

# **Te Whare Pūkākā**

## **College of Creative Arts Workplace**

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### **The Words**

Inviting

Identity

Sharing

Transparent

Social

Adaptability

Disruption

Redefining

Courageous

Creativity

Virtuosity

Understanding

Autonomy

Connectedness

Research and Scholarship

Teaching and Learning

Connections

Internationalisation

Responsibility

Generating Income

Enabling Excellence

### **Abstract**

This paper questions conventional university workspaces. The role and expectations of universities are in flux, with traditional university structures being challenged, budgets being reduced, and a broadening of both academic fields and participants. Academic culture is also changing; the solo scholar working in isolation, figure 1, is increasingly giving way to interdisciplinary teams co-teaching and researching together. The traditional space of the individual scholar in an office surrounded by books, while facilitating a solitary mode of working, can inhibit fortuitous exchange and collaboration. In some cases an office cubicle can be little more than a storage space. The separation of faculty, administrative, and clerical staff also tends to hinder the collaborative approaches that the 21st century

academy aspires to. The paper will discuss the project *Te Whare Pūkākā* (which loosely translated from Māori means the hot house), the new staff workspace at the College of Creative Arts, Massey University. The process, with its atypical timeline, will be outlined to understand the development of what has resulted in a transformative workspace. The different spaces or activity zones will be described architecturally and conceptually, concluding with the impacts of the space on the culture of the college.

## **Introduction**

The College of Creative Arts (CoCA) is one of five colleges of Massey University, New Zealand. Based in the capital city, Wellington, the college consists of a School of Design, a School of Art and a School of Music and Media. The college was founded in 1886 and is New Zealand's oldest creative arts institution. Like many other institutions of its type, it has been exploring how more interdisciplinary approaches might help it to develop in new and interesting ways.

After a century and a quarter of relocations of one kind or another, by 2014 the majority of CoCA staff occupied the former Dominion Museum building on the Wellington campus of Massey University. Built in 1936, this neoclassical building housed the national museum and art gallery until 1996. In 2001, Massey University College of Creative Arts relocated parts of its School of Design into the building, after a refit of the interior. Then, in commemoration of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) centenary of World War I in 2015, part of that building was acquired by the Ministry of Culture and Heritage in order to install a new exhibition titled 'the Great War Exhibition'. To accommodate this in time for the centenary celebrations, a rapid relocation of all CoCA staff offices was necessary. There was only a six month opportunity to plan, design and build alternative accommodation.

Work on the design of Te Whare Pūkākā started August 2014 by Athfield Architects with participatory design led by Nick Kapica. Instead of simply relocating the staff, this was seen as an opportunity to rethink the way CoCA staff worked together. Prior to this, they had been dispersed across six separate locations across the campus, with obvious communication and collaboration difficulties. Due to the tight time frame a rapid agile design process was required to not only deliver the design and construction on time and within budget, but also address this culture shift. It was necessary to understand existing practices and behaviours and also introduce new work environments that had the potential to transform work habits and culture. We see Te Whare Pūkākā as a way of testing and prototyping methods of social interaction and productively in an academic workspace.

## **The Process**

The College of Creative Arts' strategic areas of focus —Creativity, Virtuosity, Understanding, Autonomy, Connectedness— were the

foundations for the project. Regular workshops with key users added specific project aspirations for the space. A series of keywords emerged that guided the development of the planning, the design and the inhabitation: Inviting; Social; Redefining; Transparent; Adaptability; Identity; Sharing; Disruption; Courageous. With the speed in which things had to develop, these simple words were essential to the realisation of all the project's significant aspirations.

Sustainability and wellness within the workplace were topics that staff were interested in exploring through the development of a new workspace. While there was evidence of strong communities within College of Creative Arts, typically defined by the school or subject area that staff were employed within, the lack of genuine community within College of Creative Arts was identified as a problem.

Early in the design stage College of Creative Arts and Athfield's staff visited several examples of activity based workspaces. These were of varying size, quality and character. While they all had positive and negative aspects they clearly displayed that the space design would be central to the ability for staff to connect with each other across disciplines, schools and working styles.

Due to the tight timeframe, the college had to move out of the existing offices prior to the new space being completed. This provided an opportunity to prototype ways of working in a collaborative environment. Because it was the semester break, it was possible to utilise a flexible teaching studio to explore activity-based working in a large open space. Desk configuration, centralised resource provision, furniture types (from 'office' to 'lounge'), shared social kitchen, a range of meeting spaces, shared storage, and community building were all investigated. The multiple moves also provided a mechanism to consider the materials that individuals surrounded themselves with and examine their degree of importance. Further, by experiencing and working in a student environment, staff gained a degree of empathy with their students that they had not necessarily experienced before.

In approaching the design of the new staffspace the two models of office space that were currently used—cellular offices and small open plan—were investigated. While there were several perceived advantages from a user's viewpoint for both of these models there were a large number of things the various workplaces were not achieving, such as a lack of transparency, understanding and connectedness.

A solution to the workplace design was sought in the Activity Based Workplace model best described by Philip Ross (2010)

'Activity Based Working is an approach to work that does not require a traditional office, but a 'hybrid environment' that provides a place for people with shared amenities and spaces. Activity Based

Workplace space will be used on a need basis, acting as a home for a population, providing resources and specialised facilities, as and when they are demanded. The buildings that are provided will be thin – housing less complex infrastructure that, in turn, requires less cooling and power, and so creates not just a sustainable future but a place that is attractive, energised and connected – the social networked office.’

Through observation and conversation it was identified that only 10% of the 180 College of Creative Arts staff actually require a desk all day and every day — it was clear there was potential to reconsider how the 1400 m<sup>2</sup> of cellular offices could be rethought, not only improving the environmental footprint but potentially addressing some of the weaknesses identified with the existing structures. It was however very important to capture and maintain the positive attributes such as: privacy, security, storage and accessibility to items required to complete the users’ tasks, figure 2.

Although Activity Based Workplace embraces aspects of hotdesking it is not to be confused with pure hot-desking. In considering how to build community the Activity Based Workplace model enables spaces to be established for specific needs, the more users require a certain function that larger or more of that facility can be established. The 10 percent of staff that uses a desk all day everyday need to feel comfortable safe and secure, they will probably want to return to the same space each day as the files and tools they require will be located nearby, we began to describe these users as Fixed. The remaining 90 percent of staff are very project based, moving from place to place and some only occasionally in the workplace, they can find an available space appropriate to the needs of the day. They have the opportunity to locate themselves near a group of Fixed users that they may need to work with to complete certain tasks, we began to call them Nomads.

Both Fixed users and Nomads have storage requirements. Two main types of storage exist within the space: shared and personal. All personal secure storage utilises equally sized lockers located in the same area, this acknowledges that all users have an equal requirement for personal storage. Differences in the tasks users need to complete within the workplace mean that there is a need for a range of shared storage. There is shared storage for items such as stationery and equipment that all staff will require and have access to, there is also storage for books, files and papers that all staff may require access to. There is storage for certain documents that need to be secure within the workplace and only certain users will have access to. By locating the correct furniture near the appropriate Fixed users a minimum amount of storage is required within the space.

As there are multiple users, regular cleaning of deskspace and keyboards minimises the spread of bacteria within the workplace. By clearing the majority of the table surface each day cleaning staff are able to work quickly and effectively, improving effectivity and minimising costs. By not having

individual waste bins we are able to increase staff movement and interaction while reducing cleaning costs, central waste collection ensures the separation of landfill, recycling and organic waste.

### **The Human Dimension**

With the change to a more shared space a lot of the ‘norms’ of how a workspace functions and the roles of staff are challenged. This brings to the fore the need for a more hands-on approach to establishing and supporting the community that occupies this place. Staff, visitors, students and anyone who uses Te Whare Pūkākā need guidance about how to get the most from the space(s) rather than struggle with working it out for themselves (to varying degrees) and potentially deciding it's too hard and as a consequence giving up. Ongoing hands-on management is required to ensure the transition to Activity Based Working takes place and the increased use of shared facilities functions to its full potential. The architecture can provide the structure within which the changed workspace can fit but as everyone is different and people come and go there is the need to actively manage and fine tune the space. This extends to the Forge and the provision of cooking facilities, good coffee and cafe seating. A good cafe works when you don't realise how good the staff are or that they are even there. A bad Shared living scene comes about when everyone shies away from dealing with the collective responsibility of the dishes. To help facilitate staff within Te Whare Pūkākā a community manager was selected to oversee the changes and help co-create a new community of working.

While many staff have embraced the opportunity to work within Te Whare Pūkākā there are still staff—that have had the choice—that have not actually tried the space. Moving forward the project aims to understand what requirements these staff have and the type of environments required to engage them productively. It is interesting to observe how certain ‘essentials’ such as curtains on the enclosed spaces or the need for a totally enclosed space for privacy have had little use. Staff have suggested removing the curtains and the Soft Box is more often used and a wellness/relaxation space than a room for very private conversations.

### **The Activity Zones**

The following sections outline the different activity zones in Te Whare Pūkākā. Within the budget and time available priorities were established as to which activity zones would be established. The project is evolving, spaces can change and more space can be added according to future requirements and available budgets.

Many of the activity zones identified in the *Catalogue of Spatial Devices that Structure Contemporary Office Space* by Architect James Sanders (2014) are provided within Te Whare Pūkākā, with some are planned in the future (phone booth and High-back chair) or are already accessible close by (editing suite and theatre).

## **Forge**

The Forge is the space that welcomes you upon entering and is the social centre of Te Whare Pūkākā. It takes its name from both the metaphor that relationships are forged over food and drink and the physical presence of the large extract hood which was reused from site. The key elements of the Forge are the exaggerated kitchen island, the Kia Ora joinery and the cafe furniture. While not directly covered by Sanders list of spatial devices of contemporary office space, the Forge includes high-top cafe tables and communal table. The main focus of the Forge is the large kitchen island, located at the main entrance, you walk into the kitchen, the center of social activity.

The large kitchen island is a physical expression of the desire to bring people together, for them to share food, drink, conversation and ideas. The investment in this element aims to entice staff away from their desk, where the positive social and health benefits of shared time and experiences can be flourish. The kitchen is, like any good home, the place to feel a sense of belonging and ownership.

The Kia Ora space clearly signals the main entry and deters the regular use of the side entries. It provides an unambiguous position where both regulars and visitors can be welcomed and the community manager can have an overview of the comings and goings to facilitate connecting people, addressing enquiries and dealing with issues quickly. The Kia Ora joinery mediates between the entry and the kitchen but allows new-comers to be quickly hosted, put at ease and offered a drink.

The shared table and stand up tables support the kitchen island and allow for the overlap of eating, meeting, or individual working with a coffee side by side with others. The provision of good quality cafe space and amenities offers an alternative to feeling the need to leave campus for your daily rituals or the regular break from your work. The forge is a space of social working, moments of; problem-solving, question asking and answering. Aswell as a space of gathering around the kitchen bench and coffee machine.

## **Scrum**

Off the Forge and in direct view of the exterior and people entering and leaving Te Whare Pūkākā is the Scrum. It takes its name from the agile software development method of Scrum developed by Jeff Sutherland (2014) — ‘organizational knowledge creation, [...] especially good at bringing about innovation continuously, incrementally and spirally’ (Takeuchi and Nonaka, 1986). The space is simply furnished with large whiteboards, and stools. It can morph into a project space, extension of the Forge for eating and drinking, or exhibition as and when needed. Its openness is emphasised by the large roof lights and floor to ceiling window on the south facade. It aims to change the way meetings take place, rather

than long, seated motionless experiences the Scrum provides an environment for fast and active exchanges that occur often allowing project development to advance in small steps. The Scrum appropriately faces the Long Box which is the most traditional meeting space within Te Whare Pūkākā.

### **Flux**

Beyond the Forge is the Flux space which has the least amount of permanent furniture or services. Lounge Grouping (Sanders 2014) and flip top desks can be easily rearranged depending on the activity requirements or removed to provide a large open space for functions, exhibition, presentations or casual social space. The Flux space allows for a relaxed 'living-room' like area for small group short formal and informal conversations.

### **Enclosed Spaces**

There are three enclosed space types. The smallest is the Soft Box which has more discreet access, no windows and relaxed furniture. Here more sensitive and private conversations can take place. The medium enclosed spaces are populated with casual furniture (Flower Box); stand up meeting leaner and stools (Stand Box); and more orthodox seated meeting table and chairs and video conference capabilities (Long Box). These are deliberately very open with a mix of glass and solid walls to allow sightlines through the rooms to connect the Forge and Desk spaces beyond. The Long Box can accommodate the most people and includes curtains to allow, when needed, a level of visual privacy to match the acoustic privacy.

### **Fixed & Flexi Desk Space**

The activity most provided for is sitting and standing work at a computer. Six large shared desks provide clear desk top space for up to 76 people. Long double sided work desks finished with solid black linoleum providing a soft to the touch work and drawing surface and allow people to work together. The adjacent stand up tables can accommodate 16 users, they have been made from doors salvaged from the space and provide a tangible connection to the studio work of students over the years and nice use of some beautiful native timber solid core doors. stand up tables for a further 8 users are located within the rest of the space.

### **Sanctuary**

The desire for a space that provided refuge from the open areas dovetailed with the need to retain most of the existing structural load bearing walls and resulted in the the Sanctuary. Large soft curtains are to be installed across the two openings to complete the sense of visual and acoustic separation. Individual work desks with lamps, dark colours and obscured views help reinforce the quiet, individual and inward nature of the space where staff can expect to work in silence and their desire for isolation is respected. The Sanctuary is the place for individual focused work, that of writing and

reading. Bookshelves are provided for staff to share their personal libraries, the Sanctuary promotes a different type of sharing, not of working together, rather that of shared knowledge.

### **Shed**

At the west end of Te Whare Pūkākā is the Shed where messy noisy work can take place, visually removed from the main desk areas, with easy access to storage and the exterior. Sewing, cutting, painting and making can take place and if needed the large glass doors can be closed to further isolate this activity from desk based work. The workspace further inside from the Shed will be desk based activity at day one but can fluctuate to be more like the Shed itself if/when that need arises in the future. While not covered by Sanders (2014) catalogue, a making space is critical for Art and Design research staff to actively explore physical making at part of their work.

### **Project Space**

Space for project based work is provided along one side of the large area of work desks. Here the back of the lockers are lined with magnetic whiteboards and the lighting differentiates the area from the adjacent desks. Being tucked away it can more easily be left in a state of 'work in progress' for the period of the project. The Project Spaces are usable for 1 month and 1 week each, this helps maintain change and prevents any part of the environment becoming cluttered, static and unusable.

### **Toilets**

While these might be regarded as basic utility, in Te Whare Pūkākā they are intentionally unisex and colourful. As such they provide more facilities for all than a normal male/female split would do and take a step away from the institutional and office norms of toilet design.

In future developments it is planned to include changing rooms and showers to encourage staff to workout before, during and after work, these were outside the budget and space limitations. It is acknowledged the importance of allow staff to remain physically active.

### **Conclusion**

While Te Whare Pūkākā is not finished, it has started to transform the culture of the college. People in different schools and areas are interacting in a positive and productive manner, compared to minimal interaction in previous working spaces. Different activity based working conditions have been provided, from social kitchen (the Forge), shared work desks, individual focused work (the Sanctuary) and a making space (the Shed).

The productivity of staff has also improved due to the immediacy of conversations and social interactions, the need for scheduled meetings has reduced. New informed projects have emerged due to the new social

movements of people within Te Whare Pūkākā. There remain a small number of people who have only partially engaged with Te Whare Pūkākā who are noticeable missing out compared to the staff, some skeptical of the new space at first, who are becoming part of the Te Whare Pūkākā community. The construction of Te Whare Pūkākā was seen as an opportunity to establish a prototype space that enables an ongoing exploration into how faculty, administrative, and clerical staff work. The aspiration is to discover appropriate ways of working that are more inspiring, more collaborative and more efficient for those involved.

## References

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