

Tuesday Chew:**Sam Kebell - connecting people's values, attitudes, and beliefs with architecture**

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Wellington architect Sam Kebell of KebellDaish Architect's is well practiced at his craft, having worked in architecture and interior architecture in Boston, New York, and Amsterdam. He shares with us his black list of architecture and tells us why crafting for Leonard Cohen is his ultimate dream.

Who the heck are you?

Sam Kebell: a principal of [KebbellDaish](#) Architects in Wellington, which I formed in 2002 with my former teacher John Daish. Before KebellDaish was formed I spent several years studying and practising in North America and the Netherlands, including a Masters Degree from the Graduate School of Design at Harvard. I combine my work at KebellDaish with my part time academic role at the School of Architecture at Victoria University of Wellington.

What inspires and excites you?

The bicycle: the extraordinary yet apparently simple physics, economy of means, environmental sensitivity, and basic elegance of the bicycle astonishes me every single day. The bicycle represents a possible world where these qualities are common place, and that world both inspires and excites me.

What sets your work apart?

We combine research at the university with professional practice in order to emphatically connect cultural ideas and practical buildings. We are best at turning the things that people believe in - their personalities, their company, family, community or institutional cultures, and all the ambitions, priorities and values bound up in those - into practical, useful and inspiring buildings.

What are you best known for?

That probably depends on who you ask. What would we like to be known for? Well, connecting the things that people believe in - their values, attitudes, and beliefs - with the buildings they occupy, own, commission and ultimately fall in love with.

What work makes you want to jump up and shout about?

I'll jump up and shout whenever it helps to get people to build things they really believe in. Not stylistic fantasies they download online, or symptoms of status anxiety they suffer from. I'll keep jumping and shouting until they fully engage in building ideas they care about, and think other people should care about too. Then we'll all be jumping and shouting and it'll be the party I've been waiting for.

What building would you like to tear down?

I am building up a blacklist of pretentious, demoralising, foolish or incompetent buildings. This list includes thousands of houses, apartments and offices in New Zealand that could have contributed to making this country great. But instead, they embody the pathetic, simpleton, greedy or delusionary nature of New Zealanders' weakest moments. The sooner they are replaced with good buildings, the sooner we can rest.

Your favourite building in the whole world?

My favourite building is St Peters in Rome. I am not a Christian, but there are few other examples of architecture that embody, so emphatically and exuberantly, a clear cultural idea and take it to the degree that the Catholic Church has taken it. I love it not because of the geometry, material, or stylistic features, but because it connects what a large group of people believe in so strongly to an idea and a place.

Your favourite piece of design in New Zealand?

Hagley Park in Christchurch. The idea of Christchurch without the Park is unthinkable, or perhaps just too depressing to think about. It almost single handedly makes and defines the city in a way that few other designed interventions have for New Zealand cities. The design itself is not necessarily spectacular, but the idea of establishing a city around a natural core captures a 21st century value system ahead of its time, and the pay-off for Christchurch is enormous.

Your dream commission?

I would like to be commissioned a project by, and for, Leonard Cohen. I partly say that because I am listening to him as I write, but also because I love working with people who can combine wit and seriousness with the turning of an idea into reality. I've never met him, but I get the feeling he'd be a great guy to work with.