

# The 'Maori House' at the Canterbury Museum

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In 1873 the *Canterbury Museum* in Christchurch acquired a carved meeting house, Hau-Te-Ananui-o-Tangaroa, from the Ngati Porou chief Henare Potae, of Tokomaru Bay. It had reputedly been intended as Henare Potae's "residence."<sup>1</sup> But materials prepared for it were partially destroyed during the Hau-Hau uprising, and it was not put up.

Its designer, Hone Taahu, and Tamati Ngakaho, another carver from the East Coast, arrived in Christchurch early in 1874 to complete the building and prepare it for erection. It had been expected that this would take between two and three weeks, but the recarving alone of lost or damaged parts took much longer. The work was delayed further while the Provincial Government for some months declined to take any financial responsibility beyond the original purchase and freight costs, while nevertheless allowing a site to be selected for the reconstruction, just to the east of the museum building. There the Maori House was finally completed in December 1874.

Located thus, the Maori House (*fig 1*) was both an exhibit in the museum collection and an extension of the museum fabric. It was both a thing and a space, trophy - or curiosity - and cabinet. It was "a valuable and most interesting ethnological study;"<sup>2</sup> and it was, suggested Julius von Haast, director of the museum, "a considerable addition to the accommodation of the museum for holding ethnological collections."<sup>3</sup> Because it was considered in its new setting to be *property* (space or thing, it had cost hundreds of pounds,<sup>4</sup>) the architectural nature of the Maori House necessarily changed. James Stack, who helped mediate between Haast and the Ngati Porou carvers, wrote

*The first departure from the original intention, was caused by the unexpected costliness of the materials. It was thought inadvisable to risk the speedy destruction of the carved timbers, which had already cost £290, by allowing them to be set up in the grounds after the Maori fashion, accordingly, a concrete foundation was laid for them. This alteration in the structure, necessitated the erection of a frame-work, by European carpenters, to which the Maori work was fastened. And as the building proceeded, other alterations had to be made, which rendered it still more unlike what it was meant to be. Fluted kauri boards were*

*substituted for toe-toe reeds inside, and the outside of the building was covered with corrugated iron, instead of the ordinary covering of raupo and toe-toe, which was of too inflammable a nature to be allowed upon a building placed so close to the museum.<sup>5</sup>*

These changes resulted in a controversy over a loss of authenticity, or - it might be said - *propriety*.

In its status and in its architectural treatment the Maori House was an ambivalent accessory. This ambivalent status can be understood through analysis of descriptions of the house as a relic of an art "which must soon pass away,"<sup>6</sup> and through contemporaneous accounts of the design of the *Canterbury Museum* and the layout of its exhibits as planned and as realised.

The *Canterbury Museum* was opened in 1870, but proposals for it date back to the 1850s. The story that is usually told of architecture in New Zealand during the period of European settlement in the middle of the nineteenth century is that it was made of simple robust forms, devised to meet immediate need. This story is often accompanied by a lament over the subsequent loss of this direct, honest quality. The single theoretical influence that is sometimes allowed in early colonial architecture is that of A. W. N. Pugin, seen for instance in the work of Frederick Thatcher, the architect of the Selwyn churches. So much is this so that occasionally Thatcher's *magnum opus*, *St Paul's Cathedral* in Wellington, has been purported to be the work of Pugin himself.<sup>7</sup> Pugin is allowed, perhaps, because his doctrine of picturesque utility is not so far from the creeds of the (modernist) historians who have identified his influence here.

The architect of the museum, Benjamin Woolfield Mountfort, is another architect whose work has been aligned with Puginian ideals. He has paid for this identity with theory by having the structural failure of his first major building, *Holy Trinity Church* in Lyttelton,<sup>8</sup> always counted against him. Although the statement of principles that he produced, with his partner Isaac Luck in 1857 to defend their professional reputation as they tried to win the commission for *Government House* in Auckland, is offered in the form that Pugin had used - a series of

contrasts of ancient and modern principles - much of the content is Ruskinian:

*architecture ... proposes to go to nature for lessons if not for models. Accordingly, we see in Nature's buildings, the mountains and hills; not regularity of outline but diversity; buttresses, walls and turrets as unlike each other as possible, yet producing a graduation of effect not to be approached by any work, moulded to regularity of outline. The simple study of an oak or an elm tree would suffice to confute the regularity theory.*<sup>9</sup>

Certainly by the time that he produced his first designs for the *Canterbury Museum* in 1865, Ruskin's views were ascendent. This first design was devised in response to the architectural competition set up by the Canterbury Provincial Government late in 1864. Robert Speechly, another architect who entered the competition, defended his proposal by citing Ruskin when *The Press* criticised it for having "an air more suggestive of gloomy piles on the dank dark canal streets of an old Flemish town, than such as we would wish to see under our bright skies." Speechly responded that the apparent gloominess was merely a misapprehension arising from his technique of etching his drawings, and that "many ancient buildings of the type I followed, and which are so frequently resorted to by our first architects for study, and so highly praised by our great art critic - Mr Ruskin, are to be found in Venice, where surely the bright sky and the scenery will favorably vie with that in New Zealand."<sup>10</sup>

The 'committee of taste' that adjudicated this 1864/65 competition split the prize between Speechly and Mountfort,<sup>11</sup> and building was put off.

I do not know if Mountfort read Ruskin, but there are intimations of Ruskin's influence in Mountfort's designs for the museum when at last it proceeded, piecemeal, between 1870 and 1882. There are indications of influence also in the important design he made for the *Canterbury Provincial Council Chamber*. This building was completed in 1865. The *Council Chamber* is an elaborately decorated High Victorian gothic space. It features stonework carving of plant and animal forms by the mason William Brassington. This carving was said by *The Press* to have a life-like quality because "here the fancy of the artist is allowed free range."<sup>12</sup> The emphases on natural forms as a source of ornament, and on the active role of the mason in its design recall on the one hand Ruskin's "Lamp of beauty," and on the other his "Lamp of life." It was these lamps, and perhaps more likely Mountfort's *Council Chamber*, that *The*

*Press* had in mind when it stated in its review of the museum design competition:

*Of all our public buildings a Museum most demands the stamp of excellence and completeness. Beyond being commodious for the reception and display of its contents, the building itself ought to be as good a specimen as may be possible of the architecture of our day ... Such sculpture as capitals, corbels, and the like, might be allotted to picked workmen; and while conventional details should be executed with scrupulous exactitude, in a few instances we would have them copy to the best of their ability real foliage and plants.*<sup>13</sup>

This article goes on to suggest of the museum building that "Every variety of granite building stone, slate, and marble to be found in Canterbury would naturally find a place in the fabric, either in its exterior or interior, as may be expedient; and we can imagine even the crystals from our mountain ranges introduced with the best effect among the details of an edifice which might fairly be called the Cathedral of our Art." This strategy of gathering together building stones and minerals to act as a sort of synecdoche for the territory from which they came was employed by Mountfort in the *Provincial Council Chamber*. He had also proposed the use of a representative collection of building stones in his unsuccessful design for *Government House* in Auckland in 1857.<sup>14</sup> This strategy had a precedent in the design of a building with which Ruskin was closely associated, the *Oxford Museum* of 1855-60 by Deane and Woodward. A notable feature of the Oxford building is the use of a large number of different British stones in the column shafts of its court: a reflection of Ruskin's interest in geology, and of his conflation of science and aesthetics. Garnham writes of the *Oxford Museum* that it reflects the common view of Ruskin and its founding director, Henry Acland, that the world is "a living whole in which we are immersed and from which we draw meaning as well as minerals."

The gathering of mineral specimens did not, in the event, become part of the *Canterbury Museum's* architectural strategy.<sup>15</sup> But geology and palaeontology were key elements in its collections, and in their growth. These collections were initiated in 1861 by Julius von Haast, the first director of the museum, when travelling in New Zealand with the Austrian geologist Dr Ferdinand Hochstetter. That same year Haast was made the Provincial Geologist, a position which had important economic significance to the colonial enterprise of the Canterbury settlement. The collections put together by Haast

were temporarily placed in rooms in the *Provincial Government Buildings*, where they were opened to public inspection in December 1867. In 1866 a very large number of moa bones were found in a swamp at Glenmark, and presented to Haast's museum. Haast was widely vilified for failing to find gold within Canterbury's boundaries,<sup>16</sup> but the bones turned out to be just as profitable, at least for Haast's purpose, in building up the museum's collection and prestige. These moa bones were exported all over the world in exchange for artifacts and natural history specimens. The *Oxford Museum* was a major partner in this trade, and indeed it came to have an important connection with the province. William Rolleston, the Superintendent of Canterbury from 1868 to 1876, was the brother of George Rolleston, Professor of Anatomy and Physiology at Oxford, Henry Acland's colleague, and his successor as director of the museum.

As Superintendent, William Rolleston officially opened the temporary exhibition staged to mark the completion of the new *Canterbury Museum* building in 1870. He gave a "thoughtful speech," in which he "took Ruskin's view of Art as the servant and interpreter of Nature."<sup>17</sup> More interesting than this was the inclusion among a few photographs in the architecture and archaeology section of some "from the Museum, Oxford" and one described as "photograph - museum - Oxford." They were exhibited by Mountfort.<sup>18</sup> Haast was sent more photographs of the *Oxford Museum* (of its interior) by George Rolleston the following year, 1871.<sup>19</sup>

There is a striking likeness between photographs of the *Oxford Museum* and ones of the *Canterbury Museum* as it was after 1882, when it was in its 'complete' state (figs 2, 3). This state, however, was the outcome of erratic development that reflected the political and economic fortunes of the Canterbury province during those years and the influence that Julius von Haast was able to wield with successive Provincial Governments. It simply was not as much as he would have liked. This shaped the building rather more than did any consistently followed line of development. Nevertheless, the look of the *Oxford Museum* was known in Christchurch, and in particular to Mountfort, throughout the period of the *Canterbury Museum's* early development.

From the beginning Haast and Mountfort had intended a large (and fundamentally symmetrical) complex;<sup>20</sup> and in 1874 Haast had proposed to the Government that considerable additions be made in two stages to those parts of the museum that had

been put up in 1870 and 1872. He stated in the memorandum he submitted to the Superintendent of the province "this is the main point I wish especially to draw to your attention, if not a proper plan be now worked out and the money set aside, the Building will become simply a congeries of rooms without purpose and design." (This is an apt description for what did happen and for the plan of the building in its 1882 condition.) Accompanying Haast's appeal were drawings - in Mountfort's hand - that showed extensions to the west of the existing buildings, extensions that would have defined the sides of two courtyards that would then be covered over with iron and glass roofs.<sup>21</sup> These, too, echoed Oxford: Deane and Woodward's building had a glazed iron roof over its courtyard, a structure with which there had been notorious problems. F. A. Skidmore, the iron master who supplied the iron work at Oxford, was known to Mountfort who had commissioned his firm to fabricate an iron clock tower for the *Canterbury Provincial Government Buildings*. It was not used for that purpose; Mountfort included it in his design for the 1865 museum competition.<sup>22</sup>

The *Oxford Museum* was a key building in several respects: in its use of iron, of course, but more important than this it symbolised the role of the natural sciences in the university and - bound up with this - its architects tried overtly to implement the case put by Ruskin in *The Stones of Venice*, and alluded to also in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, that the worker should be "allowed to translate nature into ornament after his own design"<sup>23</sup> (fig 4). It may be difficult for us to understand how the gothic forms and decor of the *Oxford Museum* could have been appropriate to science and laboratory research, but at the middle of the nineteenth century it seems a connection was apparent. The gothic revivalist architect G. E. Street said "Surely where nature is to be enshrined, there especially ought every carved stone and every ornamental device to bear her marks and to set forth her loveliness."<sup>24</sup> And this could only be done where the workers were not bound to designs determined by someone else, but could follow their own interpretations of nature. William Brassington was again allowed the 'free range' that *The Press* had seen in his work at the *Provincial Council Chamber* when he carved the window decorations of the 1876 wing of the *Canterbury Museum*. Another mason, Mr J. Smith, carved the capitals of the Museum's 1878 portico as "an artistic mingling of foliage and animals' heads carried out in the Gothic style, the general effect being emblematical of the Museum ... Mr Smith does his work unaided by any

pictorial design, and undoubtedly exhibits high artistic culture”<sup>25</sup> (fig 5).

How was Mr Smith’s carving “emblematical” of the Museum? It was an emblem of the mid century connection of theology and science, wonder at creation and a desire to know about it. The architect John Hendry, who designed the last major extension to the *Canterbury Museum*, of 1977, has noted in connection to this conflation of faith and science that the *Canterbury Museum* is sited at one end of a street (now Worcester Boulevard) such that it faces the *Cathedral of Christchurch* at the other.<sup>26</sup> They share a common architectural language and their makers shared a common view of the world. Ruskin himself had said:

*How strange it seems that physical science should ever have been thought adverse to religion! The pride of physical science is, indeed, adverse, like every other pride, both to religion and truth; but sincerity of science, so far from being hostile, is the path-maker among the mountains for those who publish peace.*<sup>27</sup>

He had the expectation that science would enlighten the world and free it of pestilence and starvation.

The most important scientific treatise of the middle years of the nineteenth century was Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, published in 1859. The controversies over this book destroyed the prospect of a unity of science and theology. Darwin’s theories were reported in some detail in the Christchurch newspapers and were apparently widely discussed locally. Samuel Butler, resident in Canterbury from 1859 to 1864, amused himself during 1862 and 1863 writing articles for *The Press* and letters to its editor under various pseudonyms contrarily attacking *On the Origin of Species* and defending it. In a letter to *The Press* of June 13 1861, titled “Darwin among the Machines,” Butler - writing under the pen name Cellarius - rehearsed thoughts that he would later pursue in *Erewhon* (1872): “day by day the machines are gaining on us ... it is our opinion that war to the death should be instantly proclaimed on them.”<sup>28</sup> The evolutionary paradigm had been quickly carried over from natural history into the realm of material culture.

Haast was strongly influenced by Darwin. He had none of Butler’s doubts. He described *On the Origin of Species* as “the great work of the age,” of particular importance to those with an interest in New Zealand natural history faced, as they were, with the unexplained extinction of moas and other defunct

bird species (fig 6).<sup>29</sup> There was some correspondence between Haast and Darwin during the 1860s and Haast arranged for James Stack, who was to have a close connection to the Maori House and its carvers, to contribute observations on Maori for Darwin’s *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* of 1873.<sup>30</sup>

The categorizations of nineteenth century natural history were an abstract spatialization of evolutionary time. In the arrangement of the museum, this abstract space was physically realised: the temporal schema of natural history was given spatial extension, made directly available for experience. Haast reports in 1875 that:

*the addition of further space ... has afforded me the opportunity to arrange the collections more systematically than they have hitherto been. The mammals have been placed together as near as possible to their natural classification. The birds, with the exception of the extensive NZ species have been arranged systematically, according to Gray’s list of birds.*<sup>31</sup>

Ethnology and art collections were also shown in the *Canterbury Museum*, accessories to what was basically an assemblage and display of geology and natural history specimens.

The *Canterbury Museum* was founded not only on the idea of revealing the gradual improvement - as it was conceived - in life forms and human material conditions in the past; as an extension of this it was also committed to improvement in the future. It was committed to education. This is clear in the museum’s role in the foundation of Canterbury University College in 1870; Haast was Professor of Geology there while continuing his duties as director of the museum. The commitment to education was in turn linked to the ideas of material progress that drove the colonial enterprise, as is outlined in Haast’s 1862 address to the Canterbury Philosophical Institute:

*The erection of a museum of economic geology and of natural history generally, will also be of the highest importance; not only on account of those who are desirous of instruction, as a mere matter of intellectual enjoyment, but also of those who already understand the great value of well arranged collections, as aids to the development of the resources of the Province. How often have I been struck with the eager zeal, with the desire for knowledge, displayed by all classes of settlers who have come to inspect the collections made during our geological survey.*<sup>32</sup>

There were likenesses in the architectural strategies of the *Oxford* and *Canterbury Museums*; their institutional agendas were also alike. Ruskin's expectations for the *Oxford Museum* and the knowledge it would produce were directly connected to English colonial undertakings and ambitions:

*For much as I reverence physical science as a means of mental education ... I reverence it more at this moment, more as the source of utmost human practical power, and the means by which the far-distant races of the world, who now sit in darkness and the shadow of death, are to be reached and regenerated. At home or far away - the call is equally instant - here, for want of more extended physical science, there is plague in our streets, famine in our fields ... All this is terrible; but it is more terrible yet that dim, phosphorescent, frightful superstitions still hold their own over two-thirds of the inhabited globe.*<sup>33</sup>

Twelve years later, giving his first lecture as the Oxford University Slade Professor of Fine Arts, Ruskin emphasises England's destiny as *the* colonial power, and links this explicitly with the making of art and of science. "The art of any country *is the exponent of its social and political virtues.*"<sup>34</sup> He suggested that England should delegate unpleasant economic activities to "less fortunate and more covetous races."<sup>35</sup> English "simplicity and good humour," "love of the grotesque" and "love of adventure," as well as the country's developing knowledge of physiognomy would "enable us to give to the future inhabitants of the globe an almost perfect record of the present forms of animal life upon it, of which many are on the point of being extinguished."<sup>36</sup> The arrogance of these statements fades, however, in comparison to the virulent comments with which Ruskin ended his inaugural. English destiny is to govern the world:

*Within the last few years we have had the laws of natural science opened to us with a rapidity which has been blinding by its brightness; and means of transit and communication given to us, which have made but one kingdom of the habitable globe. One kingdom; - but who is to be king?*<sup>37</sup>

England must found colonies wherever she can, teaching her colonists that "though they live on a distant plot of ground, they are no more to consider themselves therefore disenfranchised from their native land, than the sailors of her fleets do, because they float on distant waves."<sup>38</sup> Ruskin described England's colonies as parts of its "fastened fleet."<sup>39</sup>

Evolutionary arguments and colonialism are clearly brought together in nineteenth century anthropology, with the museum, during that time, its principal disciplinary site. Johannes Fabian has outlined how anthropology has made its object of study, the *other*, by locating it in a time other than that of the anthropologist. For mid-nineteenth century anthropology, the time in which the *other* was located was the natural time of evolution. Anthropology was made practically possible through colonialism, but the links between them were more fundamental than this. They were epistemological: anthropological knowledge might have been facilitated through European expansion, but an anthropology which took evolution as its paradigm in turn gave colonialism a philosophical basis. "It promoted a scheme in terms of which not only past cultures, but all living societies were irrevocably placed on a slope, a stream of Time - some upstream, others downstream."<sup>40</sup> Upstream and downstream in Haast's museum would ideally have become downstairs and upstairs. In his 1874 proposal for expanding the museum (*fig 7*), Haast describes how the museum collection would be disposed between the various floors and wings. The ethnological specimens and art works would be arranged in their own wing "beginning in the lower part with pre-historical remains, antiquities and Ethnological collections and advancing gradually to the Gallery upstairs built for the purpose with lights from the top to contain works of Art, showing the gradual advancement of the human race from the manufacture of rude flint implements to the highest productions of great Artists."<sup>41</sup> European art is the peak of human evolution, and by implication of natural evolution too.

The Maori House was necessary to the *Canterbury Museum* in its role in producing an *other*, the Maori. This Maori was a coherent and singular *other* - signified in the building's designation as 'the Maori House,' and not - for example - 'the Ngati Porou house.'<sup>42</sup> Thus, the *Canterbury Museum* employed Hau-Te-Ananui-o-Tangaroa in the disciplinary discourses of ethnology in a way that European and American museums employed other artifacts from New Zealand and elsewhere at the same time. And in some sense (but only some) it was as foreign to Christchurch as it would have been to Europe or America. The Dunedin periodical *The Illustrated New Zealand Herald* wrote:

*It may seem strange to residents of New Zealand that a Maori building should possess any novelty, but the explanation is not far to seek. The 40,000 Maoris who*

still inhabit New Zealand are confined to the North Island. A mere handful, numbering only a few hundreds, are scattered over the South Island; and to a Southern Colonist a Maori is quite a novelty, and such a thing as a 'runanga-house' is almost unknown.<sup>43</sup>

What was this *other* like? How was it exemplified in this building? (Ruskin had said the art of a country is an exponent for its virtues.) What was this *other's* future in the evolutionary scheme of things? *The Illustrated New Zealand Herald*:

*On entering the building ... visitors find themselves within the walls of a genuine Maori whare, carved, painted, and embellished in the highest style of ancient Maori art. Many of the carvings are of course very grotesque - haliotis-eyed monsters in every variety of attitude, with tongues protruded, and their faces rendered more hideous by the elaborate 'tattoo' markings ... The building is substantially erected, on solid foundations, and may probably last long after the Maori race has become extinct.*

This is of course popular journalism, but it is not far removed from the aesthetic and ethnological discourses proper to the museum. Ruskin, for example, wrote in *The Stones of Venice* of "the barbarous grotesque of mere savageness, as seen in the work of the Hindoo and other Indian nations; or, more grossly still, in that of the complete savage of the Pacific islands;" and the German anthropologist Adolf Bastian, writing in 1881, said:

*For us, primitive societies are ephemeral ... At the very instance they become known to us they are doomed.*<sup>44</sup>

Canterbury was, of course, in competition with other museums in its acquisition and display of objects. Haast was first informed of the availability of Hau-Te-Ananui-o-Tangaroa in a telegram from Samuel Locke, Native Commissioner in Napier, in January 1873:

*I have just heard of a Maori house as good as Wellington's one but it would cost full £200. There appears to be great difficulty in getting Poverty Bay house & it is not a first class one.*<sup>45</sup>

How were such values - £200, 'first class' - determined? Presumably in a marketplace where the buyers were museums, tourists, and other collectors, the suppliers were entrepreneurs such as Henare Potae and Samuel Locke, and objects became property.

Property entails propriety. Stack's description of the Maori House makes it clear, however, that its reconstruction involved various compromises: the timbers were not set directly on the ground; the carvings were attached to a framework; fluted kauri boards were used on the interior instead of toe-toe; the exterior was covered with corrugated iron. These changes and others became the subject of a local controversy over an imputed loss of authenticity. (In the marketplace, authenticity becomes a pressing issue.) The work of the Ngati Porou carvers was closely scrutinised. Thomas Potts, member of the Provincial Council (and the builder of Ohinetahi, now the home of Sir Miles Warren) wrote to the Superintendent in June 1874 setting out his concerns about work that was being done on the building:

*It may be thought somewhat persistent to trouble your Honour, but I feel strongly that if any alteration takes place in the erection of the Maori House other than what is simply restoration, such a departure from the original building will only be accomplished at the costly price of losing a valuable and most interesting ethnological study, illustrating the old habits, manners and customs of so many of our fellow subjects.*<sup>46</sup>

Why, he asked, had the carved slabs been cut? Were the timbers being used of the same kind and quality as those in the "original building?" What authority was there for the use of "patent paints" by the "native artificers?"

Haast responded that "as it was impossible for me to procure for them shark oil or any other nasty compound used by them I was obliged to allow them a substitute, taking care that the shades of colour were as near as possible to those they obtain in the Northern Island."<sup>47</sup> The carved slabs had been cut to allow the painted rafters to be fitted to them "according to the original design." Haast finished by saying "I trust that no meddlesome interference of persons who know nothing about it will be allowed," and appended to his statement another, from James Buller "whose knowledge of the native race ought to give to his opinion a far greater value than of any other person in Canterbury" (including, presumably, those Maori who lived locally at Kaiapoi and on Banks Peninsula).<sup>48</sup> Buller's letter backs up Haast's. The colours being used - red, white, green, blue - were the closest possible to those used in the North Island; the natives rejected all foreign timber; cutting into the carvings was explained by the carvers as simply a matter of course. Buller expresses his fullest confidence in the

two Maori workers, their skill and trustworthiness. They “expect to have all ready in about 2 weeks time.”<sup>49</sup>

Four months later, however, the work was still not complete. In Haast’s absence from Christchurch it was apparently felt necessary for Buller to superintend the final stages of Hone Taahu and Tamati Ngakaho’s work. His trust in them had seemingly waned. He wrote:

*The carvings in front have a very imposing appearance. I mean those covering the mouldings to the doors and windows. I suggested painting out the silly fancy work on the outside post and giving it a coat of red ... The only defence the Maori artist could offer was that this illustrated the ‘moku’ or ‘tatu’ markings on a woman’s breast and arms. I told him we wanted a house and not a woman. He grinned and said he would paint it out. We must be careful to have nothing introduced that we cannot defend.*<sup>50</sup>

Apparently, though, not all the “fancy work” was painted out. In his description of the completed house, read to the Philosophical Institute of Canterbury in August 1875, James Stack wrote: “The artist unfortunately did not confine himself to ancient patterns, but introduced various novelties of his own designing, consisting for the most part of representations of the leaves of different plants and shrubs.” Could paintings such as these have been so far, say, from Ruskin’s own, or from Mr Smith’s carvings on the portico of the museum (*fig 8*)? The responsibility and inventiveness argued for the worker by Ruskin in *The Stones of Venice* and in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and argued by *The Press* for the masons at the *Canterbury Museum*, was denied to the colonised subject.

Charles Darwin included information about Maori that he had received from James Stack in three sections of his book, *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*. They were the sections on sulkiness, anger, and blushing. The point of Darwin’s book was to establish that all humanity shared certain traits which were not culturally specific, but had a basis in common physiology. Paul Carter has criticised Darwin for decontextualising the information that he used, and for failing to account for the complexities of communication between individuals from different cultures.<sup>51</sup> What could the grin of a Ngati Porou carver told to erase the moko from a meeting house mean? How could it be read? What did the carvers think of Christchurch and the situation in which they found themselves? We know

they were disenchanted with the wrangles between the Provincial Government, Haast, and the Board of Governors of Canterbury College (which at this time controlled the museum) over money and responsibility. In May 1874, Haast wrote to the Provincial Secretary for Public Works that the carvers “were very dissatisfied” (apparently at the prospect of being sent home before work was complete); in June they threatened to go home of their own volition.<sup>52</sup> And what was at stake for them in the introduction of elements and techniques which were “novelties” (according to the European arbiters of Maori culture), and in the representation of leaves of different plants and shrubs? I do not know. Roger Neich’s recent book *Painted Histories* has started to investigate questions such as these in the wider context of around 100 meeting houses built between 1860 and 1920 many of which feature unconventional paintings (see note 1).

Adverse reaction in Christchurch to novel aspects of the Maori House’s paintings was perhaps based on the necessity of maintaining difference. Differences in culture - for which evidence was found in objects such as the Maori House - were reinscribed by nineteenth century ethnology as differences in value. But the Maori House was not just an object; it was also a space. It was an extension of the museum, tenuous to be sure, but an extension nevertheless. In its status as such the stakes were different. Stack: “The incongruities of style would, doubtless, provoke less remark, if the building were called what it really is, the Maori Court, instead of the Maori House.”<sup>53</sup>

The Maori Court housed a collection of Maori artifacts, which were, therefore, out of sequence with the rest of the ethnological collection. The part of the building to which it was attached, the first part of the museum complex to be built - in 1870 - was, after extensions ceased in 1882, the location of the New Zealand natural history collections, likewise anomalously separated from the rest (*fig 9*). Haast - as we have already seen - attended very carefully to the layout of his institution. The museum not only told a story about evolution, but also one about New Zealand.

Thus, while the Maori House was necessary to the museum’s ethnological role, it was also implicated in what was perhaps a nationalist discourse to which the museum was party. This would of course be a story of unity; not, however, fabricated as was Darwin’s. It was a unity based not on biological similarity, but on the prospect of cultural

assimilation. This nationalist discourse had as its object the determination of the character of something called New Zealand. This was something that did not indefinitely consider itself to be necessarily a part of England's 'fastened fleet.' Mountfort, for instance, allowed in his little tract of 1885, *Other Places*, that though it should be postponed as much as possible, there might come the day when "the exigency of political combinations may require that New Zealand shall not form part of the British Empire."<sup>54</sup> New Zealand was something which, to the minds of nineteenth century Christchurch, might not have seemed as necessary as it does to us; in Dunedin there was discussion, after the abolition of the provincial governments in 1876, of the South Island separating politically from the North.<sup>55</sup>

What might a story of New Zealand say? Robin Craw has shown that in a story told about nature in New Zealand in the nineteenth century (and in recent years too) it was said to be unlike nature elsewhere. And this difference could be used to establish national identity, in the kiwi, for instance, and the fern.<sup>56</sup> What might a story of New Zealand say about the place's culture? The problem was, as Mountfort put it "we [Europeans in New Zealand] cannot boast of a past."<sup>57</sup>

This was not a uniquely colonial condition, however. Following Foucault, Stephen Bann has suggested that the great welling up of European interest in history during the nineteenth century was the result of a sense of loss, of loss of the past: "19th-century man did not simply discover history: he needed to discover history, or, as it were, to remake history on his own terms."<sup>58</sup>

An apparent lack of history was reason enough, thought Mountfort, for New Zealand to remain an extension, an accessory, to Britain. But perhaps some history - some cultural difference - could be made with materials at hand. It may have been necessary to import these from the North Island, to attach to a European framework, accessorizing it, making it unique. In this regard the position of the Maori House at Canterbury could be identified not only with that of ethnological exhibits in western museums (which implicates it in the production of an *other*) but also with new kinds of historical museums and collections that appeared in the nineteenth century, and then with the national architectural exhibits erected at world expositions during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While undoubtedly the foreign architectures shown at the expositions had the role of producing cultural

stereotypes of 'otherness,'<sup>59</sup> exhibitions of local architecture - historic English architecture at English expositions, historic French architecture at French expositions, and so on - had a more ambivalent role. Certainly they established the past as another *other* which progress had left behind. But at the same time they had an affirmative and legitimizing effect of producing national identity, 'not otherness.'<sup>60</sup> In his writing about outdoor building museums and period Americana rooms introduced into American art collections in the early decades of this century, Edward N. Kaufman identifies these two effects: on the one hand the differentiation between the past and the present; and on the other the celebration of national traditions that emphasised the idea of a common American experience. The nineteenth century World Fairs, says Kaufman:

*had, of course, done a great deal to emphasise concepts of nationhood. But American craft collections had to expound not only a uniquely American tradition but one that was quite specifically independent of European values.*<sup>61</sup>

New Zealand, too, was not the same as Europe, and Maori culture could be deployed as evidence of this.

An important aspect of this was the sheer weight of evidence, the filling of space with things evoking a mythic 'Maoriness': cloaks, weapons, tools, ornaments, carvings, clothing, mats. They supplemented the 'Maoriness' of the Maori House. This fullness is a quality identified by Bann in early historical collections such as that of Alexandre du Sommerard (now the *Musée de Cluny*): "Broadly speaking, the strategy of the historically minded pioneer in the 1820s is to delimit an area designated as authentic and to people it with objects which will collectively attest that authenticity"<sup>62</sup> (*fig 10*).

In this alternative reading of the Maori house, as a space rather than a thing (a space full of things), it stood not for a race that would soon be extinct. Rather, it represented another kind of colonial desire, one for assimilation. Potts had described the House as "illustrating the old habits, manners, and customs of so many of our fellow subjects." In his report on the Progress of Canterbury Museum for the eighteen months ending March 31 1875, Haast wrote

*The ethnological objects of New Zealand, both of historic and prehistoric times have been placed in the Maori House and it ought to be our endeavour to make the same as complete as possible, so as to save the records of an interesting people which doubtless in years to come will*

entirely lose their former original customs and habits and assimilate with the European immigrants and their descendants.<sup>63</sup>

By 1906, the Maori House not only contained Maori artifacts, but also what the museum guidebook described as ‘pakeha relics’ (relics of non-Maori New Zealanders), itself an interesting list: a cast of the Korotangi, an object reputed to be from the Maori ancestral home of Hawaiki; remains from a grave, apparently of a European seaman, found at New Brighton in 1854; a copper plate from the Port Levy whalers; a flag taken from Pai Marire warriors in 1867; and another flag, a red ensign, taken by Maori during the land wars (*fig 11*).<sup>64</sup>

There was a certain tension between the role of the Maori House as a thing, and the Maori House as a space; between a discourse of separation and death, and a discourse of integration and dispossession. This ambivalence was never resolved at the *Canterbury Museum*. The house was moved at least twice as the museum grew and rearranged. In 1881 it was taken down so that the space between the 1870 and 1876 wings could be enclosed with a roof, to make a room for ‘technological science’ (*fig 12*). It was shifted to the western side of the 1870 wing where it was rebuilt with dado eliminated, and the wall slabs directly touching the floor.<sup>65</sup> Skylights were installed (*fig 13*). Then in 1894 it was taken down again, the floor replaced (had it been directly touching the ground?) and turned so that the carved front, previously and appropriately facing north now faced south, enabling it more easily to be seen (*fig 14*).<sup>66</sup> It was finally dismantled in the 1950s when a large extension to the museum was commenced, and it was stored in the museum basement.<sup>67</sup>

## NOTES

1 James Stack, “An account of the Maori House attached to the Christchurch Museum,” read before the Philosophical Institute of Canterbury, (August 5 1875). Most subsequent reports of Hau-Te-Ananui-o-Tangaroa have drawn heavily on Stack’s paper which was published in *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* (1875), v. 8, pp. 172-176. H. von Haast repeats parts of it verbatim in his biography of his father. *The Life and Times of Sir Julius von Haast, explorer, geologist, museum builder* (Wellington: H. F. von Haast, 1948), pp. 683-685. Other texts which have cited Stack are: *Guide to the Collections in the Canterbury Museum* (Christchurch: Canterbury Museum, 1906); W. J. Phillipps, “Carved Meeting Houses of the Eastern Districts of the North Island,” *Records of the Dominion Museum*

(1944), v. 1, n. 2, pp. 111-112; and Roger Neich, *Painted Histories* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1994), pp. 271-272. Stack’s paper was reprinted in *Te Karanga* (1989), v. 5, n. 2, pp. 11-13.

- 2 Thomas Potts, letter to William Rolleston, Superintendent, (June 25 1874), National Archives, Christchurch, CP 349d.
- 3 Haast, letter to Secretary for Public Works, (March 31 1874), Canterbury Provincial Government, National Archives, Christchurch, CP349d.
- 4 £200 was paid to Henare Potae. Costs of removal of the house and the carvers to Christchurch were £91.2.2. The estimate for the cost of erecting the Maori House was £478.17.0. (Statement of accounts attached to letter from the Chairman of the Canterbury College Board to the Provincial Secretary, (June 16 1875), Estimate of cost of erection, signed by B. W. Mountfort, architect, (March 20 1874), National Archives, Christchurch, CP349d.) *The Illustrated New Zealand Herald* suggested the total cost at £1000 (November 1875), n. 99, p. 6.
- 5 Stack, “An account of the Maori House,” p. 173.
- 6 James Buller, letter to Julius von Haast, (June 26 1874), National Archives, Christchurch, CP349d.
- 7 Margaret Alington, *Frederick Thatcher and St Paul’s: An Ecclesiological Study* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1965), p. 39.
- 8 Holy Trinity was built in 1852 and demolished shortly thereafter. Peter Shaw, *New Zealand Architecture from Polynesian Beginnings to 1990* (Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), p. 30; Ian Lochhead, “The Early Works of Benjamin Woolfield Mountfort 1850-1865,” (MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1975), pp. 44-47.
- 9 Letters to the Governor of New Zealand concerning the designs for the new Government House, Auckland (1856-1857), Colonial Secretary’s Notebook, National Archives, Wellington IA1 60/1708.
- 10 *The Press* (May 11 1865), p. 3.
- 11 ‘Committee of taste’ report to Canterbury Provincial Executive Council, (May 5 1860), National Archives, Christchurch, CP349a.
- 12 *The Press* (November 22 1865), p. 2.
- 13 *The Press* (May 9 1865), p. 2.

- 14 Lochhead has noted these parallels with Oxford. "The Early Works of Benjamin Woolfield Mountfield," pp. 84, 91.
- 15 A collection of building stones was kept there, however. *The Lyttelton Times* (February 16 1881), p. 5.
- 16 Haast, *The Life and Times of Sir Julius von Haast* pp. 456, 560-563.
- 17 Haast, *The Life and Times of Sir Julius von Haast* p. 599.
- 18 catalogue, Art Exhibition, 1870 (Christchurch: Art Exhibition Committee, 1870); *The Press* (March 14 1870), p. 2.
- 19 George Rolleston, letter to Haast, (February 1871), mentions that Thomas Acland had "offered to take charge of our Dodo's head for your museum," and that "some photographs of views in the interior of our Museum" were being sent. Haast papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, MS Papers 37, folder 132.
- 20 *The Lyttelton Times* article on the opening of the museum notes that "We are informed that it is part only of an extended design, and no doubt when complete will fall into its proper place with effect," (October 1 1870), p. 2.
- 21 Haast, memorandum to Provincial Council (May 30 1874). National Archives, Christchurch, CP658a/21. The 1876 extension consisted of a reworking of this design, much reduced and relocated to the eastern side of the 1870 building. The 1882 portion was a timber version of one of the proposed iron and glass roofs of 1874.
- 22 Trevor Garnham, *Oxford Museum* (London: Phaidon, 1992), unpaginated; *The Press* (May 9 1865), p. 2. The tower was to be finally set up as a free-standing edifice.
- 23 Garnham, *Oxford Museum* bibliography.
- 24 Street cited, Peter Fuller, *Theoria: art and the absence of grace* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1988), p. 96.
- 25 *The Press* (May 9 1878), p. 2.
- 26 *Historic Buildings of New Zealand: South Island* ed. Frances Porter, (Auckland: Methuen, 1983), p. 87.
- 27 John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin* (London: George Allen, 1903-1912), v. 16, p. 221.
- 28 On the relationship between his pieces in *The Press* and Butler's later writings, see *The Works of Samuel Butler* eds. Henry Festing Jones and A T Bartholomew, (New York: AMS Press, 1968), v. 20, pp. 32-49; and Joseph Jones, *The Cradle of Erewhon* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1959), pp. 98-113. Cellarius' distaste for machinery could be compared to Ruskin's dislike of machine made ornament.
- 29 Haast, typescript of address to the Philosophical Institute of Canterbury, as its first president, (1862), pp. 23-24. Haast papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, MS37 244.
- 30 Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965). The Haast papers at the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, include a folder of correspondence from Darwin. Darwin wrote to Haast on January 2 1868 thanking him for Stack's answers to his queries (apparently sent to various correspondents in the form of a checklist) regarding human expression. The answers were few "but decidedly the best and clearest I have received from any quarter." MS37 51.
- 31 Julius von Haast, report on Progress of Canterbury Museum for eighteen months ending March 31st 1875, National Archives, Christchurch, CP 349d.
- 32 Haast, *The Life and Times of Sir Julius von Haast* p. 8.
- 33 Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin* v. 16, pp. 220-221.
- 34 Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin* v. 20, p. 39.
- 35 Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin* v. 20, p. 21.
- 36 Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin* v. 20, pp. 31-32.
- 37 Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin* v. 20, p. 41.
- 38 Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin* p. 42; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), pp. 123-127.
- 39 Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin* v. 20, p. 42.
- 40 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: how anthropology makes its object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 17.
- 41 Haast, memorandum to Provincial Council (May 30 1874), National Archives, Christchurch CP658a/21.
- 42 This could not happen now. In recent years the Canterbury Museum has pondered what it might do with the carvings that made up the building. One proposal was to erect it at a marae at the University of Canterbury. This was opposed by local Ngai

- Tahu, who did not want a marae set up where the appropriate protocols would not be theirs. Personal communication from Chris Jacomb, Canterbury Museum archaeologist and ethnological curator; (May 1995).
- 43 "The Maori House, Canterbury Museum," *The Illustrated New Zealand Herald* (November, 1875), n. 99, p. 6. This 'absence' of Maori from the South Island should perhaps be considered with Homi Bhabha's reading, in the context of colonialism, of the word 'territory' as "a place from which people are frightened off." "Sly Civility," *October* (1985), n. 34, p. 78.
  - 44 Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin* v. 11, p. 189; Bastian cited, Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Work of Anthropology* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1991), p. 194.
  - 45 Samuel Locke, telegram to Julius von Haast, (January 6 1873). National Archives, Christchurch, CP349d. The Provincial Government had apparently already approved the expenditure of £100 for "the Maori house at Poverty Bay." Haast, note to Provincial Secretary, (January 7 1873), - on the back of Locke's telegram.
  - 46 Thomas Potts, letter to the Superintendent (June 1874), National Archives, Christchurch, CP349d.
  - 47 Haast, "Statement re Maori House," (June 26 1874), National Archives, Christchurch, CP349d
  - 48 Haast, "Statement re Maori House."
  - 49 James Stack, letter to Julius von Haast, (June 26 1874), National Archives, Christchurch, CP349d.
  - 50 Haast cited, Haast, *The Life and Times of Sir Julius von Haast* p. 684.
  - 51 Paul Carter, *Living in a New Country: history, travelling and language* (London: Faber, 1992), pp. 75-77.
  - 52 Haast, letter to the Provincial Secretary for Public Works (May 1874), National Archives, Christchurch, CP349d.
  - 53 Stack, "An account of the Maori House attached to the Christchurch Museum," p. 173.
  - 54 B W Mountfort, *Other Times* (Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1885), p. 4. For an account of the relationships between New Zealand and Great Britain during the late nineteenth century see Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand* (Auckland: Penguin, 1991), pp. 213-233.
  - 55 Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand* p. 154.
  - 56 Craw, "Visible Difference: Nationalist Repertoires and the Semiotics of Place in New Zealand Science," *Antic* (1990), n. 4, pp. 5-7.
  - 57 Mountfort, *Other Times* p. 3.
  - 58 Bann, "The Sense of the Past: Image, Text, and Object in the Formation of Historical Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century Britain," *The New Historicism* ed. H Aram Veesser. (New York & London: Routledge, 1989), p. 103.
  - 59 "In such an environment the stereotype acquires authenticity; it gathers strength for a seemingly inexhaustible cycle of repetition and regeneration." Zeynep Celik & Leila Kinney, "Ethnography and Exhibitionism at the Expositions Universelles," *Assemblage* (1990), n. 13, p. 35.
  - 60 On progress and nationalism at the World Fairs, particularly at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900, Michael Wilson, "Consuming History," *American Journal of Semiotics* (1991), v. 8 n. 4, pp. 131-153.
  - 61 Edward N Kaufman, "The Architectural Museum from World's Fair to Restoration Village," *Assemblage* (1989), n. 9, pp. 33-34.
  - 62 Bann, "The Sense of The Past," p. 109.
  - 63 Haast, report on the Progress of Canterbury Museum.
  - 64 *Guide to the Collections in the Canterbury Museum* pp. 218-219.
  - 65 *The Lyttelton Times* (February 3 1881), p. 5.
  - 66 This information is contained in notes, apparently taken from annual reports for the period 1890-1939, in possession of C Jacomb, Canterbury Museum.
  - 67 I would like to acknowledge the Victoria University of Wellington Internal Grants Committee for its support of the research presented in this paper.