recognising current efforts towards sustainability in the hotel industry, I suggest a more profound transformation might come from an imaginative engagement that embodies experiences of time.

This creative practice research project investigates the mortality, or the temporary nature, of our built environments and interior surfaces to understand how designing within a historical fabric grounds the spatial experience of time and place. By rethinking the temporal narratives of the hotel interior, we could reduce the need for them to be rebuilt so frequently and instead create a meaningful experience for hotel visitors.

The term mortal interior has come to define a practice-led methodology that likens the material temporality of the hotel interior to that of our own bodies. Conceptual methods of revealing the historical fabric of the host building, dressing an interior skin<sup>3</sup> and wearing a material flesh are employed to challenge how a boutique hotel interior can respond to the historic fabric of an existing building and contextualise the ephemeral hotel space.

As a case study in the mortal interior, this research proposes the conversion of “The Windsor Castle,” a currently vacant heritage building dating from the 1850s in Parnell, Auckland, for a new boutique hotel.

**KEYWORDS:** interior design, hotel, mortality, mortal interior, temporality, material flesh.

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1 Annette Pritchard and Nigel Morgan, “Hotel Babylon? Exploring Hotels as Liminal Sites of Transition and Transgression,” *Tourism Management* Volume 27, no. 5 (October 2006): 770, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2005.05.015>

2 Jeff Vickers and Ben Fisher, “The Carbon Footprint of New Zealand’s Built Environment: Hotspot or Not?” (Wellington: Thinkstep Australasia, 2018), 4, accessed August 13, 2021, [https://www.nzgbc.org.nz/Attachment?Action=Download&Attachment\\_id=2635](https://www.nzgbc.org.nz/Attachment?Action=Download&Attachment_id=2635)

3 Lois Weinthal, “Tailoring Second and Third Skins,” in *Textile Technology and Design: From Interior Space to Outer Space*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 46.

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## ATTENTION OF AUTHORSHIP

*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: \_\_\_\_\_

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7. *New Zealand Herald*, *An Upper Office Area Within the Windsor Castle Hotel*, New Zealand Herald, 2016, <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/property/rare-chance-to-storm-windsor-castle/WMB3L74GDE2EIFY2F5TICVF7HY/>
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## RESEARCH QUESTION

*By engaging an interior design practice with the idea of mortality, applying a weathering material flesh, how does this enable us to understand the temporary nature of a boutique hotel in relationship to the building's historical contexts?*

## INTRODUCTION

While working in the interior design industry, I have observed significant efforts toward sustainable interiors, from product innovations to material selections that provide longer lifespans to the built environments. Despite this, in the commercial sector many hotels are refitted as frequently as every ten years<sup>4</sup> —a common practice instilled to promote an entertainment hotel model that favours performative interiors as a leading economic driver.<sup>5</sup> One alternative to this is referred to as timeless interior design, however this imagines that a set of interior conditions can remain permanently appropriate to the building's changing context and evolving function. Flesh of Form investigates a third possibility: an interior that changes and responds to guests slowly but recognises its own temporariness. The following question defines the research inquiry for this project:

*By engaging an interior design practice with the idea of mortality, applying a weathering material flesh, how does this enable us to understand the temporary nature of a boutique hotel in relationship to the building's historical contexts?*

A practice-led methodology, defined as the mortal interior, comprises a set of design principles recognising that the built environments we inhabit are materially situated and temporary, much like our own bodies. This approach focuses on the life and death of the interior through weathered surfaces, aged materials, and the spatial narratives produced through detailing.

This exegesis is comprised of three parts. Firstly, the underlying contextual framework for this project examines the expectations for the hotel space and what opportunities arise from engaging spatial experiences as an internal skin. The metaphor of an interior skin connects the built environment to the human body, conceptualising spaces like living, mortal bodies. ▬

Secondly, the research design outlines the principles of a mortal interior as a methodology and shows how conceptual methods of revealing, dressing, and wearing engage with a historical building by layering a material skin that ages, changes, sheds, and morphs. It details the design proposal for a new hotel fit-out at the Windsor Castle Hotel in Parnell, Auckland, demonstrating the applied design principles of the mortal interior methodology. The concluding section reflects on how this research has evolved through the practice.

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<sup>4</sup> Jeff Vickers and Ben Fisher, "The carbon footprint of New Zealand's built environment: Hotspot or Not?" The New Zealand built environment accounts for approximately 13% of national carbon emissions, which includes carbon from raw materials, construction, and demolition. When international trade is factored in for those products that are sourced offshore, this number increases to 20%.

<sup>5</sup> Otto Riewoldt, "Introduction," in *New Hotel Design*, (New York, USA: Laurence Kind Publishing, 2002), 7.

# REIMAGINING THE HOTEL INTERIOR

01

CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK



## THE HOTEL SPACE

A hotel is a transitional space between the routines of everyday life and the displacement of travel. It lingers on a threshold seemingly outside of time. Annette Pritchard and Nigel Morgan, writers on tourism, have categorised the hotel as “out-of-time” or “out-of-place” due to its detachment from everyday life.<sup>6</sup> The authors observed how pop culture and media supports a narrative of hotels inhabiting a fantasy realm on the borders of home life and new destinations. The role interior architecture plays may contribute to this idea of hotels becoming detached from the day-to-day world, where familiar realities for guests are put “out of mind.”<sup>7</sup> Otto Riewoldt, German architecture consultant and author of *A New Hotel Design*, identifies an entertainment model for hotels that influences how interior architecture is expected to perform.<sup>8</sup>

This perspective seems to emphasise superficial entertainment. However, this is considered the most effective design model for generating economic value,<sup>9</sup> offering insight into why hotel fit-outs occur so frequently as competitors attempt to out-renovate one another.<sup>10</sup> Spatial theorist Les Roberts’ *Spatial Anthropology*, describes the guests’ experience of the hotel (or the holiday) as “embracing the flux and freedom of space betwixt-and-between the leaving from and the eventual return to the home world,”<sup>11</sup> an experience both temporal (outside of time) and spatial (outside of place).

To understand how the hotel model of performative architecture embodies the liminal nature of the hotel space and the opportunity to become deeply placed within our environments, I examined the design by Australian architects Breathe for the Paramount House Hotel (2018) in Sydney. The hotel occupies an 80-year-old warehouse formerly owned by Paramount Pictures.<sup>12</sup> In an interview with Natasha Levy for *Dezeen*, the practice explained that:

Working intimately with an existing building fabric brought its own inherent challenges ... However, harnessing these quirks as opportunities is what makes this building so tactile, unconventional and intriguing for guests.<sup>13</sup>

The framing condition of the project’s narrative introduced layers of “comfort, adaptability and robust tactility”<sup>14</sup> and demonstrated an alternative to a hotel’s traditional expectations. Figures 1–3 of the Paramount Hotel illustrate the hierarchy of the chosen materials that layer reflective copper against the traces of the original warehouse. There is no clear division between the existing warehouse and the renovation; moments from history are framed with new rooms, followed by the new walls, and met with the introduction of new materials. The history of the site is layered, almost like an eclectic outfit of clothes, in a manner appropriate to the transient nature of the hotel, suggesting a logic of garments or skins.

6 Annette Pritchard and Nigel Morgan, “Hotel Babylon?” 770.

7 Ibid.

8 Otto Riewoldt, “Introduction,” 7.

8 Ibid.

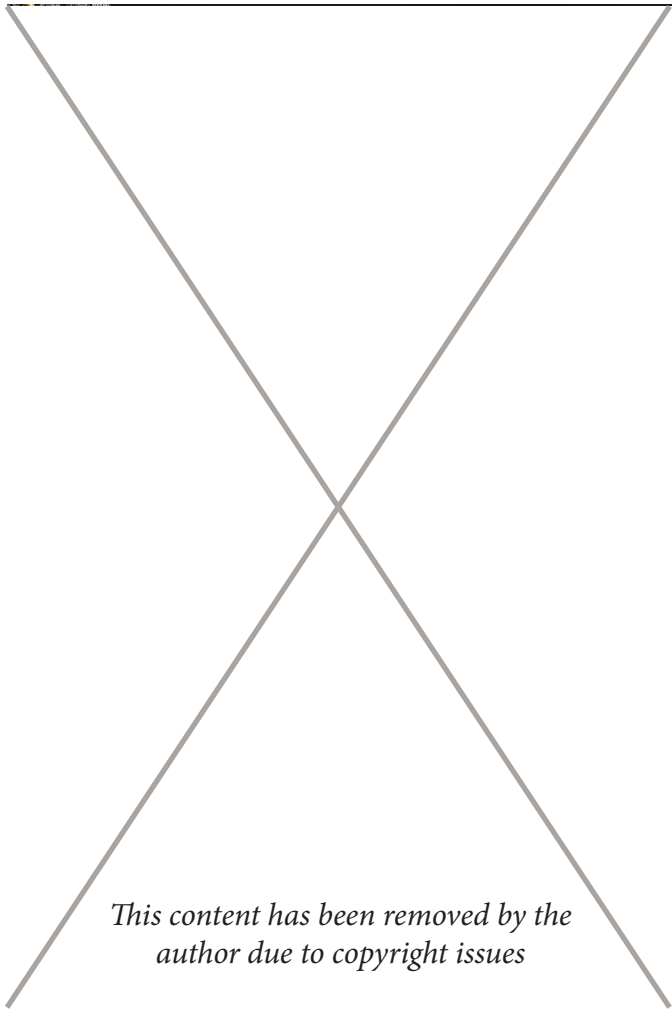
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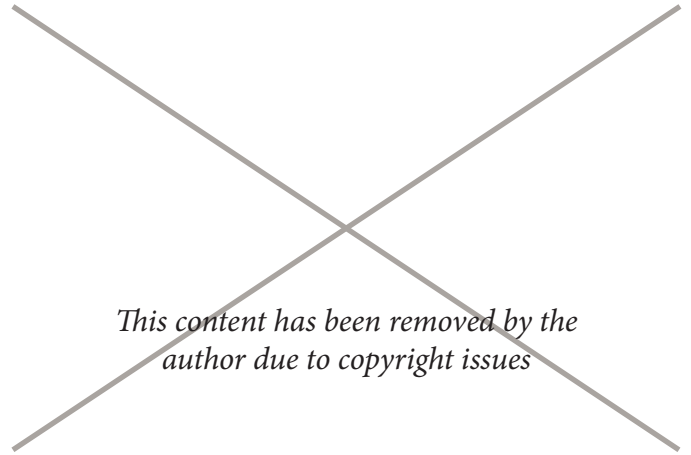
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14 Ibid.



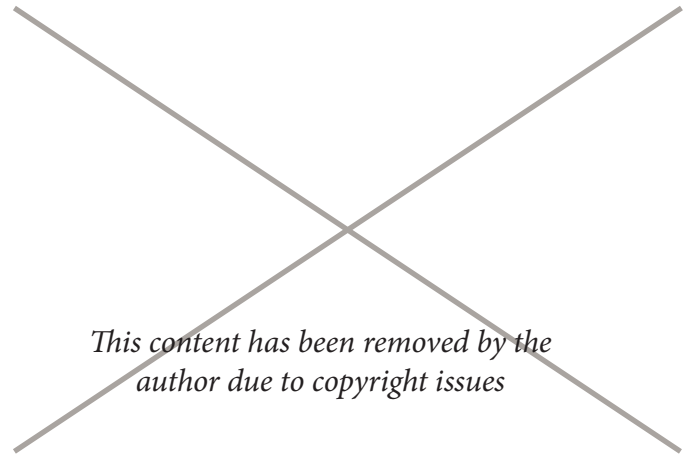
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Figure 1



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Figure 2



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Figure 3

Figure 1, Kat Lu, *Paramount House Hotel Bathroom*, photographed for Breathe Architects, 2018, photograph, <https://www.breathe.com.au/project/paramount-hotel>

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## THE THIRD SKIN

Many contemporary examples of hotels have opted to reuse existing buildings, layering historical and cultural contexts into the new interior renovations. Inserting a new interior into a current structure supports sustainable construction practices, but perhaps more intriguingly, it grounds the guests within a spatial experience attached deeply to time and place. To understand how the interior adapts to a host shell, I've adopted the metaphor of the interior skin.

In "The Pliable Plane," Bauhaus textile designer Anni Albers wrote, "if the nature of architecture is grounded, the fixed, the permanent, then textiles are its very antithesis."<sup>15</sup> She recalls how textile surfaces changed from clothing fabric, developed initially to protect our human bodies, and later translated into a fabric shelter and eventually fixed architectural structures. The interior is balanced somewhere in-between body and building, as a pliable lining or covering. As Albers stated, this concept is the foundation of the third skin, "if we think of clothing as a secondary skin ... the enclosure of walls in a way is a third covering."<sup>16</sup> Associate Professor of Interior Design at Eskenazi School of Art, Architecture and Design, Jaingmei Wu, reflects on this in-between state by developing folded prototypes to demonstrate the idea of the third skin in their work (Figure 4). Whilst she employs origami techniques to create these spaces, how she utilises the interior skin to fold space around the body responds to the following statement:

If the concept of "interior skin" can be understood as a generator of ideas for interiors that lie in between the flexible spaces around the body and the rigid spaces within the building, what new form and context can an interior skin take?<sup>17</sup>

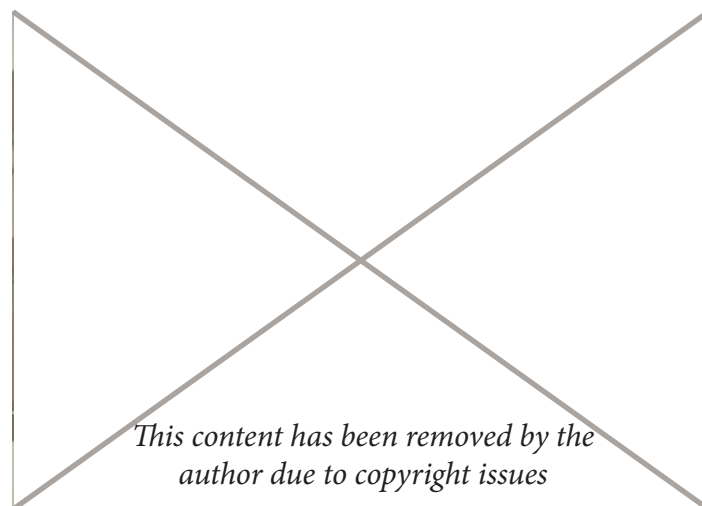


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<sup>15</sup> Anni Albers, "The Pliable Plane; Textiles in Architecture," *Perspecta* Volume 4, (1957) 36, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1566855>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>17</sup> Jiangmei Wu, "Body, Form, Material and Surface-Making of Ruga Interior Skin," *Interiors* Volume 8, no. 3 (2017) 114, <https://doi.10.1080/20419112.2017.1374026>

Interior designer Lois Weinthal explained that, like our own skin, space is susceptible to change; as the body moves, the “skin” will stretch, crease, and move with it: “as the entity changes, the surface responds.”<sup>18</sup> Weinthal builds a relationship between textile and spatial design in her essay “Tailoring the Second and Third Skin” as she captures how these skins behave and interact. Clothing or fabric can be taken on and off, whilst the idea of the skin suggests something whole and complete – a skin is part of a greater system of covering. Skin is sensitive to the touch, which is crucial because whilst an interior space can be touched, it’s not obvious how and when it touches us back. Like the hotel borders here and there, the interior skin acts as a threshold between our bodies and the building.

The idea of the interior skin is also a metaphor for adaptive reuse. In the same way that a hotel hosts people, an older building has the potential to be given a new interior skin that enables fresh or different ways to inhabit it. These interventions remain grounded within the site envelope, engaging with the existing footprint and negotiating with the current structural systems. In Graeme Brooker and Sally Stone’s *Form and Structure*, the authors offer different examples of organising interior spaces concerning renovations and remodelling.<sup>19</sup> What they call the “intervened interior” (Figure 5) demonstrates this partial redressing of an existing architectural body. The new skin is moulded to suit the space like a pliable plane, creating new volumes and surfaces.

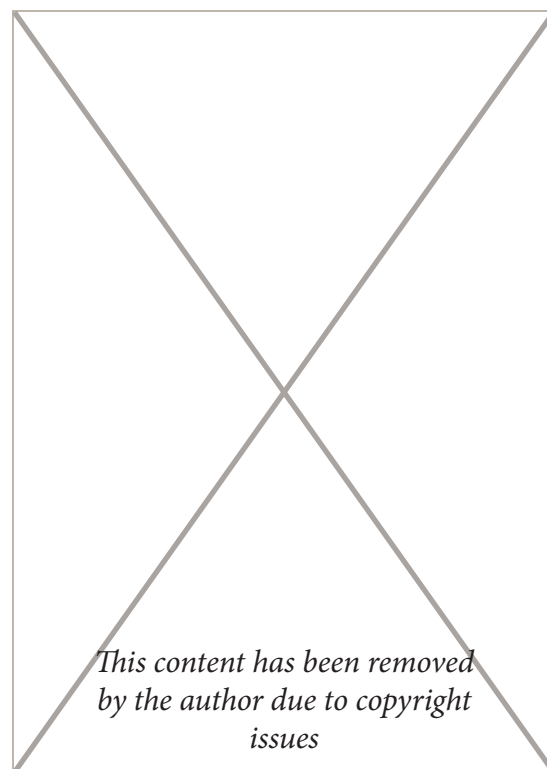


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18 Weinthal, “Tailoring Second and Third Skins,” 46.

19 Graeme Brooker and Sally Stone, *Basics Interior Architecture: Form and Structure*, (Switzerland: Ava Publishing, 2007), page 102.



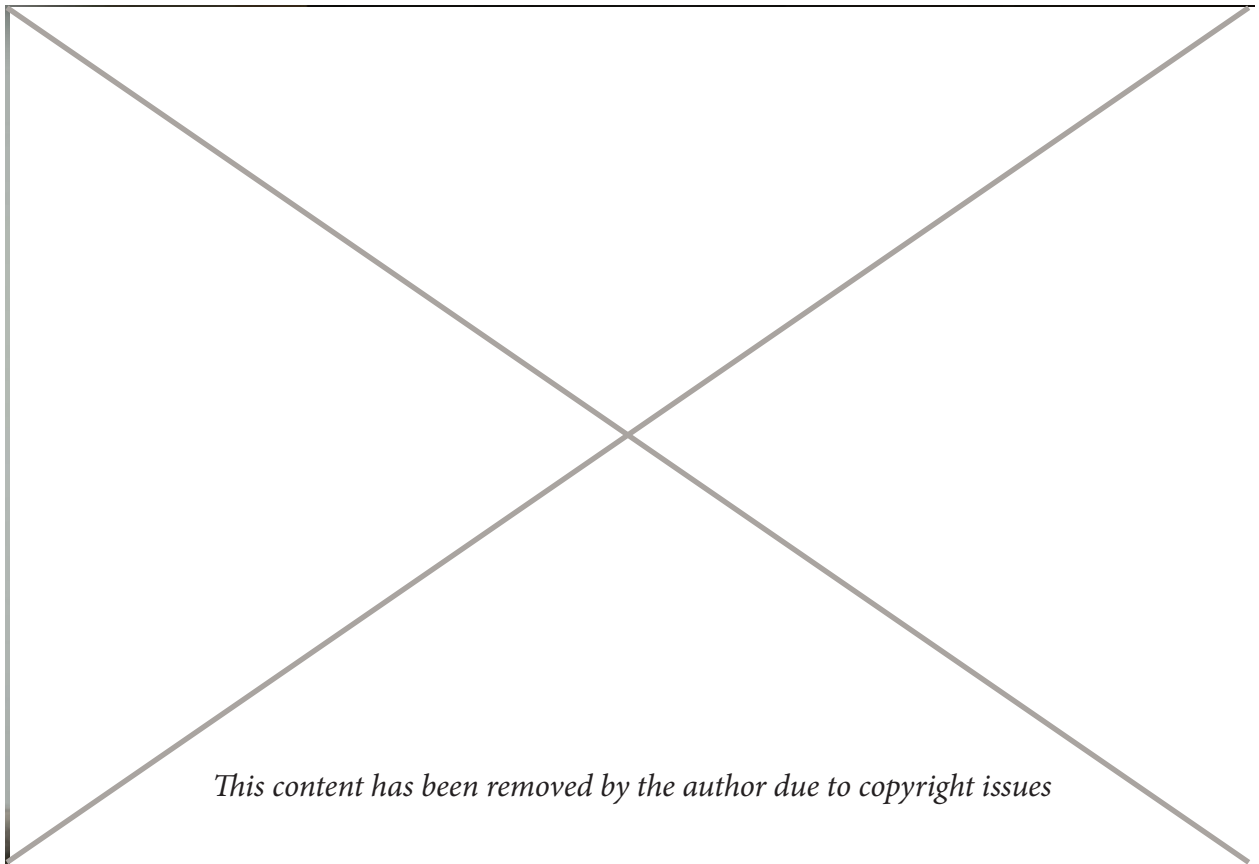


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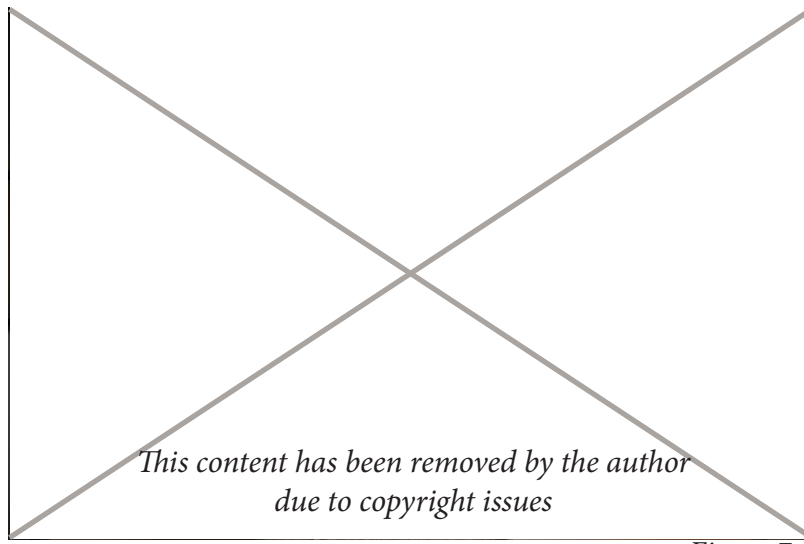


Figure 7



Figure 8

In a small village in La Rioja, Spain, lies the Casa Grande Hotel, which demonstrates how an intervened interior is applied (Figure 6–8). Francesc Rifé Studio transformed the 18th-century manor house into an 11-room hotel. A lot of the original structure remained. Some areas required maintenance, like the new concrete walls in the guest rooms.<sup>20</sup> Removing layers or adding surfaces tailors the interior to the existing building. In a 2021 interview with *The Book* magazine, Rifé explained that “the relationship with the context is fundamental. The presence of native elements contributes to the poetry of the space and preserves its memory.”<sup>21</sup> The differentiation between the old and new becomes increasingly blurred, as what Rifé describes as a “sober” colour palette seamlessly meets the new and existing materials. Because the new interior skins are partial, they expose the older architectural body or previous layers and encourage visitors to read the meeting of different times layered into the present.

Figure 7, David Zarzoso, *Casa Grande Hotel Guest Room*, photographed for *Dezeen*, 2020, photograph, <https://www.dezeen.com/2020/07/09/casa-grande-hotel-in-spain-occupies-18th-century-stone-manor-house/>

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## THE LUXURY OF CARE

High-end hotels demand a certain level of luxury. Annette Condello's *The Architecture of Luxury* defines this as "a state of great comfort or elegance, especially when involving great expense"<sup>22</sup> or indulging in high-value experiences. Condello suggests luxury may manifest as an excess of something, or more bluntly that "luxurious constructions are generally thought to be those made up of rare or difficult-to-obtain materials."<sup>23</sup> Condello highlights how modern society associates luxury with inequity and inequality. But what if luxury was reinterpreted as a matter of care, expressed through the careful dressing of architectural bodies, and generous hosting of human ones?

Interior designer Ilse Crawford suggests this, defining luxury as "attention" or "care."<sup>24</sup> In the design of Ett Hem, a 12-bedroom, high-end hotel in Stockholm, Crawford identified value in the intense domesticity of the building's detailing (based on the British Arts and Crafts movement that made its way to Sweden). It features an amalgamation of the history of the original 1910 building (formerly a private residence) and contemporary Scandinavian furniture (Figure 9–12).<sup>25</sup> Configured so guests and hosts live as a collective, the house's layout avoids separating the front and back of the house. Described as "informal, honest and genuine, all hallmarks of Swedish hospitality,"<sup>26</sup> this is where real memories are woven into the interior fabric as guests are encouraged to treat the hotel as their own home. This approach creates the freedom to experience the space more intimately, as the occupants are essentially "part of the staging."<sup>27</sup> From this perspective, luxury slows time and provides a generous context for visitors. The building's historic fabric, as a precious design commodity, is exposed and dressed; the interior skin becomes an interface between the slow time of the building and the quicker rhythms of its living inhabitants.

Each of these examples—Breathe's Paramount Hotel, Rifé Studio's Casa Grande Hotel, and Crawford's Ett Hem—consists of layers of architectural and ornamental histories. Unlike many contemporary hotels, lost in a void between coming and going, these designs are examples of how the passing of time can be ever-present. I see these experiences of layered time as reminders of mortality: life, slow change, and temporariness.

22 Dr Annette Condello, *The Architecture of Luxury*, (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 3.

23 Ibid.

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26 "Ett Hem," Studio Ilse, accessed March 20, 2022, <https://www.studioilse.com/projects/ett-hem/>

27 Soane Museum, (Alice Rawsthorn) "By Design: Ilse Crawford," June 28, 2021, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAFlGDPUfw>

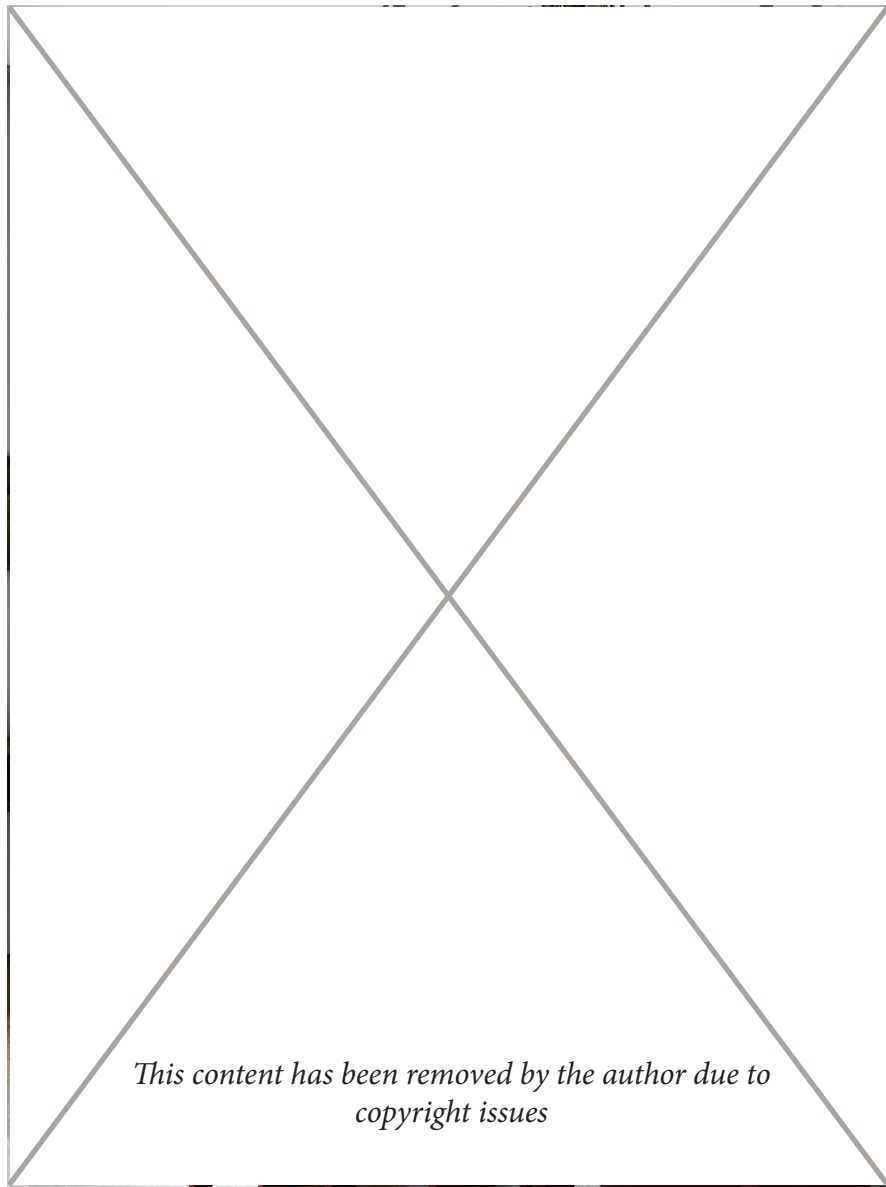


Figure 9, Kristofer Johnsson, *Ett Hem Dining Room*, photographed for *Kinfolk*, 2012, photograph, <https://www.kinfolk.com/ett-hem/>



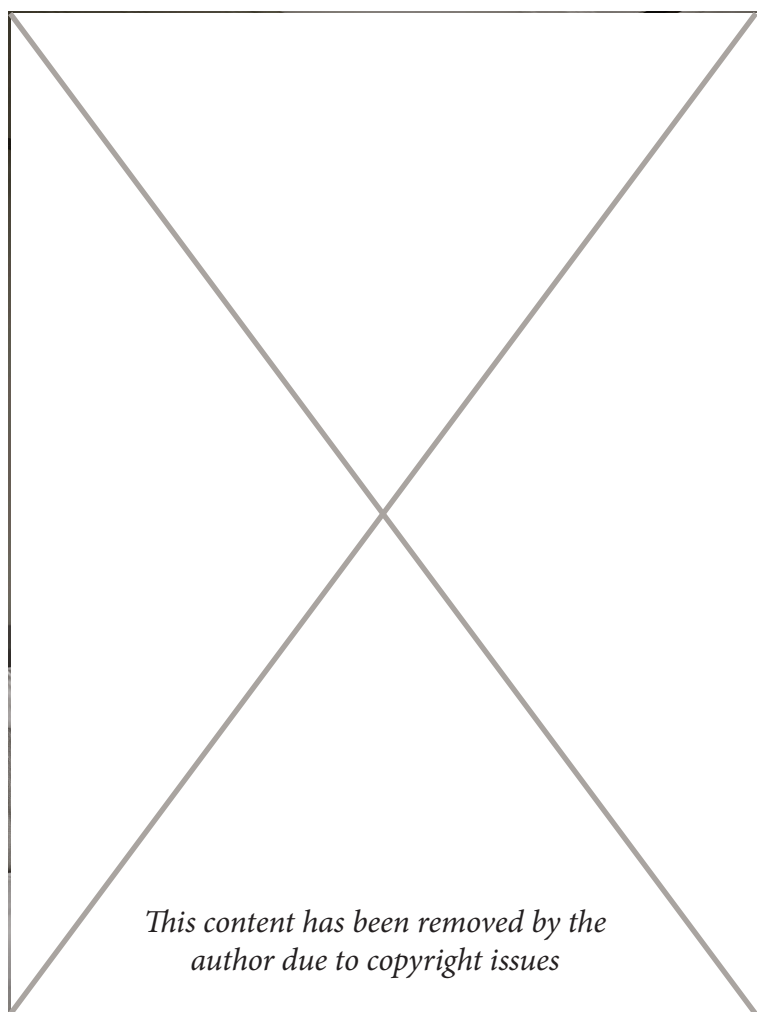


Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12

Figure 10, Kristofer Johnsson, *Ett Hem Guest Room*, photographed for *Kinfolk*, 2012, photograph, <https://www.kinfolk.com/ett-hem/>

Figure 11, Magnus Marding,, *Ett Hem Lounge*, photographed for Studio Ilse, 2012, photograph, <https://www.studioilse.com/projects/ett-hem/>

Figure 12, Magnus Marding, *Ett Hem Bathroom*, photographed for Studio Ilse, 2012, photograph, <https://www.studioilse.com/projects/ett-hem/>

# 02

THE MORTAL  
INTERIOR

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

## METHODOLOGY

In seeking to situate hotel interiors more generously in the layers of time and place, Stephen Cairns and Jane M. Jacobs' *Buildings Must Die*, has been an influential text. Cairns and Jacobs engage with death in the built environment by discussing how buildings face their eventual decay:

Death, destruction, and deterioration represent the negative, anxiety-inducing flip side to a range of enduring and sometimes contradictory assumptions about built architecture's defining attributes: its material durability, its creative genesis, its productive utility, its aesthetic value.<sup>28</sup>

Their ideas highlight how a piece of architecture changes over time despite the maintenance employed to maintain its original state. I believe the same concept is just as vital in interior practice and provides a counterpoint to the immaculate tidiness of the examples discussed in Part One. *Buildings Must Die* opens by reminding us of the inevitability of death and states that buildings "although intimate, are often assumed to have 'life.'"<sup>29</sup> This text contemplates architecture's relationship with death by exploring a structure like a body: "buildings are inorganic and inanimate. Yet they are routinely said to function like living organisms."<sup>30</sup> Likening the built environment to a mortal body helps craft a narrative between space and mortality. Adopting an interior skin<sup>31</sup> echoes the way we meet our own mortality by changing the way we dress, frame, modify, and equip our aging bodies. Spaces and hosts mould against one another.<sup>32</sup>

Early in this research project, I identified the vacant "Windsor Castle," a heritage building in the Auckland suburb of Parnell, as an opportune place to test my emerging ideas of mortality and the dressed interior. As I considered the programmatic layout and proposed changes, I developed a series of specific spatial methods, namely revealing, dressing, and wearing. Each of these methods enabled me to refine my understanding and develop a craft of the mortal interior.

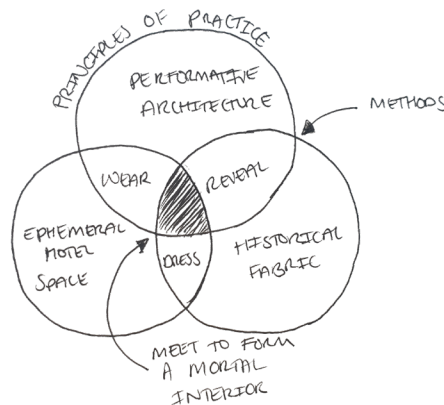


Figure 13, Sarah Budden, *Methodology Ven Diagram*, 2022, drawing.

28 Stephen Cairns and Jane M Jacobs, *Buildings Must Die: A Perverse View of Architecture*, (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014) 1.

29 Ibid, 1.

30 Ibid, 11.

31 Weinthal, "Tailoring Second and Third Skins," 46.

32 Abstract, "Interior Design: Ilse Crawford," directed by Sarina Roma. In reference to quote, "a notion that luxury is attention. It's care."

## REVEALING

This method aims to peel back layers of information from the existing site and the material selection to reveal a material scheme that embodies the spatial narrative of mortality. Revealing engages the historical fabric of the selected site and explores how an interior material scheme can reflect mortality in the hotel space, expressing the times embedded in its fabric. Cairns and Jacobs distinguish between “matter” and “mattering.”<sup>33</sup> Matter investigates the physical nature of the material while “mattering” deals with interior architectural value, or in this case, how it communicates the narrative between the new interior skin and the architectural shell. Similarly, Melinda Mitchell and Karen Fielder, in “Matter of the Manor” explain, “what matters is communities and individuals make meanings and attachments with historic places.”<sup>34</sup> Understanding this about the proposed interior materials will help ground the new hotel experience with the existing materials as well as giving a story of place, as the exposing material reveals previous lives and attachments. Material moulds spatial experience as well as responding to it.



Figure 14, Sarah Budden, *Site Image A*, 2022, photograph, Auckland.

33 Cairns and Jacobs, *Buildings Must Die: A Perverse View of Architecture*, 31–32.

34 Belinda Mitchell and Karen Fielder, “Matter of the Manor,” *Journal of Interior Design*, Volume 43, no. 1 (2018): 53, <https://doi.org/10.1111/joid.12116>

I embarked on a design interrogation of the site, which involved an investigation of the Windsor Castle's historic fabric. Through photographs (archival and my own images) and collages, I mapped out a story of material (Figure 15). Much of the interior had been gutted out at this stage, so this story was necessarily partial, a matter of gaps and fragments.

Next, I gathered material samples to form a new interior flesh and considered their embodied times and mortality. I utilised these material samples to re-map the material flesh of the interior. Benjamin Reynaert, a creative practitioner and editor for *Architectural Digest*, explains that designers "have long relied on the mood board as a place to collect thoughts, ideas, and materials in one place."<sup>35</sup> A sample board of ideas invites collaboration between medium, materials, and scale. Information and materiality were revealed by layering the concept for the new interior over the fabric of the existing building. Through this practice method, I established the relationship between the surfaces and their potential interior application by rearranging and removing items on the board. I referenced the case studies discussed in the contextual framework to assist in crafting a spatial narrative between the historic fabric and new material, particularly the way in which Breathe Architects had layered textured elements in the Paramount Hotel. An interactive table lay allowed me to examine the tactility of the scheme by working with small-scale samples. I collated all the design elements so far in the project and questioned how these textures and colours honour the fabric of the original building and how they would serve each other (Figure 16). These mood boards and layouts became a way to reveal time and expose change.

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<sup>35</sup> Benjamin Reynaert, "Kelly Wearstler, Roman and Williams, and Other AD100 Designers Share Their Spring Mood Boards," *Architectural Digest*, 1 April 2019, <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/kelly-wearstler-roman-williams-designers-spring-mood-boards>.

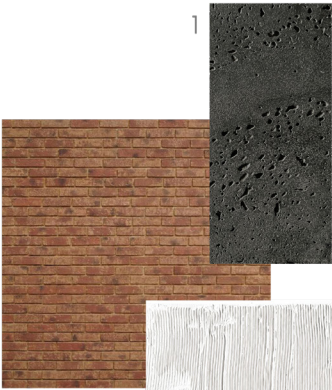


EXTERIOR TO REMAIN UNTOUCHED -  
NOTE ORANGE BRICK LAID IN  
TRADITIONAL PATTERN



2

EXTERIOR TO REMAIN UNTOUCHED - RICH ORANGE  
BRICK LAID IN TRADITIONAL PATTERN  
RESPONDING TO THE DEEP RED BRICK IS AN  
OPPORTUNITY TO INTRODUCE BOLD WARM HUES  
INTO THE INTERIOR COLOUR SCHEME



DICHOTOMY IN BASALT -  
VARYING FINISHES, SIZE AND  
FORMAT

CONTRASTING  
WHITE TILE

3



4

NOTE EXPOSED BRICK TO REMAIN  
WHERE POSSIBLE



5



6

THRESHOLDS FRAMED WITH THICK  
BASALT TO DEEPEN THE NATURAL  
REVEAL WITH EXTENDED FORMS.



8

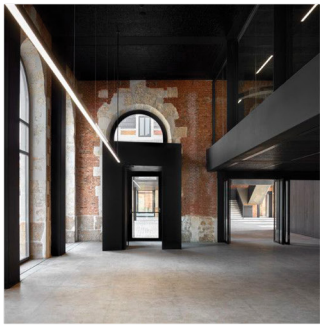


7

EXISTING TRIMS  
TO BE RESTORED



10

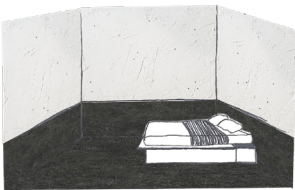


9



STRUCTURAL COLUMNS TO REMAIN  
- INTER TENANCY WALL TO BE  
REESTABLISHED.

11



MATERIAL INTERVENTIONS  
TO BE EXPLORED

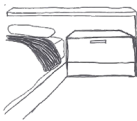


Figure 15, Sarah Budden, *Responding to Site*, 2021, digital collage, for details of image refer to list of figures page v.



Figure 16, Sarah Budden, *Design Scheme Development*, 2022, photograph, Auckland.

## DRESSING

As these materials and relationships began to suggest a material flesh, I explored how they could be used to re-skin or re-dress the host building. Professor at the Rhode Island School of Design, Liliane Wong, investigates the relationship between a host building and new interventions in *Extending the Lives of Buildings*. She explains, “these are interventions that invariably change the harmonious relationships of the original whole.”<sup>36</sup> This perspective forced me to consider how the fabric of the building would weave into the new space and what impact this would have on the narrative. She refers to the host building as a “found object”<sup>37</sup> that no longer serves its purpose or place in the city. At the time of my project, the interior of the Windsor Castle had been gutted out, leaving an empty shell with a distinct sense of emptiness and purposelessness.

Dressing as a method interpreted floor plans as figures. These figures were dressed by folding the material flesh within the host building, allowing for creases to form between different materials. In “Surface Matters,” artist and writer Guilana Bruno explains that “the aesthetic process that makes ornament into structure forces us to engage deeply with the surface materiality.”<sup>38</sup> Dressing interprets the interior’s ornamental aspect as the surface one sees and touches. Ornamenting the surface exposes it, particularly at moments of connection. Manipulating figures, folding, and creasing the material flesh evokes a pliable surface that can be tailored to suit the programmatic needs of the hotel.

Floor plan, elevations, and building sections worked like figures that could be “dressed” by overdrawing. These two-dimensional drawings allow for the new interior to be tried on like clothing, while testing the adaptability of the material flesh and experimenting with how the surfaces would interact with the host building. The interior skin must negotiate with these figures and inherited boundaries.<sup>39</sup> In early sketches, I experimented with the idea of folding and creasing the interior skin, exploring how surfaces might meet, wrap, or divide the space (Figure 17).

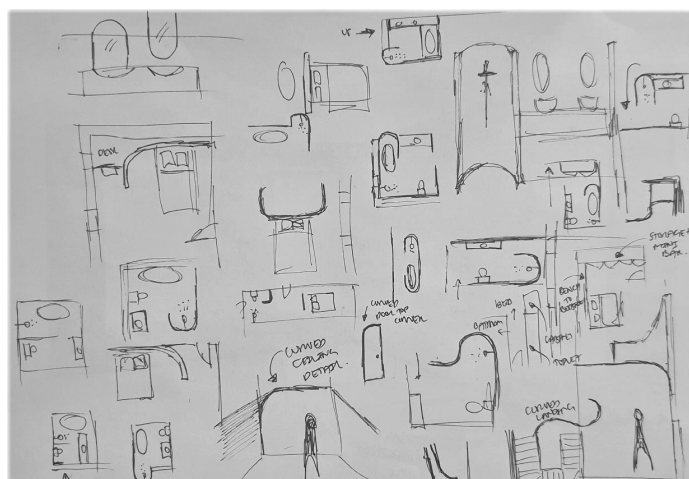


Figure 17, Sarah Budden, *Concept Sketches*, 2021, drawing.

36 Liliane Wong “Second Violin,” in *Adaptive Reuse: Extending the Lives of Buildings* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2016), 242.

37 Liliane Wong “Hosts (And Guests),” in *Adaptive Reuse: Extending the Lives of Buildings*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2016), 104.

38 Giuliana Bruno, “Prologue, Surface Matters,” in *Surface and Apparition: The Immateriality of Modern Surface*, ed. Yeseung Lee, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), xv.

39 Wong “Hosts (And Guests),” 107.

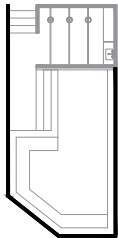




FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



BASEMENT

Figure 19, Sarah Budden, *Working Floor Plan*, 2022, drawing.



## WEARING

I began to imagine how guests might “wear” this interior skin—both in the sense of wrapping themselves in it, and in the sense of wearing it out. Weathering occurs when the interior is worn. Mohsen Mostafavi and David Leatherbarrow summarise this concept in *On Weathering*, where they explain:

Weathering reminds one that the surface of a building is ever-changing. While a potential nuisance, the transformation of a building’s surface can also be positive in that it can allow one to recognise the necessity of change, and to resist the desire to overcome fate—an aspiration that dominated much of modernist architectural thought through its resistance to time.<sup>40</sup>

Wearing considers the topics associated with luxury discussed in Part One and refocuses the project to assess how mortality may be captured in the surface flesh of the interior. I discovered how the hotel interior fit-out could achieve a sense of longevity by utilising finite materials destined to fatigue over time. Bruno proposes that touching surfaces instead of simply observing them develops a greater understanding of materiality in the interior.<sup>41</sup> She goes on to explain:

This reciprocal contact between us and objects or environments occurs on the surface. It is by way of such tangible “superficial” contact that we apprehend the art object and the space of art, turning contact into the communicative interface of a public intimacy.<sup>42</sup>

The surface of the interior skin becomes the interface that communicates mortality. When guests expose themselves to the material flesh, they impact how that surface will change, mirroring their own mortality. I utilised rendering techniques to anticipate how materials might wear in the space. Figure 20 depicts an early iteration of the bathroom basin design with brass coated cabinet fronts simulating different stages as the brass morphs with time and environment. On the left is the original brushed metal coating, and on the right is a raw, burnished, and exposed finish.

These practice-led methods allowed me to understand how the notion of a mortal interior can be applied to an interior. The conceptual methods helped me to formulate a process by contextualising standard practices such as sampling, drawing, and rendering with the building’s historical contexts.

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40 Mohsen Mostafavi and David Leatherbarrow, *On Weathering: The Life of Buildings in Time* (Massachusetts, USA: MIT Press, 1993), 112.

41 Bruno, “Surface Matter,” xii.

42 Ibid, xii.



Figure 20, Sarah Budden, *Basin Metal Coated Cabinetry Wearing*, 2022, render.

# FLESH OF FORM 03

A BOUTIQUE HOTEL FOR THE  
WINDSOR CASTLE



Figure 21

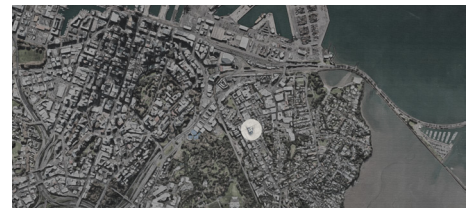


Figure 22

This section explores the ways in which the conceptual methods of revealing, dressing, and wearing have led towards a new interior skin for the new Windsor Castle Hotel and reflects on how this supports the narrative of a mortal interior.

The concept of place is an integral part of the historical narrative and cultural identity of Aotearoa.<sup>43</sup> Adaptive reuse of a heritage-listed building has a vital relationship with place because it takes on the historical context of the original host building. It is both situated in place, as part of the city landscape, and symbolic of a time—an era steeped in the history of colonisation and the early architecture of the country. I have understood working with the particularities of place as a luxurious act of public care and a means to foster a sense of mortality.



Figure 23

Figure 21, Sarah Budden, *Site Plan*, 2021, render.

Figure 22, Sarah Budden, *Area Plan*, 2021, render.

Figure 23, Sarah Budden, *Site Image B*, 2022, photograph, Auckland.

43 Erana Walker, et al., "Kaitiakitanga, Place and the Urban Restoration Agenda," *New Zealand Journal of Ecology* 43, no. 3 (2019): 4. <https://doi.org/10.20417/nzjecol.43.34>.

The Windsor Castle Hotel, on the corner of Parnell Road and Windsor Street, replaced a Georgian drinking house built in 1850. Following a fire, it was rebuilt into a two-storey brick building with sixteen rooms, a cellar and an underground well. By 1880, the building was renovated into a Victorian Pub by Architect R. MacKay Fripp, an English-born architect working in Canada and New Zealand whose work was heavily influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement.<sup>44</sup> The building also underwent significant alterations to the original structure between 1891 and 1895. Heritage New Zealand describes the hotel as “one of the earliest surviving hotels in current-day Auckland and ... among the oldest remaining brick buildings in the region.”<sup>45</sup> The Windsor Castle Hotel is listed as a Category 1 New Zealand heritage building, the highest status offered to a historic structure. This category means the building and the underground well must be retained, as it has been deemed an important historical site. As cited in a 2016 archaeology assessment, the site “contributes to the 19th Century archaeological landscape of Auckland.”<sup>46</sup>

The brick façade is an identifying element of the building, but bricks also appear inside, albeit with layers of the plaster and paint with which they had been covered previously. Unlike many new brick buildings, the interior ceiling height was over three metres, and the scale of the doors and windows on the front are tall enough to meet this line. Figure 24 shows a collaged panorama of the interior during its deconstruction. The only traces of the previous fit-out are the edges of the ceiling paint recalling where the internal walls used to be. These masked surfaces and barely discernible lines suggested moments of revelation and the creases of wear.



Figure 24, Sarah Budden, *Site Interior Collage*, 2022, digital collage.

44 Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, *Windsor Castle Hotel 144 Parnell Road, Parnell Auckland: Heritage Impact Assessment* (Auckland: Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 2016) 2, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/ResourceConsentDocuments/bun60078080-19-144parnellroad-heritageimpactassessment.pdf>

45 Ibid.

46 Zarah Burnett, Sarah Macready and Rod Clough, *Windsor Castle Hotel, 144 Parnell Road, Parnell: Heritage Impact Assessment (Archaeology)*, (Auckland: Clough & Associates Ltd, 2016) 38, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/ResourceConsentDocuments/bun60078080-14-144parnellroad-archaeologicalassessment.pdf>



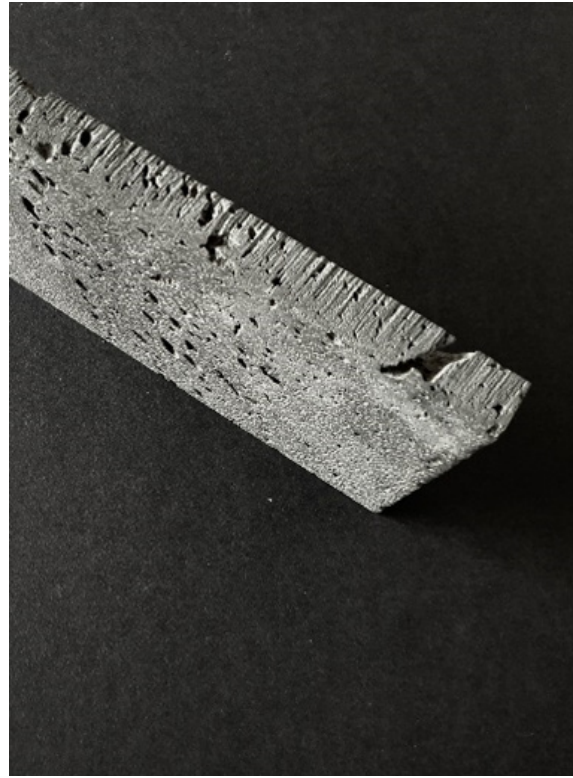


Figure 25, Sarah Budden, *Material Documentation Basalt*, 2021, photograph, Auckland.

In the design interrogation of the existing building, I localised the historic fabric to the materials found in the building to determine the creative direction of the new interior. This elevation of the east wall, prepared for a heritage survey by Simon Best in 2000 (Figure 26), depicts the different layers of stone utilised in its construction. Brick is the most recognisable material on the building. Yet, within these layers lie volcanic basalt rock used as a foundation and concrete introduced to support the architraves of window and door openings.

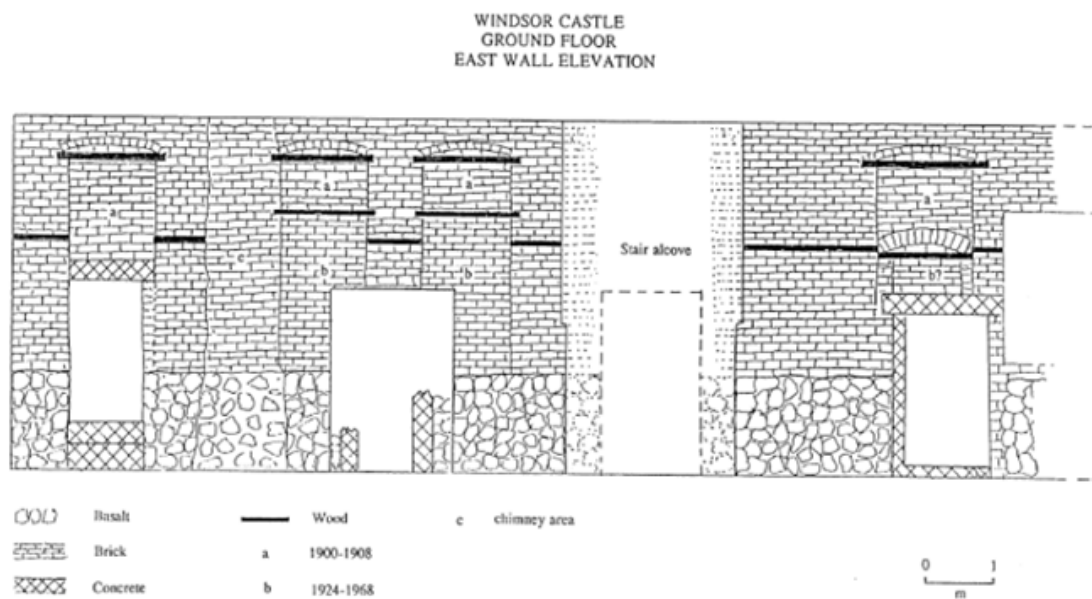


Figure 26, *East Wall Elevation Prepared by Simon Best (2000)*, in *Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, Windsor Castle Hotel 144 Parnell Road, Parnell Auckland: Heritage Impact Assessment* (Auckland: Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, 2016) 25, <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/ResourceConsentDocuments/bun60078080-19-144parnellroad-heritageimpactassessment.pdf>

One of the primary materials selected was Timaru basalt. Basalt is a grey-black igneous rock formed by molten lava from volcanic eruptions solidifying. In Aotearoa, it is one of the most common rock products from Northland, Auckland, and South Island volcanoes—a vital part of Aotearoa’s landscape and history that mimics the metamorphic story of death and rebirth. Basalt is hard, unyielding, and although not a pliable surface, its material flesh presents memories of how the lava would have creased and folded around the earth in its formation, taking on casting blemishes to its surface.

During its formation, basalt acts as a membrane to the ground, representing the raw and uninterrupted labour of the land. The stone can be tailored into different sizes, textures, and finishes in its next ensemble, taking on an entirely new appearance in the interior application. I considered how different surface finishes could be curated together to build a tactile surface (Figure 27). To develop this new material skin, I used a visual storyboard to understand how this proposed material would contrast with the red brick façade (Figure 26). As the Windsor Castle Hotel is one of the oldest brick buildings in Auckland,<sup>47</sup> I believed it was important to emphasise the red tones of the brick by incorporating them into the current monochromatic scheme. I considered the material potential; each sample and reference image began to take on a conceptual meaning, or “mattering”<sup>48</sup> that I used as a tool for representing these ideas. For example, the basalt samples represents a grounded lining for the floor and walls, evoking the slow changes of the ground beneath, while the metal swatches highlight movement and moments of interaction.

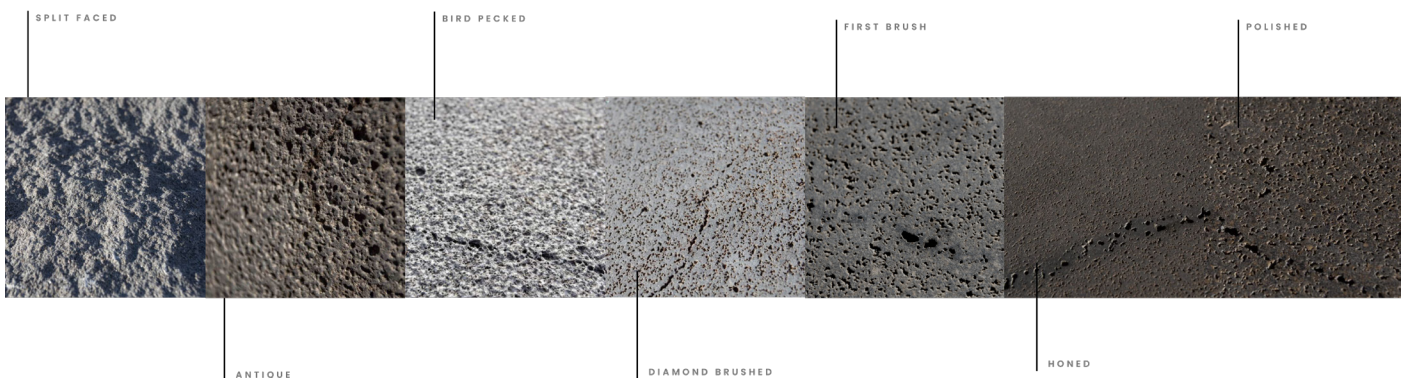


Figure 27, Sarah Budden, *Basalt Finishes* (Image Courtesy of Timaru Bluestone), 2021, digital collage.

47 Matthews & Matthews Architects Ltd, *Windsor Castle Hotel*, 2.

48 Cairns and Jacobs, *Buildings Must Die: A Perverse View of Architecture*, 31–32.

The concept of folding has been adopted to explore how materials engage with the host building. As Bruno explains, “the fold, often misunderstood in architectural discourse as a mere formal device, is actually an elaborate mutual figuration of mind and matter,” recalling the way matter *matters* according to Mitchell and Fielder.<sup>49</sup> In this project, folding allows the interior skin to mould to the host building, and in turn to mould the social and experiential world of the inhabitants. For example, the exposed concrete ceiling on the ground floor was painted black and dragged down the surface of some of the walls to give the illusion that the ceiling was folding down—the concept depicted in Figure 29. This was done to reduce the sheer scale of the ceiling height, keeping the pipework exposed without adding a suspended ceiling throughout. It is intended that guests will feel wrapped in this third skin.

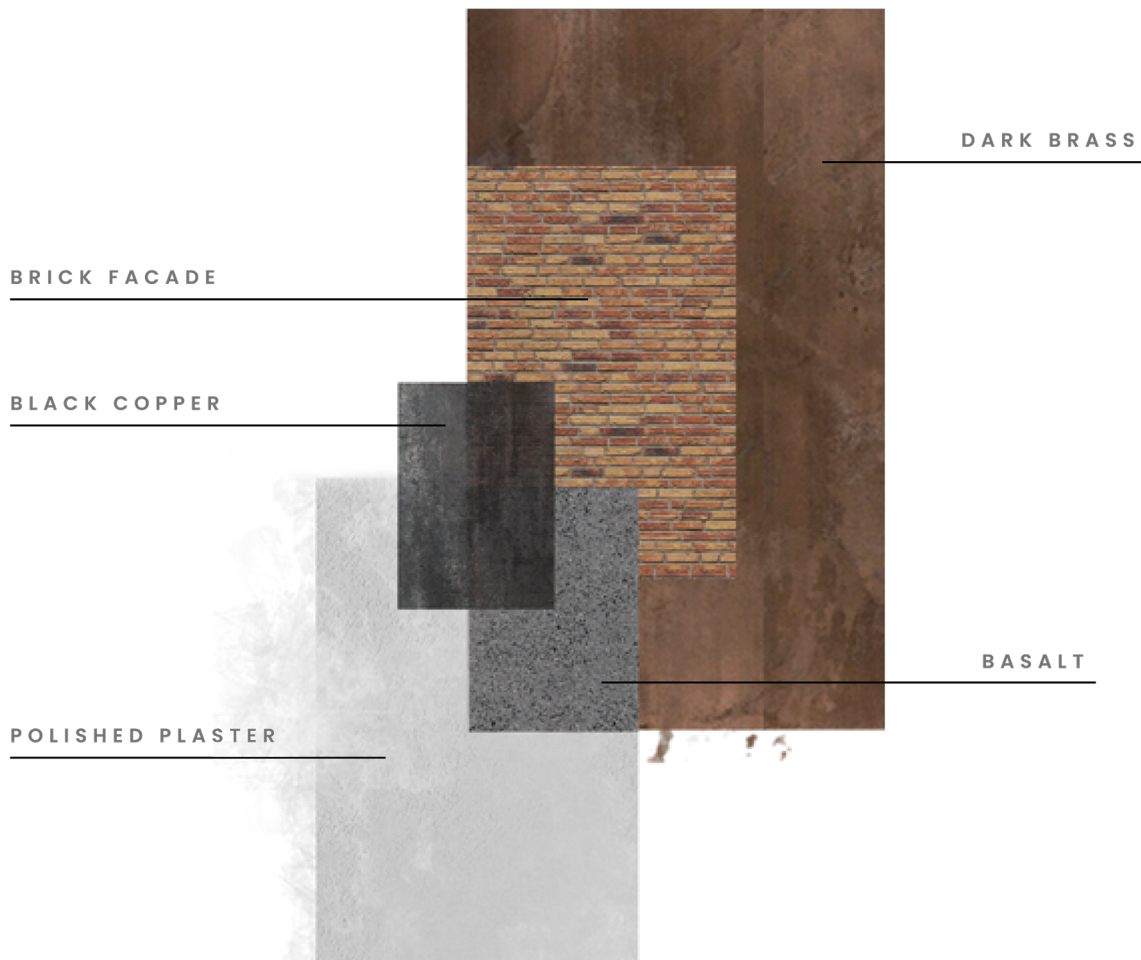


Figure 28, Sarah Budden, *Material Scheme*, 2022, digital collage.

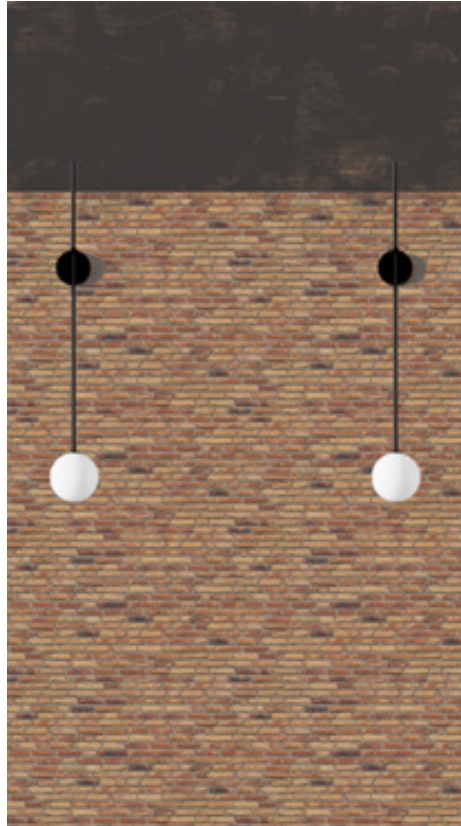


Figure 29, Sarah Budden, *Wall Lining Folds Concept*, 2022, render.

In addition to folds, I examined how dressing the interior skin left creases in the material flesh. I discovered that a crease wasn't as dramatic as folds, and that folds often occur within the space between the host building and the interior, or when the interior space is divided into smaller areas. An example of creasing is demonstrated in the guest rooms, which were designed to balance the raw, exposed materials of the brick building and the refined materials (polished plaster, pressed metals and basalt) introduced in the new interior skin. The exposed brick remained a stand-alone feature, with new interior walls of polished plaster only meeting it to divide the rooms from one another.

Architect David Chipperfield explained that adapting existing architecture should be “the new reflect[ing] the lost but without imitating it.”<sup>50</sup> These connections were intended to reflect the aging matter of the Windsor Castle, to embody its fragility, and make visitors aware of their own temporality.

50 David Chipperfield, “Neues Museum,” David Chipperfield Architects, accessed November 5, 2021, [https://davidchipperfield.com/project/neues\\_museum](https://davidchipperfield.com/project/neues_museum)



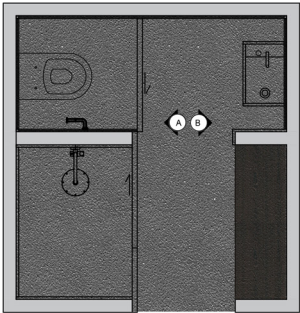
In interior design practice, a finish describes the topmost layer of a surface. However, in the context of this project, the top layer is not the final appearance of the surface. A *living finish* is a surface subject to change under certain environmental conditions. Through constant touch (whether through the skin, water, or light), the exposed layer is subtracted to reveal the colour and texture of the material below. As described in *On Weathering*, “practically, weathering produces something that is already there.”<sup>51</sup> Naturally, the inclusion of living finishes was vital to the changing nature of the hotel’s interior. It creates a parallel between the weathered bricks of the original bones of the building and presents guests with an opportunity to become situated in time.

It was essential to acknowledge the site’s history and attachment to water while considering how the interior is worn. Waters adds a patina to metal surfaces, which captures the passing of time visually on the surface. Uncoated brass fittings were selected and allowed to patina in the downstairs pool and the upstairs guest rooms. It’s hoped that this changing surface condition becomes a visual representation of memory and traces of previous activity. The bathroom drawings illustrate how the selected materials have been dressed to support the environment for a patina with basalt-lined floors, metal-coated cabinetry, and the tapware for the wet areas (Figure 31).



Figure 30, Sarah Budden, *Initial Material Board*, 2021, photograph, Auckland.

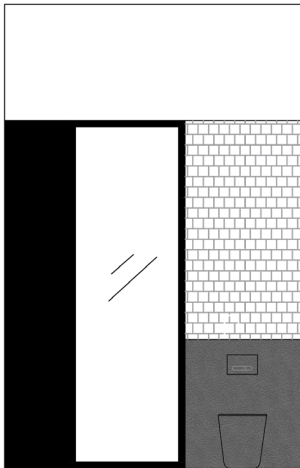




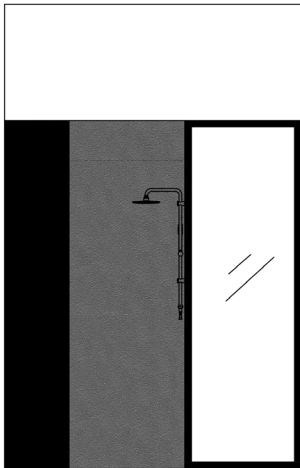
01  
SB-01 PLAN: SMALL BATHROOM  
SCALE: 1:25 @ A3



02  
SB-01 ELEVATION A: SMALL BATHROOM  
SCALE: 1:25 @ A3



03  
SB-01 ELEVATION B: SMALL BATHROOM  
SCALE: 1:25 @ A3



04  
SB-01 ELEVATION B: SMALL BATHROOM (VARIATION)  
SCALE: 1:25 @ A3

Figure 31, Sarah Budden, *Guest Bathroom Plan and Elevations*, 2022, drawing.



Figure 32, Sarah Budden, *Staircase Concept*, 2022, render.

As the visitor enters the hotel lobby, they experience the curation of materials, from soft furniture coverings and hard basalt floors to light plaster wall creases and dark ceiling folds. But the hands are the things that guide the guest through the space. As architect Juhani Pallasmaa suggests, “the door handle is the handshake of the building. The tactile sense connects us with time and tradition; through marks of touch, we shake the hands of countless generations.”<sup>52</sup>

This notion of the interior reaching out to touch the guests reminds them people have come before and will come again. I considered how the staircase would meet the guests in the lobby and carry them to the first floor. The balustrade wraps around the columns and interior walls in a dark metal finish with the handle moulded from negative space, so the guest’s hand is wrapped in a metal channel as they ascend or descend (Figure 32). The surface keeps a tally of each guest by collecting marks and fingerprints.

These layered details (Table 1), as spatial expressions of revealing, dressing, and wear, come together in a mortal interior; a space that mediates between the various eras of a building and its occupant

MORTAL SPACES	METHOD: REVEALING	METHOD: DRESSING	METHOD: WEARING
RECEPTION AND CAFE	<p>EXPOSED BRICKWORK AND CEILING</p> <p>BASALT TILE IS INFLUENCED BY THE FOUNDATIONAL STONE (SEE FIGURES 26 AND 27)</p>	FOLDED CEILING PAINT (SEE FIGURE 29)	PRESSED BRASS CEILING
POOL	INFLUENCED BY HISTORIC UNDERGROUND WELL	FOLDED BASALT LINING	METAL TAPWARE PATINA (FIGURE 20)
GUEST ROOMS	<p>EXPOSED BRICKWORK</p> <p>EXISTING FLOORBOARDS WITH TRACES OF THE PREVIOUS LAYOUT</p> <p>TAPWARE TO PATINA WAS INSPIRED BY THE UNDERGROUND WELL</p>	<p>LAYOUT CREASED WITH DIVIDING WALLS THAT MEET THE EXPOSED BRICK</p> <p>BASALT LINED FLOOR AND SHOWER WALLS TO BATHROOM (FIGURE 31)</p>	METAL TAPWARE PATINA (FIGURE 20)

Table 1, Sarah Budden, *Summary of Methods*, 2022.

Through this project, I argue that we can facilitate the re-use and adaptation of existing buildings by establishing spatial experiences grounded in place and time. The historical foundation is woven into a new interior skin, drawing on similarities between the human body and the architectural body, challenging the life span of the built environment. This design is aimed to balance the expectations of the hotel space with a performative architecture that reflects the mortality of the interior environment. As guests come and go from the Windsor Castle Hotel, their ghosts linger long after they have checked out. It may not be immediately apparent that someone else has shared this space until you attend more closely to weathered surfaces and exposed layers. Each visit would be unique as the hotel morphs, regenerates, and heals.

This research project has reshaped how I approach sustainable design thinking as an interior designer—reimagining the hotel space allowed for developing a design approach that considers how the interior and the material flesh will change with a building. From my initial interest in reducing the need for frequent fit-outs to maintain a hotel's appeal, I became fascinated with the guest's experience of a transient hotel setting, and the way this might enable them to experience time in a new way, and find a new respect for the matter that matters around them.

Flesh of Form will be exhibited at the St Paul Street Gallery in August 2022.



Figure 33, Sarah Budden, *Exhibition: Material Collection Close Up*, 2022, photograph.





Figure 34, Sarah Budden, *Exhibition: Full View*, 2022, photograph.





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