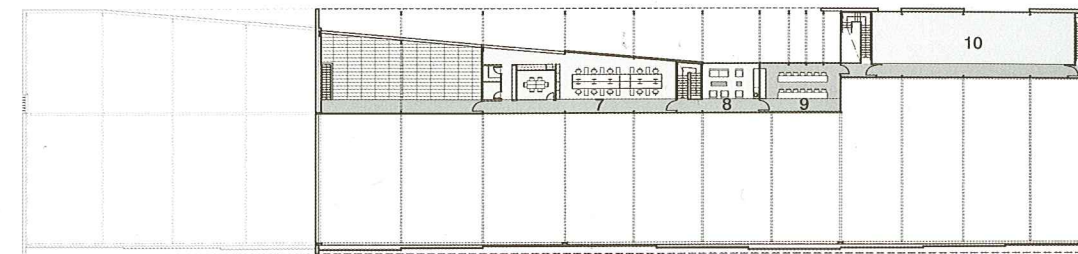


The Rotary Club

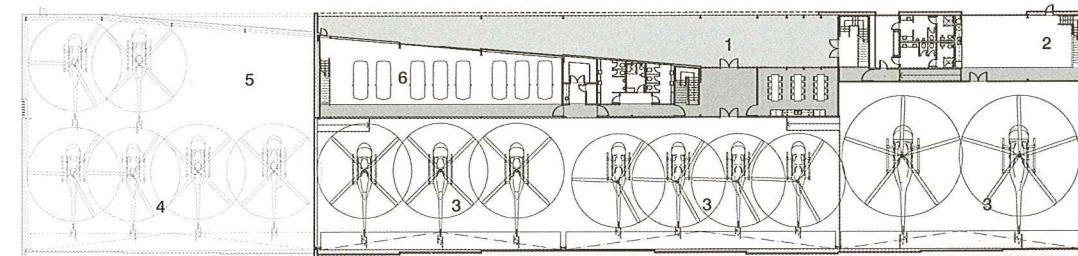
On an Onehunga landfill Bodie Maxcey has designed a base for Auckland's sexiest models.

Text **John Walsh** Photographs **Patrick Reynolds**





FIRST FLOOR PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



- 01 Drop-off bay
- 02 Future tenancy
- 03 Hangar
- 04 Future hangar
- 05 Future maintenance area
- 06 Garage
- 07 Office
- 08 Lounge
- 09 Training room
- 10 Future office

In the age of mass travel, the helicopter ride is the one form of flight we don't take for granted. Freed from the normal temporal (schedules) and spatial (runways) constraints helicopter transportation is special. A helicopter signifies Important Business: rescues, surveillance and, of course, war. For the last half century the helicopter has been the defining piece of battlefield inventory. Once, the blades to be feared were wielded by charging dragoons; now, they're controlled by bug-helmeted pilots conducting missions experienced as divine intervention. Death or salvation is announced by the whump of rotors, as we know from *MASH* and *Black Hawk Down* and, especially, Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, in which the air cav led by Robert Duvall's berserk Colonel Kilgore gets his boys into the blitzkrieg mood by broadcasting from their gunships *Ride of the Valkyries*.

In the *New Yorker* Antony Lane has pointed out that Duvall's helicopter scene is a brilliant exemplar of "that most radical of aesthetic effects: the conservative high" ("I love the smell of napalm in the morning"). One is tempted to say that helicopter travel itself is a conservative high: the chopper is the ultimate vehicle of choice for the Important Personage. Time is money – can't be wasting it on the public highways. Like bigger, richer societies we've got our own heli-crats now, international men of mystery who, when they jet in from one of their off-shore pads, wish to be whisked to their holiday homes over the heads of the hoi-polloi.

Auckland Heliport, which is sited on a hectare of Onehunga landfill owned by Ports of Auckland, exists to serve the local heli-crazy. (In the future, it may perform, and is designed to accommodate, other uses, such as rescue services.) The facility is operated by a company in which owners of the helicopters parked at the site have a financial interest. It is, obviously, a pragmatic piece of plant, albeit one designed to satisfy highly particular demands. "There were lots of red flags," architect Bodie Maxcey says. For one thing, you wouldn't want to miscalculate the circumference of helicopter blades, for the sake of your head or your wallet: the slightest ding can cost tens of thousands of dollars. The design provides for sight lines and safe approaches, aviation fuel storage, helicopter landing pads and parking bays, outside and inside car parking, and offices and meeting rooms located in a glazed box-within-a-box.

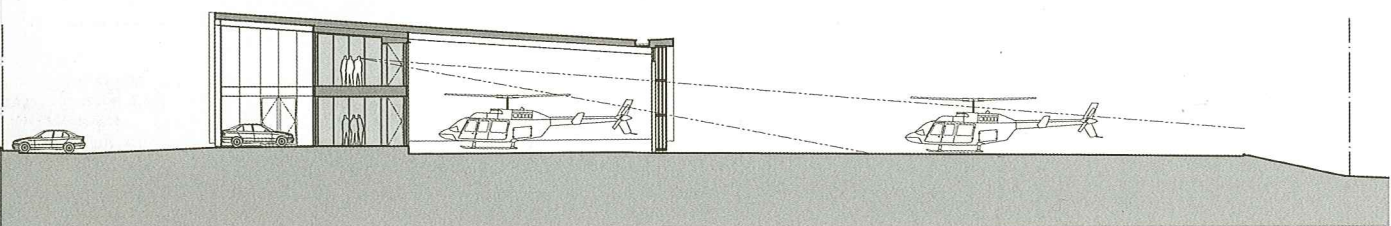
It also provides for some architecture. The Heliport building could easily have been an inelegant shed, but the clients have given Maxcey – on his first substantial project in his own right – scope to design a building that



01 (Pages 50-51) The Heliport from the south. 02 A helicopter at rest inside the hangar.
03 Front (north) elevation of the Heliport building, which houses offices, reception, waiting areas, car parking and hangar space.



Walking along the hangar and into the 'box-within-a-box' office areas.



lements the stunning European helicopters it houses. (The EC-130 is a reneuve of choppers). Sure, much of the work is invisible to a visitor: the hangar sits on a "pin cushion" of more than 100 steel piles driven 20 metres into the sub-surface of sediment and organic matter, topped by 300mm of clay; a gas membrane encloses the building's concrete slab as a prophylactic against gas given off by the landfill. And, yes, the building has been designed for a specific purpose and for ease and economy of expansion – the steel portal frame, Maxcey says, offers the best means to incorporate a Stage 2 add-on. The architect was determined to make the most of the visual opportunities offered by the Heliport.

There are perfectly sound safety and supervisory reasons for the transparency Maxcey has introduced all along the south elevation (he supported his case for so much glass by reference to the US Air Force fire station; however, the glazing also has less mundane benefits, for the Heliport's design and also for anyone walking along the public path between the Heliport's hangar and the northern shore of the Manukau. Maxcey has recognised that the real stars of this show are the helicopters. These are beautiful machines; watching them lift off and alight at their improbable Onehunga base, or just watching them at rest, it's impossible not to be seduced by their glamour. The Heliport is a sexier cat walk than any on show at Fashion Week.

AUCKLAND HELIPORT

Client Auckland Heliport Limited Partnership **Architect** Maxcey Architects **Project Team** Bodie Maxcey, Richard Kane, Grant Johnson **Heliport construction & aviation consultant** Advanced Flight **Project manager** CHL Project Management **Civil / geotech engineer** Babbage Consultants **Gas membrane design** Tonkin & Taylor **Fire design** WAP Fire **Hydraulic engineer** I & L Consulting **Fuel systems** Carlyon Civil Construction **Contractor** Macrennie Commercial Construction **Mechanical** Airtronix **Electrical** Electrical Systems **Project cost** Not available



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