

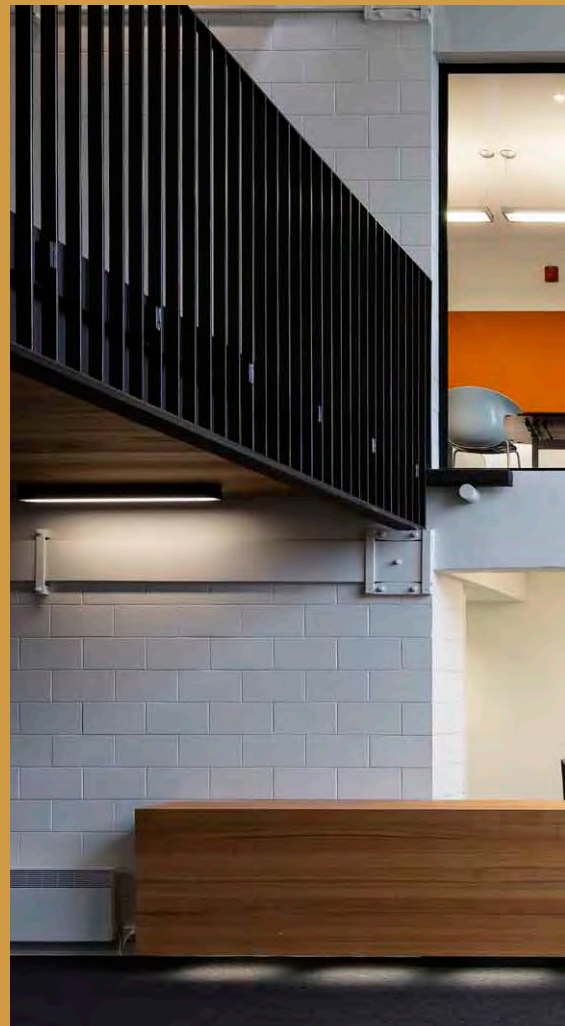


Royal Society of New Zealand

Wellington

In 2008 Studio Pacific won a nationwide competition to design the redevelopment of the Royal Society of New Zealand office and grounds, which they have occupied for over 30 years. Studio Pacific's concept

has gone on to be developed into a new built complex that brings cohesiveness to the site, brings all staff together into one building, and creates a strong presence representative of the Society's ethos.





Originally the Society's 40 staff were dispersed between three old residential-style cottages and a 1970s concrete block. To bring staff together, the original two-storey concrete block to the rear of the site was refurbished and a new third level added on to create the 'white box'. Perpendicular to this, a new annex building or 'black box' has been constructed at the front of the site. This houses conference and meeting facilities. At their collision, a glazed linking entry foyer forms a three-floor atrium gallery space.

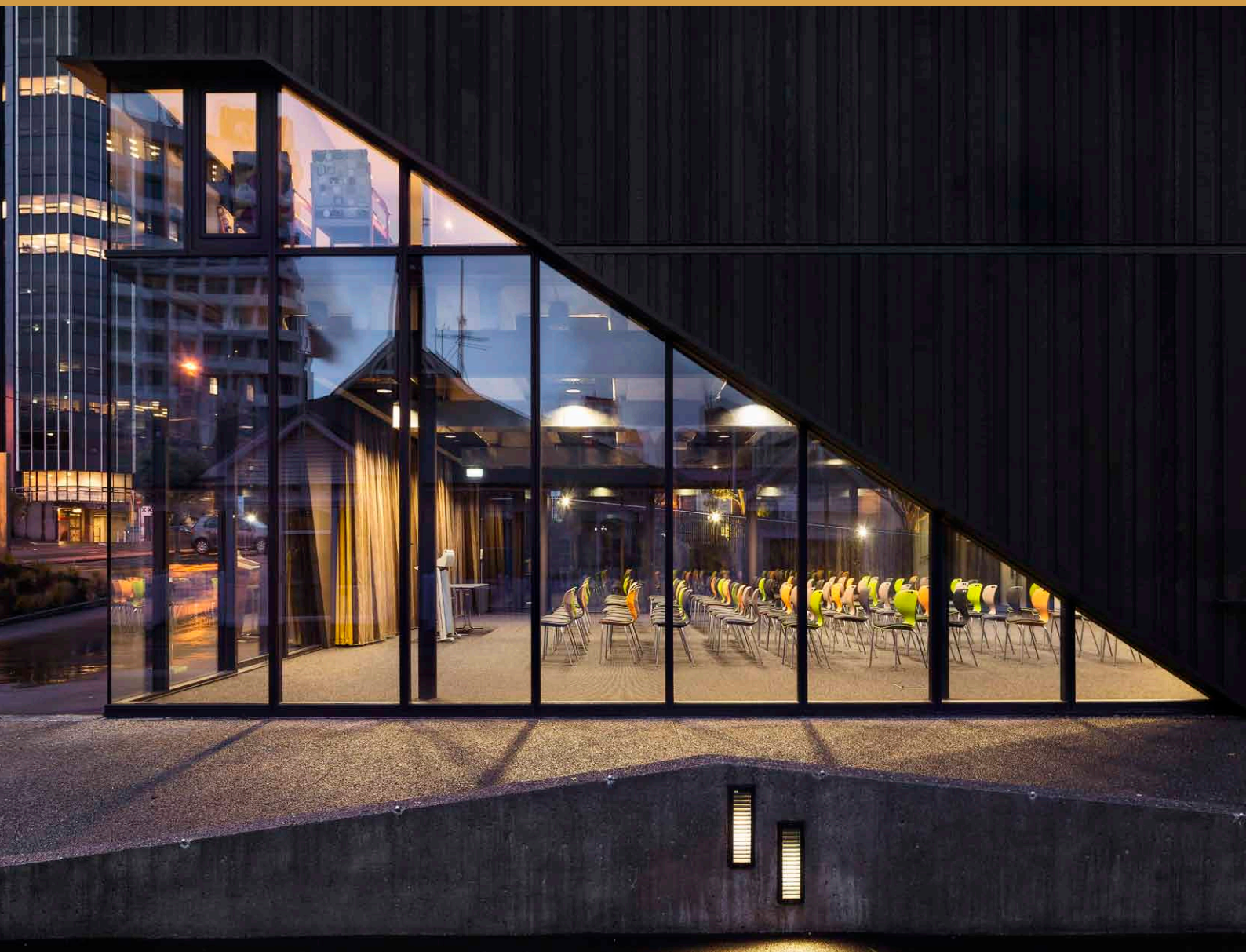
Lessons learned from the Christchurch earthquake informed its structural design. Blockwork was selectively weakened to prevent premature cracking and shear failure, and additional external steel dissipater beams were added. The building is buttressed by new PREcast Seismic Structural System (PRESS) concrete walls within the existing and from the new building. The exterior is finished in **Resene Sheer Black** woodstain.

The atrium provides a flexible open meeting and greeting space to be used to promote science and foster science education, such as collaborative research exhibition projects. Its height and apertures allow natural light to be exploited, adding depth to the space while drawing visitors through from the street as well as framed views into both the white and black boxes.

Locally-sourced native plants and grasses weave through the site connecting to a sheltered internal courtyard. The landscaping is woven around the L-shaped border of the courtyard to create an inviting garden space for staff and conference visitors. A landscaped plaza on the Murphy Street corner softens and freshens the surrounding streetscape.

This project is about combining the new and recycling the old, set by the clear brief for a building that is bold and reflective of the Society's ethos. The building's stripped back aesthetic plays on a conceptual





narrative of reduction and addition of space, carved and sculptured, both on the skin of the building and within the body of the building. The heavily recessed windows within the white box provide natural cross ventilation to the office spaces as well as shading from the late western sun. In turn the changing light across the facade becomes very tonal as the shadows within the recesses shift and reflect the change.

The entrance is at the confluence of the new atrium and the recycled existing building. The clear expressive articulation of the structural solution is on display within the atrium and can be clearly read and understood as the structure

threads through all levels of this double height space. The carefully articulated apertures allow a play of natural light and shadowing from the surrounding landscape to layer across the natural raw internal material of the structural shear walls, textural New Zealand wool wall rugs and the warm rough-sawn timber walls and doors. The internal feature stairs screen is finished in **Resene Gold** metallic.

The old external wall, now expressed as an interior wall, is painted white to allow the texture and imperfections of the existing blockwork to have a tactile presence. In addition and in contrast, the vertical rough-sawn black stained

timber cedar cladding folds in from the exterior cladding to form internal timber wall linings. This horizontal and vertical folding of walls and space, layering and integration of external claddings, textures and natural materials, along with people and natural light, creates a rich and dynamic environment as the building's edges are blurred between the landscape, the exterior and the internal functions of the building.

This engagement allows the user to have a richer experience of space where finishes and colours connect the outside and inside harmoniously. The careful material selection of textural, tonal and contrasting finishes heightens your

experience in a building that is bold and striking. Situated in a difficult contextual neighbourhood of supermarket back doors, motorways, schools and residential properties the building presents itself self-confidently within its surroundings.

Architectural specifier: Studio Pacific Architecture, www.studiopacific.co.nz
Building contractor: Fletcher Construction
Client: Royal Society of New Zealand
Painting contractor: Kensingtons
Photographer: Patrick Reynolds

