PROPOSAL

For as long as I can remember, a little Kiwi bird figurine has sat on my bedside table, inlaid with brilliant Paua shell. Its humble and distinct shape often leads me to imagine a real kiwi scurrying across the forest floor on a misty New Zealand mountainside. My parents gave me the Kiwi when I was little, a reminder of my connection to this far-away and mysterious land, where I was born during my family’s year-long sabbatical. We moved back to the U.S. just a few weeks after I was born, so I have no memory of my birthplace, yet New Zealand has a special place in my heart. When I was 9, I phoned the New Zealand Citizenship office to see if I was a Kiwi by law. I remember the feeling of pride and possibility when they said I indeed am a citizen. I’ve always intended to return.

Studying Landscape Architecture at UC Berkeley has been a natural and exciting step forward from my prior studies and creative work. From a young age, I’ve been involved in environmental work. I entered the creative world through nature photography, which led me into Design Studies at the University of Washington. I went on to pursue work as a florist, as well as learning about permaculture practice through a farm apprenticeship, and designing and maintaining gardens in San Francisco. When I learned that Landscape Architecture is a discipline, it felt like the perfect next step to combine my interests of art, nature, and design. I see landscape architecture as the perfect education to train me as a graceful conversationalist, able to find that easy and beautiful interaction between people and environment.

My heart went out to Christchurch as I followed the devastating earthquakes of 2011. I can’t envision a better way to re-meet New Zealand than through researching landscape architecture’s role in rebuilding Christchurch. This area of interest stems from my experience with heritage landscape architecture, which I began to pursue through my JLS-supported internships in Seattle this past summer. By working for two non-profit organizations, both dedicated to preserving a legacy and historical narrative, I learned a lot about how these aspects influence decisions. I worked on redesigning the grounds for the formal Chateau at the Bloedel Reserve. It was fascinating to engage with various perspectives on how its history ought to determine its future. In a place like Christchurch, where much of the city core is simply demolished, the question is much more wide open. What is the role of landscape architecture now, post-disaster?

I’ve taken on a course-rich Fall semester so that I will have more time Spring semester to pursue an internship with a landscape architecture firm, as well as write a thesis.
related to my research in New Zealand. I’ve spoken with two faculty members who may be interested in advising me on the thesis project. This trip to New Zealand would help determine the precise focus of my thesis.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

I am applying for the JLS Scholarship to travel to New Zealand where I will conduct research around the role of landscape architecture in rebuilding Christchurch. The 2011 earthquakes left the city in ruins. One thousand of the 4000 buildings within the city core were expected to be demolished. Pre and post-earthquake Google Streetview and satellite imagery reveal incredible changes to its urban spaces, and I included an example on the last page.

Now three years later, though two-hundred buildings have gone up, Christchurch still has a long way to go in rebuilding. What can we learn from this massive destruction, and the ensuing design and reconstruction of much of a city core? To begin, I want to investigate the logic behind the way the city, especially parks, plazas and streets, were planned before the earthquake. Christchurch’s library archives would be especially helpful in uncovering its history of city planning. This will provide context to my next question: what are the influences and discourses behind the reconstruction efforts? How have these affected the design of plazas, streets and parks? Who are the stakeholders and how have they influenced the rebuilding? How much of this effort is public vs. private? What means of decision-making in designing public spaces have been successful or unsuccessful? Beyond the earth quake memorial, how is the Old Christchurch remembered or forgotten in the reconstruction? Are the public spaces built in the same way, or differently? New Zealand’s indigenous people, the Maori, have a strong political and cultural place in society. How are the Maori people involved in rebuilding Christchurch?

I will conduct my research through ethnographic interviews, using techniques I’ve learned in Galen Cranz’ Arch 110 class. Her approach will allow me to map cultural knowledge in an informative and largely-objective way. I will also use GIS mapping techniques to create maps of physical, social, and design characteristics that are relevant to studying Christchurch’s reconstruction. For my maps, I will gather data from local surveying in the spirit of William Whyte’s social and environmental mapping of public spaces. I will also draw from census information, maps and photographs.
I’ve been referred to collaborate with Jacky Bowring, a professor at the landscape architecture department at Lincoln University in Christchurch who has recently focused studies on post-disaster landscapes. I will seek help from the Christchurch Central Development Unit, the organizational hub for master planning Christchurch’s rebuilding. I am particularly interested in interviewing and working with, if possible, the people responsible for designing a new Maori cultural center, the Earthquake Memorial, and the new “Green Frame” to extend parks around the central core. I will pursue interviews with a member of the Christchurch City Council and with someone from Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu, the tribal governance.

Through my study, I hope to glean what the seismically active San Francisco Bay Area can learn in terms of reconstruction following a major earthquake. What can the rebuilding of Christchurch teach us about design after a crisis?

**ITINERARY**

December 20: Fly to Christchurch  
December 21-24: Explore and map the city, library research to gather data  
December 25-28: Christmas-time visit to the NZ West Coast  
December 29-January 2: Christchurch: Ethnographic interviews  
January 3-5: Christchurch: Initial mapping of Christchurch before and after, map ethnographic taxonomies, compare and contrast taxonomies of various stakeholders.  
January 6-7: Follow-up interviews with questions based on analysis, confirm taxonomies with interviewees.  
January 8-15: Aid in a local humanitarian rebuilding effort  
January 16-18: Visit Milford Sound, Queenstown (to see another south-island city), visit a National Park or two.  
January 19: Fly back to SFO
A GLIMPSE

Google Streetview: before and after