**URBAN HUTS AUDIO DESCRIPTION 2020**

**WHAREROA HUT**

Beneath our feet, short, green grass. Either side, longer dry grass with fat seed heads nodding and swishing in the wind. We’re tramping up a gently sloping grassy path. Past a tall stand of bush to our left, we glimpse the hut up ahead, tucked down in the lee of a small hill. The hills behind it funnel down to a valley, and the hut sits just below a place where you might cross the sloping hump of the bottom of the hill, and walk further up the valley behind.

The hut is clearly visible, with its sharp angles and spash of orange colour, standing out against the ochre of the grass and the patchy green of the bush that clings to the lower slopes of the hills behind.

As we get closer we see that almost the whole outward face of the hut is comprised of big double wooden doors, while the chimney on the right hand side juts upwards, the black corrugated iron separating from the body of the hut two thirds up the wall, and shooting off on a sharp angle skywards. The hut resembles a strange flying cupboard, or a tardis that has just landed.

The main body of the hut is rectangular, with a roof that slopes back on a 45 degree angle towards the hill behind. Circling the hut, the left wall is unpainted corrugated iron, oxidized and grey, with a rusted metal triangle above head height that you could hang belongings out of the way on.

The back of the hut, is a much lower wall, finishing at chest height. It is composed of overlapped, horizontal weather boards, painted matt black. The matt black roof is made of four flat tin panels, with raised ridges between each panel. The ridges are perpendicular to the black metal ridgeline at the top, but they are twisted - they flatten at the top and slip under the top ridgeline. The roof slopes down steeply to an angled metal gutter below. In rain, water would cascade off to the left.

Finally, the black corrugated ‘baby’ iron chimney is the most flamboyant part of the structure. The ‘baby’ iron has smaller corrugations than the standard grade. The chimney is attached to the hut at its bottom half, while the top funnels up and away on an angle. When we face the chimney squarely, we see that almost the whole face is made of two windows, with bright orange frames. We can look into the hut, and once inside, we can see out, the view is framed in glowing orange, its two panes one on top of another.

Having circumnavigated the hut, we face the doors again. They are solid wooden double doors, made of vertical rimu tongue and groove planks, the timber dressed and oiled. They are lovingly patched in places with thin tin patches, which are nailed down neatly on the edges with many small metal nails. Half way up the left hand door is a square opening, which hinges upwards on a flat rubber hinge on its top edge. The door opens with a hand crafted, wooden sliding latch, set half way up in the door on the right. Swing the doors open and since it is set on a slope, you step up, off a rammed earth step, and into the hut. The hut is just big enough for two people to sit side by side, and unless you are very tall you can stand up, with care, inside.

The floor is solid wood, tongue and groove, oiled to bring out its warm tones and rich grain. The floorboards run longways down the hut and right into the floor of the chimney. The wooden uprights and horizontals of the chimney are all bright orange, on the left hand side it is augmented with smooth silver aluminium plate a third of the way up from the floor – reminiscent of the back of a fire. The uprights and dwangs of the wall the chimney sits in, are painted green, as is the corrugated iron of the wall facing it. The timber has signs that it has had a life before this incarnation: nail holes and evidence of past fixings can be seen and felt.

The sloping ceiling is also painted a dark green, with a dressed timber board across it, half way up. parallel to the roofline. On the left hand wall, before it begins to angle up towards the roof, is a dressed wooden horizontal. Below this, is another wooden horizontal, and just above that, two fine, stripped manuka branches run the length of the wall, fixed at either end, behind them are tucked two colourful copies of the Arts Festival programme, and the hut’s visitors book, a small green spiral bound A5 book, with a pen attached. It’s filled with notes and drawings from appreciative visistors.

Sitting inside the hut, on the wooden floor, our backs against the smooth unpainted weatherboards, there are two beautiful views. One through the open double doors and out across the grassy hill that falls away below us to a stand of bush, with a lovely big matai and surrounding trees. Beyond this, on the other side of the valley are rolling hills and a mixture of scrub, bush and gum plantation. In the distance on the hill to the right is a power plyon, the wires dropping down the hill off to the side and out of sight.

Through the window that is the chimney – the orange verticals and horizontals frame: first grass, then a taupata tree, a cabbage tree, then grassy hills that fall away to the seaward plain, and further beyond it, the sea itself, and the southern part of Kapiti Island.

**WAIKANAE HUT**

Through the trees we glimpse something that is not trees. It is a sliver shape…a house shape. We weave our way up the gentle slope, crunching on fallen leaves, with seedlings springing up underfoot everywhere. Supplejack vines hang under huge puriri and nikau trees, shafts of light filter through and paint golden patches on the ground. The massive size of the trees dwarfs the hut even more.

As we get closer, we realise the hut is two dimensional. The main part is only waist high, made of flat, matt, aluminium sheeting, over a four by two wooden frame. The aluminium has been fixed down with many nails, at the edges and along pertinient sculptural lines. The indentations of the nails give a slight undulation to the flat surface. The overall shape looks as though the house has been gently flat packed, and that at any moment it could spring back out to three dimensions.

The left and right sides are parallel, and the overall body of the house is squareish. It has a chimney on the left, which protrudes up above the roof level, and tapers upwards, ending with a flat top. The roof is a parallelogram and the illusion of a corrugated iron roof is created effectively through the use of a finely ribbed surface on the aluminium, which runs diagonally from the roof ridge to its bottom edge. Below this, is the square of the body of the house. This is is flat aluminium.

On the right hand side the end of the house faces us. A triangle shape atop a square. The aluminium here is vertically ribbed, identical to the roof. This end wall has a window in it, the top edge of which is aligned with the roof line. The window is bordered with natural wood. This is the only variation in material on this face of the sculpture. The contrasting textures of the aluminium gives the illusion of dimension, even though we know the sculpture is flat.

Seen from the side, the structure is only a handspan wide, the aluminium lapping neatly around the edges, it disappears to a silver streak. It is as though its been beautifully crafted by tiny builders.

The back face of the hut has a surface of a brushed aluminium, it has fine scratches in rounded random patterns, overlaid with square, dressed, narrow gauge timber about two centimeters thick. This has a complex, boxed structure that reminds us of the joists and dwangs of a building under construction. Some of the lines follow the shapes that we saw outlined on the front, while others fill in the gaps. They are all vertical and horizontal, apart from the roof outline.

One of the squares frames the window that we saw on the other side. The dark wooden frame has a narrow green trim on the edge. This is not glazed - you can put your hand right through. Another wooden rectangle, at floor level on the bottom right, outlines a small door, made of dressed timber, with a timber Z shape overlaid on the verticals to brace them. It is like the door of a robust dolls house, and opens with tiny hinges and a small wooden handle to reveal the hut logbook and the bright cover of the festival programme.

**KAITAWA HUT**

A small winding pathway cuts left off the main track and meanders through the bush towards the stream. To the left, up ahead, through the randomness of the trees, we notice a complex inteweaving of hazel wands that can only be human. The path opens up to a small clearing, and reveals a cocoon of hazel rods, densely woven into an upright nest. The majority are vertical, with some crossing in and out on an angle. The opening, which faces the stream, is wide enough for two people to pass through with ease. The rods are fixed by their thicker ends, at the base. The structure thrusts upwards vertically, to form three edges of a rough square above. The roof is made of four strong manuka poles, stripped back and lashed together with rope. On the inside, an old portion of canvas is attatched, which brings a history from somewhere else to this incarnation. It is weather beaten, with a seam acoss it, the outside edge folded downwards reminding us of the inside of a tent. It is green on top and blue on the inside.

The base itself is a hexagonal platform – like a tiny stage. The base slopes down and inwards to form a solid platform about a handspan thick. Looking from above, there is a honey coloured hexagon of dressed, oiled wood in the middle, with a fine hexagonal frame made of the same wood. The two further concentric hexagonal frames are made of wider, rougher wooden boards, meticulously cut to shape, a beige wood for the first ring, paler wood for the outside. The joins are fine and the edges match in a craftsman like way. Steel nails pin the corners of each piece down.

One panel at the back lifts up, hinged at the outer edge, with a circular hole toward the middle that allows a finger to lever the panel up and outwards. This is the lid of a box-like cavity, and inside we can find a green spiral bound log book and festival programme.

Sitting in the hut, we have a view of the stream, clean and shallow, flowing past from right to left about three metres away, beyond a small bank. The bush around is young and slender, matai, nikau, taupata about five metres tall, and assorted small seedlings scattered about. It is a bush that is regenerating fast, and the hut looks as though it too, might take root.

**OTAKI HUT**

The path leads through sand dunes towards the beach. Fine grasses thrust up through the shifting sand. The driftwood hut is visible from quite a way off, located down in the hollow of the last sand dune before the beach. We turn left off the path just before we reach the cut away path through the final hump that would tumble us down to the beach.

The hut is perched in the lee of the foreshore dune, squatting on multiple driftwood legs, hunkered down against any weather.

From a distance we can see that the driftwood leans together along a central spine, and that there is a door facing us. As we get closer we can see that the door is made of wide, horizontally positioned chunks of wood, lined up neatly, one on top of another to form the door. They are all different: some straight, some curved, a few curly, but all are weather beaten and sea salt washed, shades of grey, brown and beige.

Alongside the door are vertical driftwood sticks – six on one side and four on the other, which fit inside the arch, which is made up two very substantial pieces of driftwood, that curve towards each other and cross over gracefully, making an archway. The arch shape at the front is reflected in the back of the hut, where driftwood horizontals climb like a ladder up to the crossed driftwood spars. Between the top V shape made by the driftwood arches front and back, a substantial spine of driftwood forms the ridgeline. This has been cut to fit at the back, and the cut wood is brighter and browner then the weathered silver of the rest of the piece.

For part of the way, at the back of the hut, we can’t see the ridgeline or the supporting arches, because the back of the hut and part of the roof is wrapped in old oxidised aluminium. It’s a dusty grey/silver, and has traces of blue paint clinging to it. It is not a complete cover – more like a large ragged metal cape that has wrapped itself around part of the hut, with some portions reaching down the right hand (seaward ) side. Only the bottom left hand corner of this side has been left open and free of metal cladding. There are just a few driftwood sticks, with a piece of punga among them, and two gaps that look like a windows at the top right and bottom left.

The left hand side of the hut continues to use long, semi upright driftwood sticks, some fixed, and others leaning or interweaved with the soild ones that are nailed or screwed discreetly together.

The door opens on rope hinges, with the aid of a gnarled driftwood handle, fixed to the left hand side. Inside the hut we find weathered floorboards, with gaps between, running along the hut front to back. Facing us on the back wall is a cupboard with wooden doors. The weathered boards of the cuboard swing open left and right and reveal a green spiral bound log book, a pen and festival programmes.

From inside the hut, we peek at dune scapes through the driftwood lattice, changing as our gaze shifts. Through the open door we look back to where we came from: the dunes with tousled vegetation, the rough path, the sky above.

**PAEKĀKĀRIKI HUT**

The approach to the hut is along a path that meanders through thickets of head high blackberry canes, all fat with ripe blue black fruit. The hut sits in a clearing with tall yellow headed fennel growing abundantly, among a few young native trees, with more mature pines the background. The grass around the hut is fairly long, though some has been flattened by the activity in the area. The hut faces us squarely as we approach it. It is chest high, skeletal, and for the most part, unclad. The uprights and horizontals are all painted a dark blue, as is a small veranda roof, made of corrugated iron. It sits on an unpainted timber base, with wide wooden floorboards that run from front to back.

The front face of the house is open. Four people could sit comfortably side by side along the front edge, and since it is the height of a good sized step, this is what many people do. If you lean backwards and look up, you will see that the inside of the verandah roof is painted bright pink. \*\*\* The verandah struts are made of stripped manuka, and support from half way up the front uprights, to the corners on both sides of the verandah.

Standing and facing the hut once more: the verandah roof has a blue painted guttering attatched along its front edge. Above the roof, on a steeper angle are six beams running up towards the roof spine. The central four beams have a diagonal across them. This is mirrored on the back face, so that they form a diagonal cross when you stand square to the front.

The right hand wall has a cross piece a little below half way, which butts up to the bottom edge of the back joist, and there is a diagonal cross piece across the bottom rectangle.

The back of the hut is very simple. The roof is the mirror of the front pitch, minus the verandah. Six uprights from the wall, with a cross piece half way up, and a board at the base of the wall. All are painted the warm mid blue colour. Many of the wooden 3 x 2 timber pieces have indentations - evidence of being recycled -undeneath the paint.

Out side, at ground level, on the left hand side is a long aluminium box that runs almost the length of the side of the hut. It is substantial and well braced. Looking inside the box, we see that the lid and the front wall are lined with flattened olive oil cans, their colours still shining and vibrant, blue, yellow and deep red. It is here that we find the hut log book and the festival programme. The box is reminiscent of an animal proof food safe.

On the left hand side is a large, square, bright orange perspex window. It is fixed in place – it was once a roof window for a caravan. It is quite opaque and casts a soft glowing light. Below this, there is a diagonal cross piece across the bottom rectangle. \*\*\*Inside the hut, on the left hand edge of this wall, is a small wooden sign, with lettering that has been laser burnt into the wood. It begins ‘Nau mai ki Paekākāriki Hut, and continues with a dedication in Māori, ‘NGĀ MIHI NUI KI TE KUIA MIRIONA MUTU MIRA ME TONA IWI KO NGĀTI HAUMIA KI PAEKĀKĀRIKI an acknowledgement of the the designers, Kemi and Niko, the Paekākāriki Orchard group and the Festival. On the right hand side of the sign is the hut code, which when entered on the Urbanhutclub.nz website will take you to a recoding of a story, inspired by the hut.

Currently the structure is very open. The artists’ intention is that this sculpture will change and grow as members of the Paekākāriki community interact with it. The intention is that they will bring pieces of building material, or found objects, either from their homes or from the surrounding environment and that these will be fixed onto what is currently very open structure. This may happen informally, by tying them on with string or more permanently through fixing with nails and screws. This hut will change and grow as the community interacts with it and puts energy into it.