

Bypass Podcast Season One.

TRANSCRIPT | Episode Three: Live Environments.

Bio:

If these walls could talk! Our guest today is a Victorian building by the name of *Vicky B*. She has been on Auckland's Karangahape Road for 180 years, designed by settler and architect Edward Bartley. Vicky used to be architecture, but now she's *just another building*. It's the same tired story; "desperate heritage seeking repairs and occupational fulfilment". Miss Vicky B is leaky, lonely, and looking for love (or at least a decent landlord)...

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Bypass Podcast is produced by Gabi Maffey. Our sound engineer is Ariki Perana. Intro music by Gabi Maffey, episode music by Gloria Florence. A transcript of this episode can be found at our website: <https://bypassjournal.com/>

Episode Transcript:

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Episode Introduction: Kia ora koutou katoa. I'm Gabi Maffey. Between the flat whites and the white flats, this is *Bypass Podcast*, bringing a totally different episode this month, as promised. And in this episode, called *Live Environments*, Well...

you know that old architecture adage: "if these walls could talk".

If these walls could talk, a tale as old as time. It always goes a little something like this...

Imagine. It's a brisk, and well-measured morning on the front steps of a Trademe win. You are standing in a suburb that has a complexion of limp. But it's close to *Ripe*, and *Good Settler*, and *Status Anxiety*, and *Society*, and *World Ponsonby*, and so on. And a young Clarke-Gafford-style presenter lobs themselves into the 100-year-old Villa that you are standing outside of.

He caws,

"Cawww!!! Look at the old girl!"

His plaid-wristed palm rubs up on the musty rust wallpaper.

"They don't build them like this anymore!"

Clarke gives the wall a bit of a slap, with a Freudian slip of the palm. They caw again.

“Cawwww!!! She's seen some things, eh?”

Rub rub.

“What a fixer-upper!”

Rrub, rub.

“Gosh, gorgeous!”

Rub rub. Look left of camera, and ohh, here it comes....

“If! These! Walls! Could! Talk!!!!”

If these walls could talk. Well, in this episode, these walls will talk. They'll cry, they'll scream, they'll bitch. Because at *Bypass Podcast*, we don't just talk to people who talk about buildings. No, we interview the actual buildings too. Because these walls can talk, and they can cry, and they can scream, and they can bitch, just as we do.

Our guest today is a Victorian building by the name of *Vicky B*. Vicky has been on *Auckland's Karangahape Road* since 1885, and was designed by settler and architect *Edward Bartley*. She was built with bricks brought up from *Omaru*. You'd know Vicky now by the businesses that are inside of her; *The Caker*, *Brews Liquor Store*, *Peaches and Cream*, that Laundromat with the broken coin slot, even *Daniel Marshall Architects* up above, to name a few.

Once she was a modern apartment building for settler Auckland, adorned with the most illustrious furniture, technologically inspiring photography studios, enlightened medical practices, and cucumber sandwiches. But now, 180 years on, Vicky is an all-too-common has-been. Once architecture, her status has fallen to ‘just a building’. She's uninspired, a replication (don't tell her I said that).

But, this desperate heritage seeking repairs and occupational fulfilment... whilst she may be a cracked old girl, but she has not fallen over yet! And she wants you to know that she's not crying. She's leaking.

“If these walls could talk!”

If these walls could talk. So the next bit of this podcast is an extract from a live performance from Vicky at the *Auckland Fringe Festival* back in February 2021. Vicky's got a lot to say. She talks to a prospective tenant at one of her flat viewings. Her landlord is renting her out again, and she's got a lot to say about it. So today, I present Vicky! Enjoy.

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Performance Transcript: So embarrassing. Just throwing myself at you like that, I just um...drink your tea it's good it's *Earl Grey*..

I, I just haven't been owned 'well' in a long time, okay? I've been cracked. I've been broken. My landlord comes, but never takes care of my needs. And I'm falling apart, okay?

Look, put a deposit down. I'm sure we can fix each other you know like, under my roof, and your key.

You could call yourself a property owner. It's actually a really big deal I heard. I'm a really big deal, I heard.

You know what you will see in me the moment before you move in?

Opportunity.

Vast, white, GIB walls, plain. For you to fill in as you please.

My chin rests, on the Karangahape sidewalk, like this - [opens mouth]

My top lip opened up, and over the sidewalk. To shelter you from the Auckland rain.
You can lug your possessions up these flightless steps
and I will smile. And I will smile.
And I will smile as I have done,
and will continue to do,
for,

180 years. [Proceeds to sob]

I am old. Oh my god and I am boring. Don't even look at me I mean,
English spring flower? Maybe 12 owners ago honey.
You know it's just, uhh, 'pastel grecian columns'.
Brick blue pigeon shit! You know, let me tell you, I just..

I once was really, quite something.

Now like a dehydrated wedding cake, just stale.
Just waiting for the groom who
never
fucking
showed.

He promised that we would grow old together, you know.

I was magnificent.

I was magnificent.

And now for you, cheap tenant.

I mean, sorry but, you know.

I'm plain.

Painted over, basic.

A whole ocean. A whole hope, holding out for a new land, for you to fill in a new identity as you please.

For you to find a new you in.

And I know you, let me see are you:

you will litter the walls with, cheap white frame of watercolor circles. Rose gold plated laced succulents. Geometric cushions, and uh

LINEN! Linen.

A waffle knit pillow slip crumpets the floorboards, these Kauri floorboards. Apparently yours now, I mean

he's rented me out for like the 12th time in a row you know. I was once owned by Kings.

I was a Law Firm once you know.

I was a Surgeon's office, yeah.

I was a Jeweller, for little photo locket, and wrist watches, even diamonds!

Are you going to buy me diamonds? No, no, no. Your carbonated turmeric sits in a labelless jar with a handle on one side, pretending to be old, bought new last week along with your wooden coat hangers!

And I mean, it's not your fa-

I mean, it's your fault, but it's not *your* fault you know. I shouldn't be ranting on. No, first came the suburbs.. I hate those bitches.

Then, (ugh) 'Modern Taste'.

The Modern was about reducing a building to its pure geometry. Boiling it back, no more frills you know.

I live for frills.

I mean, I live for waffle knit now apparently, but.

You know, I live for frills. They're the very thing that makes me great. I was built. By an Architect, who grew up in the Victorian Architectures of Methodist Christian Faith..

Edward Bartley.'

I was drawn like kit set, like I was replicated, as if I was shipped straight from Victorian Britain but I wasn't.

He was.

Then, these same men call me gaudy? Decide that my taste is suddenly all a bit much? Fled to the Suburbs. Left me at the altar.
Any kind of investment? Any kind of asset and, property that I was entitled to inherit -

Gone!

Jilted!

Those weather-boarded whores!

And I shouldn't be ranting at you, I mean, it's not your fa-
I mean it's your fault, but it's not *your* fault, you know.

A Modernist Architect, I don't know if you've heard of him um *Le Corbusier*: Little swiss wife of an architect. Now he reviewed
my style, to be, "the clothes of an old age".

He decided that the *Ornament* on an Architecture, was to a building; "a feather on a woman's hat".
"Sometimes pretty, though not always, and never anything more".

Sometimes pretty,
though not always,
and never,
anything,
more...

What a cock!

Never anything more!? Never anything more!? You know, a feather on a hat, is worth much, much more to any kind of body, who
relies on any other body for financial security. Keith Sinclair wrote of the white settler woman in the 1850s getting invited to the
Governor's Ball. "The decision of what to wear took up many months leading up to the event."

Well with no votes! Or job prospects! A feathered head, and a lace dress is called *Survivalist Architecture*,
you ungrateful bald newt!

Same with the suburbs, I mean;

1950s housewives dressed their buildings as they did their home. Because to dress your building as your home is a sign of
domestic proficiency...

Window drapery,
curtain dressings,
skirting boards,
foundations,
facings,
altars,
pins, patches, patterns,

always the homemaker,
never the architect!

Thank you.

Do you know what the Architect told my Landlord? "White walls are usually installed without discussion. It is as if they have a unique ability to typify any complex argument with which they punctuate."

And I was built in 1865. Just after Wellington became the Crown's Capital, "like some unspoken order".

Just last year, my Landlord lined my walls in white GIB because the rooms he planned to rent went better when they were basic, and plain.

I just felt naked. And plain. But you know, I am frilly. I'm, I'm a bit much. I'm kooky. Well you know, Modernism may have tried to forget about me. The motorways may have cut me off. Suburbia may have tried to replace me. But I have continued to remain a home. I have survived. I have continued to make a home, and you know what?

I was rejected for the very thing that made me great,
Frills.

Because I wasn't 'new' anymore.

But come the 60s; the people that occupied me, were the people *like* me. The people who knew what it meant to have a feathered hat, and a housewife smile. And who knew what it meant to not fit that white frame. And these people, let me tell you Mr Linen, these people were remarkable. *Are* remarkable. These people were remarkable because they didn't try to bowl over what was already there, to form an identity on a new land. No. These people adapted to what was already there, so I could come along for the ride too!

The market's under my lip line,
the fish,
the regular corners.

It was the only time in my life that I ever felt enough just as I am.

But you know, there's a paradox to a plain white wall. It must be filled. It must be dressed. And then, stripped back because it's not fashionable anymore. And then redressed. And then redressed. And then redressed, and then redressed. If an architect builds a plain white wall, the homemaker becomes the architect of a credit card discipline. Dressed, and then redressed, and then redressed.

"Complicit blankness, to the continuous consumption of a fickle market."

And there's another paradox to a plain white wall, it's persistent. Cultural outputs of unique quality, when popularized to a diverse degree become, big trends! Big business! Big opportunity! So the things that made me great from the 60s to the 80s, the things where I fit.

Queer breath. Displaced teeth. Low rent business. Well, they became popularized again by about the 90s when Bohemia came around and suddenly my old was suddenly new and kooky again! And I was full! And, getting my rent paid. And, it didn't feel great to be honest.

I mean, I was like the old-new kind of new. Like the old-new is in Op Shops, you know, Opportunity Shops, you know. Or like the old-new in like the nostalgic frills of an old Drag Queen in YOUR parade, or the overly opinionated bells and whistles of a Flat White.

Yeah I just felt naked.

And I cry for Karangahape because it's just kept happening. And you know, the funniest thing. In the whole ocean of different tenants that I've had. The different people, and identities that have rented my walls - I've always felt relevant. I've always felt timeless.

But now, I've seen what's going on. And I know what's about to become of me, why you're here. Either a full renovation, or a total demolish. I'm not good enough for the market just as I am. You know it.

But you know, I think I'm gonna get destroyed either way. Because what is a body without its identity anyway? There's so many ways to demolish a building, but I think the most destructive is to just keep on building these plain white walls. It's not your fault. I mean, it's your fault, but it's not *your* fault. No, it's just it's just the times that we're living in. So, finish your tea. Get yourself unpacked. And um, yeah.

I'll make us some scones.

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Episode Outro:

When it comes to architecture writing and how it represents buildings, what gets to be published about as being part of that building? Does personality get to be a part of the building? Because architecture gets old, but buildings continue to get lived in, and over time, those personalities, they become inherently part of the building. Like K Road, like Vicky B, architecture becomes more than just its site and how it's built. Its site becomes more like a sense of place. And performances like Vicky's assert that representing buildings as their personalities, as the people who occupy them can appropriately characterize their walls and locate their contemporary significances. And in doing this, it will help us to locate its place, find the architecture, and appreciate it.

Thank you for listening to Vicky and this episode. A few messages from me before we wrap up. I'm actually looking for people to join the *Bypass Podcast* team. We need someone who can edit scripts. For example, if you found the last episode too long and want to help an artist to clarify her thoughts, please help. We also would love some more writers, contributors, researchers, and presenters. So if you think that sounds like you, hit us up! Email us, or message us on Instagram, our contact details are in the episode notes. A reminder about the donation page, we make all of this completely out of my overdraft. And also, on that page you can send feedback. So let us know if you're listening, and if you like us (or if you don't). Forever and always, thank you to

our fantastic sound producer *Ariki*, and my team with *Bypass Journal*. The fabulous *Gloria Florence* is playing us out. That's the episode. Ngā mihi nui for listening.

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End of episode.