

## pre:fab Report\_002 to Te Kāhui Whaihanga

pre:fab is pleased to offer this update of activities to the records of Te Kāhui Whaihanga NZIA Board Meeting for February 2024.

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### **Crises and Complicity**

Since the submission of the last pre:fab report in September 2023 the occupation of Palestine, the war on Gaza and the genocide of its people has escalated unprecedentedly, in scale and in violence. This violence is unfathomable, and yet it has a long history: it is routinely funded by European and North American hegemonies, and is consistently misconstrued by mainstream media. Many of the physical manifestations of this violence are not possible without architects. Architecture is always a political act. The conversations we are having about architecture in Aotearoa, the work we celebrate and promote, the ideas that are publicised, must recognise this. As practitioners and researchers of the built, destroyed, and imagined environments, we must account for the on-going practices of settler-colonialism, entrenched systems of capitalist exploitation, their architectures, landscapes, cities, and infrastructures everywhere, including here in Aotearoa. We must fight for the liberation of all oppressed people, all occupied territories, all those exploited under capitalism, all bruised and battered lands, all threatened species, all spirits and intangible forces. Much of the growing conflict around the middle east, in particular Yemen, is related to issues of supply chain. Architecture is increasingly a service industry to the supply chain, and we must be aware of and consider where our materials are sourced, who and what is exploited in their extraction, where the profits go, and how they make their way here to Aotearoa. pre:fab are committed to a deeper understanding of the whakapapa of materials and our broader responsibility as architects and as citizens in reckoning with our complicity in global power systems and the violence they enact in the name of wealth generation. pre:fab encourages and supports its members to advocate for their values, protest, make submissions, email MPs and propose regulatory change. pre:fab members are in the process of organising an event that will consider the role and responsibility of architects in the face of these global crises, in particular the occupation of Palestine.

### **Architecture Beyond Capitalism School**

In September 2023 pre:fab participated in The Architecture Lobby's Architecture Beyond Capitalism School 2023 - Future Belonging - Organising for Global Change. Two pre:fab members were part of the core team coordinating the School, and pre:fab hosted two sessions - one in collaboration with Marisa Cortright: a casual gathering for those who want to connect around projects that sit outside the conventional commercial approach; and the

second a pecha kucha session for attendees of the school to share their practices. pre:fab member Leonard Hobbins also hosted a workshop about ritual gathering and communal living scenarios, culminating in the ritual burning of a scale model of a Jennian home. This act was to channel animosity for these housing scenarios that are less communal, more energy intensive, speak less to our collective identity, and use land and resources wastefully. The ABC School connects pre:fab to an international network of changemakers and to other collectives, resources and ideas for liberatory practice and organising for change in architecture.

### **[Detecting] The Darchive**

In November 2023 pre:fab hosted their second annual conference. [Detecting] The Darchive delved into the dark matter of architecture practice: the undeclared, undiscussed, unacknowledged, uninspected, or otherwise hidden people, objects, spaces, events, and ideas that have had an enduring effect on our individual or collective imagination, and through that, our creative practices and built environment. We invited over 20 thinkers and makers from architecture and its expanded field to contribute a darkefact - a physical manifestation of something from their own darchives or the darchive of architecture more broadly. Each darkefact presenter had 3 minutes to describe what they had brought and how it fit into a personal narrative or a broader narrative of architectural discourse. The content of these talks was then explored across four workshops in three rounds, ranging in exploration from embroidery, to out-of-control poetry, to ritual gathering, to terrain mapping. We shared a potluck lunch halfway through the day. Lamplight Books provided the vouchers for speakers, Florets Bakery provided the bread, Flight provided the coffee and Groupwork Aotearoa provided the workshop materials and Italian tablecloths. This conference was free, open to anyone and hosted over 70 people across the day.



Conference attendees explore darchive ideas through an interactive workshop, Tessa Forde, 18.11.23

Darkefact presenter Farzad Zamani, Manager of Te Ngākau civic precinct programme for Wellington City Council (and frequent conference-goer) said it was the best conference he had ever been to, and indicated his ambition to launch a pre:fab chapter in Wellington. You can read more about the conference in [an account published by Architecture Now](#) written by Te Kāhui Whaihanga NZIA Director Joseph McAuley who we were pleased to host as a presenter on the day alongside President Judith Taylor.



Te Kāhui Whaihanga NZIA President Judith Taylor presents her darkefact, Leonard Hobbins, 18.11.23

The conference was an opportunity to bring people together across the spectrum of architectural discourse to share ideas, knowledge, beliefs, secrets and observations. We have so much to learn from each other, and these platforms provide the space to discover new knowledge and ways of being together.

### **Mud and Mixing**

In December 2023 pre:fab, in collaboration with Groupwork, hosted a ~~christmas party~~ mud mixer where friends, colleagues, family and curious others were invited to make lightweight earth bricks and eat BBQ fare. We were pleased to host Te Kāhui Whaihanga NZIA President Judith Taylor and NZIA Auckland Director Michael Thompson on the day. We welcome other members of the Te Kāhui Whaihanga NZIA board and staff to join us at these free, open events. The mud mixer provided many young graduates, established practitioners, non-architects, and children alike with the opportunity to engage with a hands-on material process involving the making of paper pulp, mixing of clay, hemp hurd and paper pulp using their feet and large tarpaulins, and construction of bricks in several wooden moulds. The bricks were taken home in party bags by attendees and the remainder by a pre:fab member to construct an earthen pizza oven. This would not have been possible without the support of Alan Drayton from Biobuild who has been supporting Groupwork in their development of a lightweight interior earthen wall board.





Attendees make mud bricks at the pre:fab christmas mud mixer, Tessa Forde, 02.12.23

pre:fab platform recognises earthen materials and other experiments with locally accessible, regenerative building products as a central pillar of the future of material culture in Aotearoa and hope to see more of this promoted and engaged with by the Institute. To this end, pre:fab sponsor Groupwork has joined the innovation and research subcommittees of the Earth Building Association New Zealand (EBANZ) and is developing a range of earthen building materials including a clay based interior wallboard. pre:fab hopes to support these endeavours by educating its members about natural materials and, in the long term, providing an audited list of ethical materials and suppliers to assist architects and designers with their project specifications. There is a particular opportunity for the Institute as BRANZ reviews the earth building regulations with EBANZ, and as MBIE reviews the Architects Act. Understanding complex material histories, systems and consequences is a key responsibility for any architect. It is a privilege to be the only country in the world with a recognised earth building standard and this positions Aotearoa to be a world leader in building material solutions that are more local, transparent and ethical. Te Kāhui Whaihanga NZIA could be at the forefront of this shift.

### Thank you Judith

We understand that these next few months mark the last of the Presidential tenure of President Judith Taylor. We would like to acknowledge the warmth, enthusiasm and support we have received from Judith in the past year and we would like her to know that she has a friend in pre:fab and we hope to continue the enriching conversations we have had around the critical issues in architecture. We hope to have similarly collegial engagement with President Huia Reriti when he assumes the position.

**What's next**

Our members will continue in their work across advocacy, architectural practice, education, finishing theses, earth building and supply chain research, embroidery, writing, publishing, the council, moving to Chile, contributing to events and other architecture organisations, political campaigns, the design of buildings, and generally expanding the architecture field through passionate commitment to its many avenues of practice. We have a number of ideas for future action, many of which will be discussed at a visioning session on the 18th of February. We will no doubt update the institute on the outcomes of this session in our next report.

Once again we invite further discussion with the board and warmly welcome all Te Kāhui Whaihanga NZIA affiliates to our events and gatherings. You are welcome to join the pre:fab subscription [google group here](#) for email updates, follow us on instagram @prefab.platform, stay up to date via our website pre-fab.xyz or email pre:fab at [kiaora@pre-fab.xyz](mailto:kiaora@pre-fab.xyz).

Ngā mihi,

pre:fab  
they/them