

## ambitious architect group

interview part 2

the BUSINESS of  
ARCHITECTURE



On September 5th I was interviewed by Enoch Sears from the "The Business of Architecture", blog site working out of Fresno, California. It was a great opportunity to discuss architecture on a broader scale looking at both nationwide as well as global trends.

It was a long interview, part of which we brought you in our last news letter – as we have much interest in hearing more about what was discussed we bring you part 2.

**Enoch:** Is there a difference between the value that is placed on the more traditional housing stock between Denmark and New Zealand?

**Mona:** Totally. Yes, very much. The housing stock in Denmark is a lot older in part because we've been around for longer than New Zealand has in terms of being a nation. What's really interesting about is this: As you probably well know, Denmark is very well recognised for design, and style, and quality throughout design. It also applies with respect to housing and how people see investing in their properties. So, one typical example would be my aunt and uncle. They were just putting a small one room extension on their property – not a flashy neighbourhood or anything in Denmark, but they're still wanting to see an architect, because, of course, you go and see an architect if you want to do anything to your house. That's the first point of call.

The whole value of what architects can give to a property and what they can give to a neighbourhood or an area is somehow lost in New Zealand. It sounds like a big chunk to take on, but I would like to see if I could change it and try to attain that value back and make people understand what it is we do.

**Enoch:** I'm going to leave that open to hook our listeners here. We're going to come back and circle around to building in the later part of the interview. But, before we jump in to that, Mona, let's take a step back and just tell us a little bit about your journey to become an architect.

october 2013

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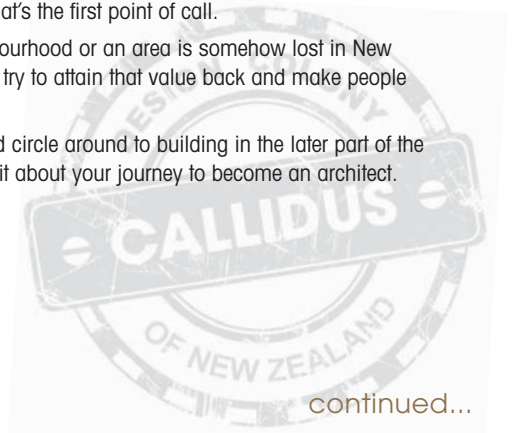
'7 Mistakes people make when renovating' - one of our recent publications. Contact us for more details.

[info@callidusarchitects.co.nz](mailto:info@callidusarchitects.co.nz)

[www.callidusarchitects.co.nz](http://www.callidusarchitects.co.nz)

"A home is a home when it shelters the body and comforts the soul"

- Phillip Moffitt



continued...

# ambitious architect group

interview part 2, continued...

**Mona:** Yes, an interesting role to be in as a woman, I find. I was pretty much sold on it from the first time I met my first female architect back in high school because of the things she had to say, and how she was dealing with the built environment and space all around us. I think particularly the residential market is of great interest to women. We seem to spend a lot of time looking at magazines about house decorating. I wanted to be one of the ones who actually did the homes as well. So, I guess that's where my initial interest came, and also from having growing up in a very old part of Denmark where we can trace our ancestry back 2000 years.

**Enoch:** Wow.

**Mona:** Where I come from in Denmark history is all around you, from the stone age burial sites through to castles from the 1700s through to today's built environment. It goes back to the whole thing about heritage for me, I guess, and the sense of belonging, and the sense of being part of an area. So, that was why I decided to become an architect in my youth.

I enrolled at the Royal Academy of Art, School of Architecture school in Copenhagen, and while I was there, I met my husband who's from New Zealand. That was why I ended up in New Zealand in the long run. What has been a great benefit to me is actually having had the opportunity to study both at the Royal Academy in Copenhagen and also when I transferred to New Zealand. I did my last year and a half at the New Zealand school of Architecture at Victoria University of Wellington.

I have found it really beneficial to have actually studied at two different universities and two different ways of thinking.

**Enoch:** Fascinating.

**Mona:** Another privilege has been working and living in Jamaica for a year for Phil & Son, working on the huge marina refurbishment project in the old character area of Port Antonio, home of Errol Flynn and Ian Flemming. It was amazing, did you know Flynn's wife still lives there? We used to bump into her from time to time, very grumpy lady though. Anyway working and dealing with slightly unconventional Jamaicans in terms of how you deal with health and safety on site, and smoking cannabis, etc, it was a great experience and privilege for me.

**Enoch:** Sun, sea, sand and surf, what is not to like? How have you found working on building projects in different countries?

**Mona:** The interesting aspect of being an architect is you study all these higher forms of style when you are at a university, and everyone speaks on a high-level plane about the built environment. Then you go out into reality talking to builders on site where the challenge then becomes how to translate your style notions into timber and nails. So, how you actually negotiate a huge scale and range of people that you interact with and deal with... I think

it's the conversation that's the biggest challenge for architects, because if you don't get everyone on your boat, believing in what you want to do the build project can quickly become an uphill battle.

There's a lot of tension especially when you start a building project, but also when you finish it. In some ways, I almost find it that you're the mediator between the person paying for the job and the person building the job in respects. So you just try to see if you can keep the process going smoothly.

The other thing is, well, it's very traditional here to go out for open tenders so that anyone can bid for the job. We try and tone that down especially because we would like to set ourselves up as being more exclusive and to deliver a high quality product. We try not just vetting the clients, but actually also vetting the builders. We're very reluctant to work with builders that we haven't worked with before just because of ultimately what comes out the other end is the level of quality that will get us the next job as well. So, I don't know if that answers your question with respect to the builders.

What's the big goal for me is the end product. I just want to make sure that the end product is how it was visualised. That's the biggest thing for me. Once people that are on the building side realises that's actually what she's all about, then they become much more committed in terms of delivering it themselves as well. That is what I see as a successful project.

## about



Mona Quinn.

Mona Quinn speaker, author and commentator is one of NZ's leading character home architects. Her education started in Denmark at the prestigious Royal Academy of Arts, School of Architecture

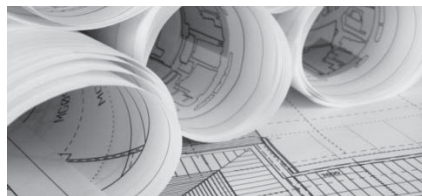
and she has drawn inspiration from her extensive travel around the world ever since.

She has a passion for restoring character buildings both through her work for clients and her own development projects. She set up Callidus Architects in 2010, specialising in Character Home Renovations.

Her combination of Scandinavian design flair and nz no8 wire attitude provide a practical approach to design and construction. A love of old buildings and her unique skills set result in designs that enhance the original character and add a sophisticated flair.

## want to talk with Mona?

octoberfest special...



*Do you want to discuss your project with no strings attached?*

*Do you have questions but do not know where to start?*

We are holding open office on Sunday the **10th of November 2013** between 13.00-15.00. There are 3 bookings only so get in quick and request a design review by emailing [info@callidusarchitects.co.nz](mailto:info@callidusarchitects.co.nz)



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## contact

**email** [info@callidusarchitects.co.nz](mailto:info@callidusarchitects.co.nz)

**phone** (04) 527 4304

**mail** 84B Johnsons Rd  
RD1, Whitemans Valley  
Upper Hutt, 5371

**web** [www.callidusarchitects.co.nz](http://www.callidusarchitects.co.nz)