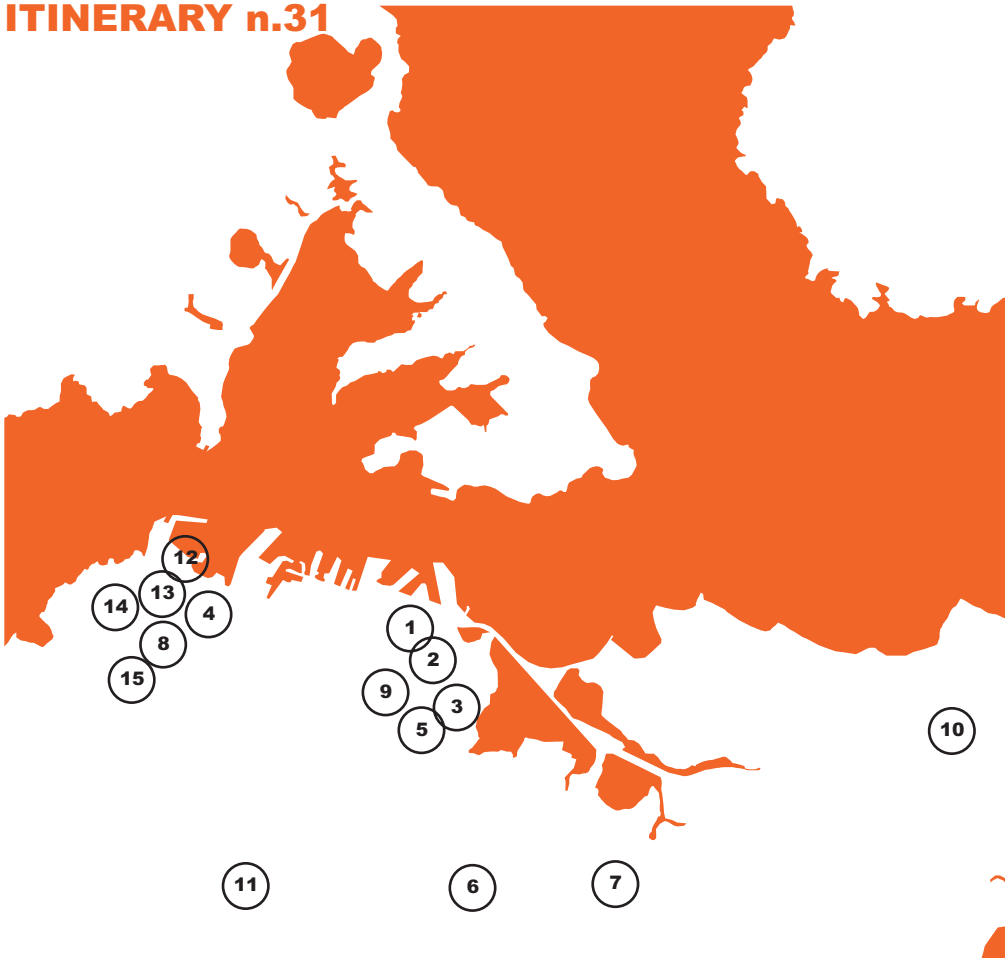


## ITINERARY n.31



### Marshall Cook in Auckland

Marshall Cook and his practice are largely known for a series of houses that manage to be both highly civilised and experimental at the same time. In his forty odd years of practice he has restlessly worked on the evolution of a house type that incorporates a profound understanding of the changing dynamics of families over time and of the vicissitudes of our climate. The projects too invariably incorporate a sensuous pleasure in materials and an adventurous exploration of ways of structuring and building. Cook's empathy for the expansions and confluences of family size over decades, closely experienced in his own family, has generated a parti which splits out a secondary living/working area from the main house, invariably linking across either an enclosed or partially enclosed courtyard. These secondary living zones allow for home occupations, the gradual distancing of teenagers from the family bosom or the return of bits of the family with their own family in tow.

The projects are often inventive in their approach to structure and construction, and seek to minimise the size and quantum of materials employed. The Pier Z project at Westhaven, for example, uses yacht technology's millennium rig buried within facade fins to stiffen the large north-facing glazed facade, while a combination of mezzanine floor diaphragm and solid toilet enclosure buttresses stiffen the structure against lateral load. The thinking underpinning this approach is mirrored in Cook's constant seeking out of new projects, materials and processes. Though his work is always marked by a gentle civility and concern for fit, be it built context, climate or social organisation, each is always another step in the evolution of his thinking. The two Cook family houses at Parnell and Freemans Bay show a clear lineage and development of his strategies for the accommodation of families, an increasingly sophisticated manipulation of climatic controls and an enriching of the material palette employed. Where the Parnell house borrows a European-like parti of villa and courtyard, the Freemans Bay house joins two enclosures with a light pavilion. Where the former has a solid block with deeply penetrating openings the latter's two blocks are eroded by assemblies of fins and a profusion of materials that I suspect might be given short shrift in Parnell.

Marshall's ability to achieve consent for a house with such an eclectic facade as that in Franklin Road is testimony to his ability to prevail over bureaucratic nonsense using all possible means at his disposal ranging from well reasoned argument to good humoured bombast. These are skills that Marshall has also put to good use as both urban commentator and teacher. In both roles he brings a strong pragmatic understanding of human behaviour, a healthy regard for the complexities and opportunities of construction and design and a relentless desire to civilise the city. His observations are born of extensive travel and work overseas, the latter involving the masterplanning of ski villages in the US and the design of urban transit stations in Bangkok.

Marshall is an enthusiastic supporter of architectural activity in all its guises; institute, association, competitions, exhibitions, publications, conferences and that vital glue of architectural discourse, the open wine bottle. In all roles Marshall's mercurial and all encompassing sociability make him a pivot around which much of Auckland's architect rotates. *Pip Cheshire*

### Biography:

Marshall Cook grew up surrounded by the maps and photographs of his cartographer and historical curator father in Napier. School holiday jobs at the local architect's office introduced him to John Scott and reinforced his enthusiasm for studying architecture. He came to Auckland architecture school in 1959, took time out to work with Bill Wilson and Ivan Juriss - the remnants of Group Architects - John Scott and Lillian Chrystal then returned to the school to finish in 1966. Cook started a practice in 1967 with Terry Hitchcock and they were later joined by Peter Sargisson. In the mid seventies Cook travelled to England and taught timber construction for three years. Returning to New Zealand in the late 1970s the practice undertook a number of ski resort and masterplanning projects in the USA. This was followed by work in Japan and Thailand before withdrawing from international work in the mid-nineties. The practice remained Cook Hitchcock and Sargisson until 1990 and is currently known as Cook Hitchcock and Pirie with a staff of around 15 undertaking predominantly residential projects.

① 1980  
Townhouses  
14 Ruskin Street  
Parnell  
1981 NZIA Ak Branch Award



It must surely have been the street name that lured Cook from his large old Freemans Bay villa to the east side of town and the construction of the first of a series of Cook family living experiments. A tight grouping of townhouses on a steep Parnell back street shows some of the hallmarks of Cook's later townhouses; the picturesque facade and concern with streetscape, the articulated roof forms accentuating the formal massing of the house and the use of trees as an organising focus for, in this case, front yard and vehicle storage and, within the house, the organisation of the living space.

② 1987  
Townhouses  
41 Scarborough Terrace  
Parnell  
1992 NZIA National Award



The townhouses present a gentle ordered facade to this Parnell back street - plastered gables, glass block and vine covered facade and energetic roofscape that hints at the forms tumbling down the hillside behind the streetscape. The houses take advantage of an east slope falling to a public reserve and open up on upper levels, creating private sunny terraces that separate living from studio live/work spaces. Best viewed from the reserve accessed from the top of St Georges Bay Road.

③ 1990  
Townhouses  
18 Brighton Road  
Parnell  
1992 NZIA National Award



These houses are part of a comprehensive Cook development undertaken to prevent the view from the family home at number 16 being compromised by unsympathetic development on this site. The facades create an urbane streetscape in this back lot car court and open to private gardens in the north. The extensive glazed roof visible from the court hints at the architect's bold engagement in Auckland's climate and his development of spaces that are enclosed and covered yet by virtue of their role as circulation spaces are allowed to enjoy more extreme temperature changes than the core living areas.

④ 1982  
Townhouses  
50 Napier Street  
Freemans Bay  
1985 NZIA Ak District Award



These polychromatic townhouses with their post modern touches of columns, shutters and arches create a varied and lively streetscape. Off the main street the car courts and a second layer of houses generates a rich and eclectic mix of forms and spaces that draw on references as varied as the Ngapuhi Road bathouses and the tumble of Italian hilltowns. As with all of Cook's townhouse projects a clear distinction is made between a carefully ordered public entry and the informality of private north-facing spaces enlivened by secondary structures and densely planted gardens.

⑤ 1987  
Cook House  
16 Brighton Road  
Parnell  
1989 NZIA Ak Branch Award  
1990 NZIA National Award



This house for the architect's own family explores Cook's interest in the creation of houses with multiple living and working areas linked to core cooking and eating spaces. The house has two expressed forms; the main gabled house and a near stand alone apartment above the garage. The two living areas are linked by a glazed roof entry space off which the main house spaces open. The effect is to create an internal street like space - one is neither outside, nor truly in. The house also explores Cook's interest in creating buildings which respond to Auckland's climate with cross ventilation and thermal mass.

⑥ 1978  
Osborne House  
27A Armadale Road  
Remuera  
1981 NZIA Ak Branch Award



This stand alone house illustrates Cook's ability to extract the most from a somewhat daunting site. Thick planting to the north controls outdoor space and generate few opportunities for the architect's more normal blurring of indoor and outdoor space. Instead a substantially glazed entry lobby, another of Cook's favoured gambits, links living with a garage top space that, in this case, is home to a music practice room. The entry sets up a strong relationship to an enclosed garden to the south and the sequential revelation of living spaces culminating in the cul de sac enclosure of a study space to the north.

⑦ 1986  
Marsh House  
73 Benson Road  
Remuera



Like a number of the architect's houses this stand alone family home enjoys a double frontage; the public address at the end of a long shared driveway and the other a private gateway to a public park. This dichotomy is reflected in the massing of the two facades, the private face to the public park being a composed gable in the manner of Cook's Brighton Road house and the public face to the private right of way being a picturesque assembly of forms and materials quite at home in central Remuera. The massing reflects the centrality of the domestic arrangements while a window above the garage hints at Cook's live/work program being played out.

⑧ 1995  
Whaley House  
52 Wood Street  
Freemans Bay  
2000 NZIA Colour award



This single unit family house uses vertical separation to generate discrete living zones within a singular form. The mid level entry affords access to the lower level space and to the mid-level living area with wide city views. The living area has a large shuttered porch on the northern side, while an enclosed street side terrace on the top storey completes a private third storey bedroom and study zone. The house is one of the most complex examples of Cook's interest in the provision of layered and separated living and working zones allowing for multi generational occupation.

9

1997

Roche House  
45/47 Brighton Road  
Parnell



These two buildings reveal much of Cook's skill in creating subtly modulated space in the often inauspicious left over sites that the city throws up. A combination of access rights of way creates a broad open driveway with little discernable shape or charm. Cook creates a gracious suburban island with house, courtyard garden and apartment. The composition is densely developed around a garden courtyard and though somewhat at odds with its present diffuse context it anticipates a dense but gentle development of adjacent sites.

10

1993

Curran House  
13 St Heliers Bay Road  
St Heliers



Cook's big houses are distinguished by a careful concern with the arrangement of the external skin, invariably composed of articulated masses, a range of materials and sculptured climate controlling devices. The effect is to break down the singularity of a big program, in this case two large town houses, into civilised and richly modulated components. Here the familiar Cook parti of greater and lesser living blocks is enriched by the manipulation of solar gain through louvres, verandahs, pergolas and the like. The somewhat more pragmatic treatment of the above garage live/work storey seems only to exaggerate the main houses' sense of their south pacific site.

11

2002

Wood Golder House  
48 St Leonards Road  
Epsom

2005 NZIA Ak Branch Award  
2006 NZIA New Zealand Award



This house again illustrates Cook's concern with the zoned arrangement of living to facilitate occupation by multi-generational families. A familiar Cook strategy of the dumbbell plan: two living volumes linked across private open space, is arrayed up the slope and used to facilitate a plan that offers a rich family living, cooking and eating area and discrete secondary working and living zones. The two elements are linked by a wide brick tiled hallway, the dimensions of which allow for both easy movement and its use as play area, library, and heat sink. The exterior composition sits easily in this leafy suburb.

12

2005

Z Pier  
Westhaven Drive  
Freemans Bay



This building identifies and organises the public face of Westhaven marina, providing two marine related office spaces and a cafe immediately adjacent to the main public embarkation point within the marina. The building sits within a vast carpark which renders all facades public. Cook manages to deal with the effluvia of cafe back of house storage and to create a moment of urbanity and sun soaked public occupation at the water's edge. The building shows Cook's ability to bring steel and aluminium together with jaunty maritime elan and to soften the assembly with well placed timber elements.

13

2002

Apartment  
40 Drake Street  
Freemans Bay



The astragal divided window and wooden interior are a shockingly domestic sight on this rooftop addition to a highly visible fringe city warehouse and reveal Cook's relentless desire to civilise, and humanise projects through the articulation of those elements in play. The two storey zinc clad addition presents a reenterant terrace backed with a large louvre glazed wall to the north and shaded by an overhanging monopitch roof. The composition uses a number of elements familiar from his stand alone houses but here bought together into an eclectic and spatially complex rooftop occupation.

14

1998

Wallace House  
House 46a Sarsfield Street  
Herne Bay



The house folds around a tight north west vehicle court and distributes living and working spaces around a stair tower at the joint between north south and east west wings. The materials are somewhat more robust and elemental than the earlier timber structures; as with the Whaley house (#8) and the Owens Road house, raw blockwork provides a solid buttress against and on top of which extensive clear and opaque fenestration is organised. The flat roof flies out to manipulate heat gain and the horizontality thus formed is augmented by exaggerated floor deck extensions and flying pergola.

15

2008

Cook House  
49 Franklin Road  
Freemans Bay

2009 NZIA Local Award



This latest Cook family home develops the notion of zoned spaces allowing multiple uses and occupation by extended family groups and linking these with ephemeral pavillion-like spaces containing cooking and dining facilities. The dumbbell plan revisits the social organisation of his Brighton Road family home but occupies the linking form with a skylit garden room opening to the north. The house features the careful detailing and thoughtful use of materials that characterise Cook's architecture and is particularly noteworthy for a design that prevails over the restrictive constraints of heritage zoning.

## Sources:

The text and photographs are by Pip Cheshire. Many thanks to Marshall Cook and the staff of Cook Sargisson and Pirie for their assistance in assembling this guide.

*Houses New Zealand Issue 2* features a profile of Marshall Cook with an interview, photos and plans of a number of projects.

See also major articles in:  
*Architecture NZ* No 4 1980,  
No1 1984, May/June 1990,  
May/June 1992, Sept/Oct 1992,  
May/June 2000

*Home and Building* No4 1980,  
No1 1982, Oct/Nov 1989, June/  
July 1998

## Other addresses:

**Townhouses** at 68 Brighton Road Parnell

**Additions** to house 46A Bassett Road Remuera

**House** at 41 Brighams Creek Road Whenuapai

**House** at 135 Churchill Road Campbells Bay

**House** at 32A Owens Road Epsom

**Townhouses** at 117 Portland Road Remuera

1987 NZIA AK Branch Award

**Jenkins House** at 54 Seacliffe Road Takapuna

2008 NZIA Local Award

**House** at 218 west Tamaki Drive Glendowie

1999 NZIA Ak Branch Award