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**BRINGING THE MARKET 'BACK INTO' SUPERMARKET**



Bringing the Market 'back into' supermarket:  
*Creating a social hub for local communities*

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Design  
at Massey University, Wellington  
New Zealand

Amie Walters, 2010



To my parents, Trevor and Debbie Walters, for their endless support and love.





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## ABSTRACT

This design project addresses the contemporary supermarket chain, seeking to bring back to this typology the traditional sociality and dynamic qualities of the urban marketplace. In this sense to 'bring back' does not mean to restore time, but rather to provide the means for public engagement by establishing the supermarket as an active civic space.

By negotiating between the micro-levels of everyday life and the macro-levels of culture and civic society, I propose to transform the supermarket into a communal 'event-space' by formulating a 'kit of parts' that is applied to the national supermarket chain *New World* – “the only local supermarket nationwide” – thereby establishing it as a viable, productive social hub. Encouraging health and wellbeing benefits through the rituals of cooking, dining, learning, communing and consuming, this sociocultural connection to the commercial environment also reinforces health research studies, which advocate a community-based approach toward producing the best outcome for upward mobility and community revitalization.

The concept is developed through research into historical and contemporary models to a final proposal of a range of Communal Elements. These elements are adapted and applied to three site-specific locations around New Zealand within an urban, suburban and rural context. This new approach to land use, innovative partnerships, health planning and sensory-based design strategies instigates a radical revision of the role of the supermarket. The thesis proposes that this is not only fiscally viable but that it provides positive assets to communities and neighbourhoods as a global entity within a local reality.

The project investigates ways in which spatial design can reconstruct quotidian consumption and public space, revising amenity infrastructure through site-specific interventions that draw on commensality, “the exchange of sensory memories and emotions, and of substances and objects incarnating remembrance and feeling” (Seremetakis, 1994, p.225).



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## PREFACE

As a young boy Trevor Walters started bagging onions and potatoes at *Praters Foursquare* in his hometown of Taupo. Leaving school at the age of 15, he then worked fulltime “7am to 7pm, six days for \$42 clear a week, I (he) had it made”.

By 1998, having worked 23yrs in the grocery trade Trevor (dad) was now a father of four girls and had taken the role as grocery manager at *Remuera New World*, store manager of *Downtown Foursquare* in Mt Roskill Auckland and manager of *Havelock North New World* in Hawkes Bay. The dream of running his own store was on the playing cards now more than ever; “I want to be my own boss and run my own business for a change”. On November 9th, 1998 that dream turned into reality, as he, along with his wife Debbie (mum), took over the *Greenmeadows Foursquare* in Napier. That’s when my life in the grocery trade began! (Fig. 2 & 3)

I was 11yrs old at the time, bagging lollies with my sisters, filling up (rotating) the milk and stocking the shelves. Seven years later in 2005 I entered a ‘new world’, University. My dad’s last words were ‘if you want to come home, there’s always a job for you at the *Four Square*’. That was until April 2006 when my parents became the proud owner/operator of *Waipukurau New World* supermarket (Fig. 4). Now my dad’s famous last words are, ‘if you want to come home, there’s always a job for you at the *New World*’.

Although the grocery trade has always been in my blood, my interest and passion as a spatial designer lies in looking at the consumer society and how ‘sites of consumption’ can become both fiscally and socially viable assets to local communities, where employees and customers are very much locals.