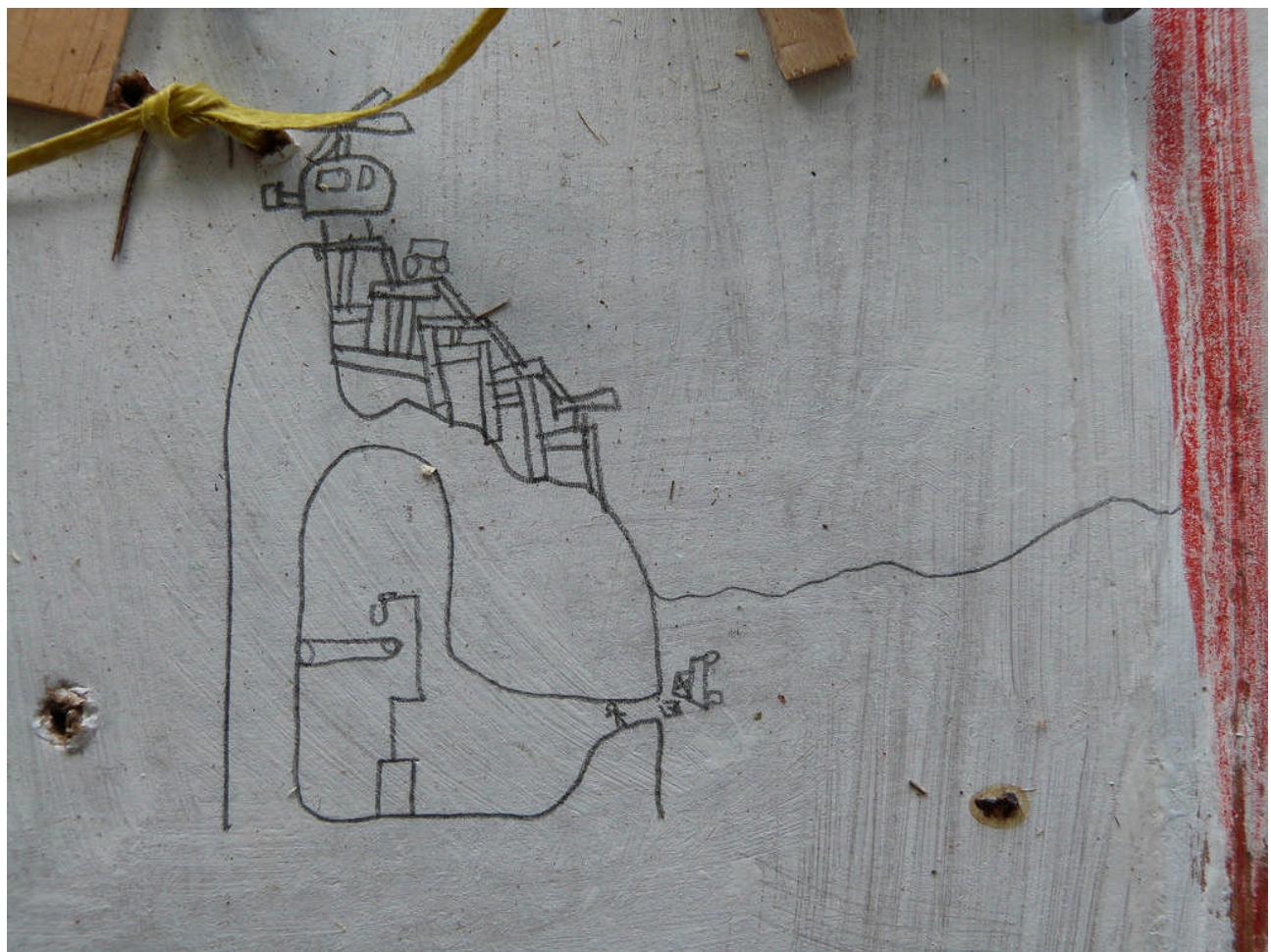


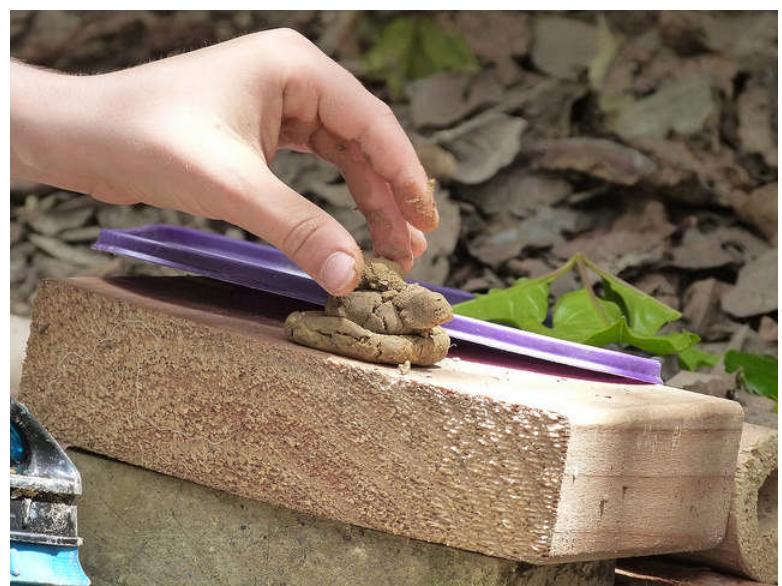
Five Bedtime Stories About Real Estate in Mairangi Bay

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The House That is Just a Bedroom

I was walking along the beach. There were houses made of blue plastic all along the path.



All of these blue houses were made by the people who lived in them. People called them 'homeless' even though they had these homes.

Since I was studying architecture at the time I was interested in these houses, but they all looked weak. I felt like I wanted to help the people that lived in them to find better places to live. Then, I found this one house... It had a solar panel on the roof so that it could make its own electricity. I had never seen something like that before!

I knocked on the door and the woman inside let me in. The room was super small, probably about the size of the room your toilet is in. But everything was powered by electricity!

I was amazed.

The person who lived there built the house by herself from stuff she had found on the street. It cost her ZERO dollars - NO Money! - and she had made it just the way she wanted to.



People called her homeless, but her home was more like a home than my house. It was comfortable and friendly. I started to feel like I was homeless. Someone else had made my house and I had to pay them money every month to live there. Can you believe that!?

But, the house WAS very small. I asked her - "Isn't it really hard to live in such a small house?" And do you know what she said?

"NO! This house is just the bedroom"

"When it's sunny I can go to the park and read or play my guitar."

"I can use the bathroom and the water there as much as I like"

"So, it's like my living room and bathroom"

"The people at the supermarket give me meat and vegetables when I help them with the cleaning"

"It is like a big refrigerator"

"There are heaps of libraries. They are like a giant bookshelf."

"The city is my house"

"So, actually, I only need this part to have a good sleep in."

Wow.

What I saw when I looked at the city was very different to what she saw.
She uses the city in a way that is very different to people who want to 'own' things and keep them for themselves.

She is a bricoleur. That means she lives, makes, and enjoys her life with the stuff that she can find around her.



Mr. Berthelsen's Mairangi Bay and My Mairangi Bay

I am very interested in people who make their own houses on the street.
Their houses are more like nests built for free than 'normal' houses.
The more I research, the more inspired I get.

People everywhere are building houses with stuff that other people are throwing away.
Houses made from junk.



They have made a great discovery. All the junk around us can be harvested and used!
Waste is an amazing natural resource.

Even if I think it is rubbish, other people can build a house with it or even sell it for money.
This is true for houses, but it is also true for our whole lives.

For example, I met a man called Mr Berthelsen. When I walked around Mairangi Bay with him the place looked totally different.

"At this cafe you can get enough milk bottles to make a boat..."

"This shop throws away perfectly good sushi every day but I eat it up..."

"You can get delicious onions in the park beside this rugby field..."

In his brain, Mr. Berthelsen has a totally different map of Mairangi Bay than I do.

Ms. Lucas' Philosophy

Ms. Lucas, a lady that lives on the street in Murray's Bay has another very unique map of the area.

She is a treasure hunter who finds gold and other rare and valuable metals in rubbish bags. Every month she finds more than \$6,000 worth of this stuff! That is as much as the income of the average household in Auckland!

People who buy valuable metal because it looks cool sometimes just throw it away when it is not cool anymore. But they do not know how much this metal is worth! Ms. Lucas hunts this treasure like she is a gold miner of the old days.

Ms. Lucas has one rule: She hates having to pay money for things.

So, she finds ways to get things for free. She discovers ways to save money. And, she invents ways to turn rubbish she finds into money.

Once, someone gave her a free place to live. She only had to pay for electricity. But, as you know she hates paying for things, so she used a car battery that she found so she could charge her iPad.

Ms. Lucas is a pro when using electronic devices. She carries a car battery with her in her backpack so she can test devices that she finds on the footpath. She finds tablets and smartphones that other people throw away, fixes them, and then sells them. She can make anything work again with her special powers.

In addition to not paying for electricity she doesn't pay for water; she gets it from the park or the beach. So, even though she lives in a normal house she uses NO MONEY! Even though she has amazing skills, some things are difficult for her... but working out those problems is a fun hobby for her! That's her way of thinking. It's her philosophy.

This is an amazing way to live.

If your house is just a box where you can sleep well, you can get your power and water from other places. Then, you don't have to worry about working for other people to get money.

And, it's fun! It can be a good hobby to try to work out how to get the things you need every day.

Actually, Ms. Lucas is now famous because of her powers of using the treasure around her that other people call rubbish. She has an apartment in the city, next to the Sky Tower! Even so, she says that her life would be just the same if she was back living in a box on Murray's Bay beach.

"You can change your way of thinking any time" she says, "I don't know what all those people going to work early in the morning are doing!".

Mr. Sludgekins Makes a Discovery at the Beach

I would like to introduce you to another amazing person. His name is Mr. Sludgekins and he is one of my best friends.

People call him homeless, but he doesn't like being called that. He isn't doing anything illegal, he has just built his own house in a nice place.

His house is between the walkway and the cliff between Murrays Bay and Mairangi Bay. He had been interested in that spot for a long time because it was very overgrown. He is a neat and tidy man and he didn't like the mess.

"This land probably belongs to Auckland City. Someone should tidy it up" he said. But no one did anything. After some more time worrying he decided to clean it up himself. This was just his way of helping out.

(By the way, Mr. Sludgekins had been living under Murray's Bay wharf on his own special layer for a long time already. He knew that area well.)

Anyway, the piece of bush on the cliff now became neat and tidy. Thank you Mr. Sludgekins!

Even though the land probably belonged to someone else Mr. Sludgekins started thinking of it as his friend. He was taking care of it like a lost puppy or cat that someone had abandoned.

After a while, he started thinking that maybe no one owned the land after all...

He went to the council and asked to see maps and property records, and he asked all the people he met, but no one could find out who owned the land. Mr. Sludgekins felt sorry for the land. He decided to live there in order to keep it company. He has been living there for eight years now. He is a proud parent to the land. He looks after it like it is own child and no one complains about the situation.



Magic Layers

Everybody sees Mairangi Bay in a different way. That sounds obvious, but most people don't really think about it.

When I was studying people that live on the street, I decided to call the way that they use their space a "layer". It is not something you can see, it is a new way of using your space that you invent with your imagination.

Humans always try to get more "space". All wars and fights are about getting or keeping "space". In Mairangi Bay pretty much everyone goes to work so that they can get more money, land and other things. In the end it is about "space"

I used to study architecture, which is about how to build buildings. Architects think that building something on a piece of land makes more space. I don't think so. You don't get more space just because you build some walls...

Think. When we make walls, one big space gets chopped up into many small spaces. Space gets

smaller. But, when we use 'layers' we do not make walls. We make MORE space when we need it, right in the same space.

This is not something new. This is something that children can do but adults have forgotten.

People who live on the street have remembered the power of 'layers'. They can't buy land, so they don't think about 'owning' something. They make a new 'layer' by the power of thinking. This 'layer' means that they can make new space anywhere they want, just by imagining.

For example, if you close the door of my friend's small house and then fill up a big bucket with hot water his bedroom becomes a bathroom. There are knives on his door. If you open it up the bathroom then becomes a kitchen. If you go to the park in the middle of the day it is your living room. If you are there with your towel it is your shower room.

This is not magic, it is just the power of the creative mind.



We are always looking for new stories about 'real estate' in Auckland.
Please email Chris Berthelsen – chris@a-small-lab.com - to share yours.

[part of summer art, not-school 2016 | small-workshop.info/sans2016]

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¹ These stories were adapted for Mairangi Bay by Chris Berthelsen based on Kyohei Sakaguchi's book 独立国家のつくりかた (How to Build an Indie Nation). Photographs by Chris Berthelsen from Small Waste Workshop at Mairangi Bay School (<http://small-workshop.info/sww/>).