



HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND  
POUHERE TAONGA

## New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero – Report for a Historic Place Area 51 Futuro House, ŌHOKA (List No. 9870, Category 1)

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Area 51 Futuro House, Ōhoka, R. Burgess, 23 June 2023, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga

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DRAFT: Last amended 19 October 2023  
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### *Disclaimer*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### *Purpose of this report*

The purpose of this report is to provide evidence to support the inclusion of Area 51 Futuro House in the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero as a Category 1 historic place.

### *Summary*

Built in Christchurch in the mid-1970s, Area 51 Futuro House, at 56 McRoberts Road, Ōhoka, is an eye-catching Futuristic style ellipsoid building made from prefabricated white reinforced fibreglass plastic that is authentic to the vision of Finnish architect, Matti Suuronen, who designed the first Futuro in 1968. From the late 1960s and through the following decade or so, around 100 Futuros were built around the world, 12 of them being produced in New Zealand between 1973 and circa 1976. Now only around 68, in various states of repair or assembly, are known to survive globally. Area 51 Futuro House is an outstanding international example of a fully renovated habitable Futuro, with a prior history of curious low-key utilitarian functions in remote South Island places. It has aesthetic, architectural, cultural, historical, social and technological significance or value.

In Finland, in early 1968, Matti Suuronen came up with an innovative solution for a prefabricated, easy-to-relocate, after-ski hut – the first prototype of the Futuro. So grew a vision of these becoming the sort of houses that people in the future would live in. Helsinki plastics firm, Polykem Ltd, took on mass-production rights to create Futuro houses. The ellipsoid capsule, made of segments of fibreglass-reinforced polyester plastic could be assembled and taken apart for relatively easy relocation. Basing his design purely on mathematics, Suuronen's ellipsoid shell provided optimum structural efficiency and, although it wasn't his intention, the Futuro happened to look like a space ship. The spectacular design went into production world-wide. By 1972, a Christchurch company secured the rights to manufacture Futuro houses in New Zealand and the Pacific. Their first, produced by August 1973, was a show-home at their factory grounds on Wainoni Road, Christchurch, and by the beginning of 1974 two other Futuro houses were show-cased at the entrance to Queen Elizabeth II Park for the British Commonwealth Games. Around the same time, another Futuro was stationed at the Addington Showgrounds. Despite optimism for increased production, in the end only 12 Futuro houses were produced in New Zealand. One of those is the one now known as Area 51 Futuro House in Ōhoka.

Ōhoka is situated on the edge of the historic 18,000 acre wetlands that lay between the Waimakariri and Rakahuri rivers providing a good supply of wading birds and fibres for weaving, food and medicine. The name Ōhoka may derive from Ō (the place of) and Hoka ('the stick') which was used to snare the

birds for food. Ara tawhito (travelling routes) crossed over the landscape providing annual and seasonal pathways up and down and across the Plains. The resources supported the nearby Kaiapoi pā, a vibrant and successful pā which was a thriving trading centre for a range of goods, including pounamu.

The structure at 56 McRoberts Road, Ōhoka, is demonstrably a Futuro house of standard form and dimensions. Circular in plan and ellipsoid in elevation, the main unit has a diameter of eight metres and a height of four metres. Constructed of shiny white fibreglass plastic, the Futuro is made up of 16 modular segments, connected in eight bays to create a distinctive flattened spheroid form. Each bay contains a pair of ovoid porthole windows, sealed with concave clear perspex. One bay contains the entry door, which folds down to reveal an aircraft-like staircase. The fibreglass structure is raised above the ground on a steel support frame comprising a ring on four pairs of angled struts. The interior has been immaculately renovated to reflect typical layout and vibrant décor of the period.

As is common with Futuro units, Area 51 Futuro House tells a quirky story of use and relocation. Its earliest use when built in the mid-1970s is not known. By 1977 it was ‘parked up’ at the campus of Lincoln College (now Lincoln University) and by 1979 it had been transported up to the water take area of ‘Middle Rock Farm’ near Lake Coleridge, adjacent to Dry Acheron Stream, where it functioned as a sort of research station related to the monitoring of water conditions in the creek bed. By the late 1980s it was used for storing dog food at Dry Acheron Station. In circa 1990, Richard Mee spotted the strange unit when he was helicoptering over the high country property. Mee purchased it and transported the Futuro to the Paringa River in South Westland where he used it over several decades as a whitebaiting and fishing hut. In 2018 the Futuro was eagerly purchased by Futuro aficionado, Nick McQuoid, who dismantled and transported it from the remote Paringa site to family land at Ōhoka, where it has been painstakingly restored and renovated to bring it up to Matti Suuronen’s vision. Now an immaculate example of a habitable Futuro house, Area 51 Futuro House has a popular new life where it is available for hire at this property as short-term holiday accommodation.

## **1. IDENTIFICATION<sup>1</sup>**

### **1.1. Name of Place**

*Name*

Area 51 Futuro House

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<sup>1</sup> This section is supplemented by visual aids in Appendix 1 of the report.

*Other Names*

Futuro House

Futuro Home

Futuro

**1.2. Location Information**

*Address*

56 McRoberts Road

ŌHOKA

*Local Authority*

Waimakariri District Council

**1.3. Legal Description**

Lot 1 DP 71457 (RT CB41B/1114), Canterbury Land District

**1.4. Extent of List Entry**

Extent includes part of the land described as Lot 1 DP 71457 (RT CB41B/1114), Canterbury Land District and the building known as Area 51 Futuro House thereon. (Refer to map in [Appendix 1](#) of the List entry report for further information). Movable furniture within the Futuro is not included in the Extent.

**1.5. Eligibility**

There is sufficient information included in this report to identify this place. This place is physically eligible for consideration as a historic place. It consists of a building fixed to land which lies within the territorial limits of New Zealand.

**1.6. Existing Heritage Recognition**

*Local Authority and Regional Authority Plan Scheduling*

Not scheduled in the Waimakariri District Plan (Operative 2005).

Not scheduled in the Proposed Waimakariri District Plan (Notified 2021).



## 2. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 2.1. Historical Information

#### *Ōhoka*

The vast network of wetlands and plains of Kā Pākihi Whakatekateka o Waitaha (Canterbury Plains) is inherently important to the history of its early occupation. The area was rich in food from the forest and waterways. Major awa such as the Rakahura (Ashley) and the Waimakariri were supplied from the mountain fed aquifers of Ka Tiritiri o te Moana (Southern Alps) while other spring fed waterways meandered throughout the landscape. The rivers teemed with tuna, kōkopu, kanakana and inaka while the forest supplied kererū, tūī and other fauna as well as building materials. Ōhoka is situated on the edge of the historic 18,000-acre wetlands that lay between the Waimakariri and Rakahuri rivers providing a good supply of wading birds and fibres for weaving, food and medicine. The name Ōhoka may derive from Ō (the place of) and Hoka ('the stick') which was used to snare the birds for food.<sup>2</sup> Ara tawhito (travelling routes) crossed over the landscape providing annual and seasonal pathways up and down and across the Plains. The resources supported the nearby Kaiapoi pā, a vibrant and successful pā which was a thriving trading centre for a range of goods, including pounamu.

From the mid nineteenth century, Pākehā missionaries and immigrants settled in the Canterbury Plains, many arriving as part of the Canterbury Association settlement programme of the mid twentieth century. In the Waimakariri district, small colonial towns and settlements developed in the 1850s and 1860s, including at Ōhoka. By 1866 there were some 25 farms established in the Ōhoka area.<sup>3</sup> These days, Ōhoka remains a small semi-rural township and, as at the 2018 census, the wider area's population was just under 300 people.<sup>4</sup> The McQuoid family bought the property at 56 McRoberts Road, Ōhoka in 1998, but in the late 2010s their home was destroyed by an electrical fault fire.<sup>5</sup> Since 2018, Nick McQuoid has turned around this misfortune by installing Area 51 Futuro House at the site and redeveloping the surrounds to create a private resort for short-stay hire.

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<sup>2</sup> Ōhoka School website: URL <https://www.ohoka.school.nz/a/BJFhqKN> (accessed 25 Sep. 2023)

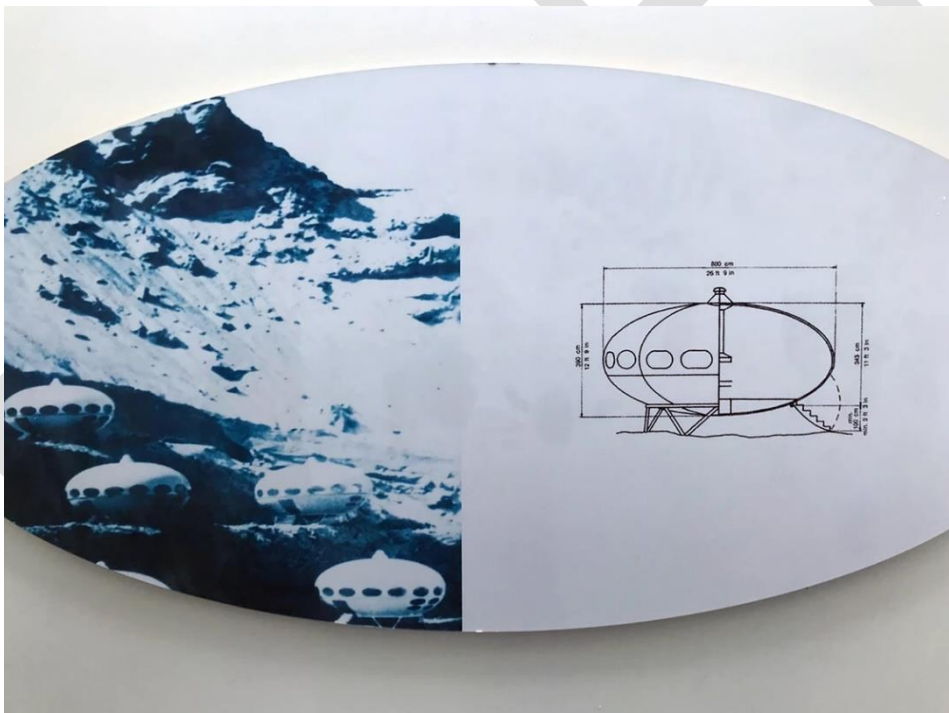
<sup>3</sup> D. N. Hawkins, *Beyond the Waimakariri: A Regional History*, Christchurch, 2001, pp. 136-137.

<sup>4</sup> As part of the wider Mandeville-Ōhoka statistical area, the area recorded a population of 297 in the 2018 New Zealand Census.

<sup>5</sup> Record of Title CB41B/1114; *Essence* (North Canterbury) magazine, April 2022, pp. 14-15; Canterbury Maps shows the family home there prior to the fire in the aerial dated some time between 2015-2019 (Canterbury Maps URL: <https://canterburymaps.govt.nz/> )

### *Futuro House Design*

The Futuro house was the invention of Finnish architect, Matti Suuronen, who specialised in designing functionalist buildings such as petrol stations, kiosks, grain silos and various solutions for housing.<sup>6</sup> He had a particular interest in prefabrication and the use of plastics. When a friend asked him to design an after-ski hut, after extensive research and development, in 1968 Suuronen's solution was the prototype Futuro house, an ellipsoid capsule made of segment-like pieces of fibreglass-reinforced polyester plastic that could be assembled and taken apart, like an orange, for relatively easy relocation.<sup>7</sup> The pieces could be carried by truck or the whole could be suspended from a helicopter.<sup>8</sup> Once on site, it was supported by a metal ring with adjustable legs. Basing his design purely on mathematics, Suuronen's ellipsoid shell provided optimum structural efficiency for managing weather conditions such as wind and snow load.<sup>9</sup> Quick to heat and easy to construct in rough terrain, the sealed-up saucer shape all but eliminated dust and humidity.



Section and image of Futuro houses from interpretation panel on display at 56 McRoberts Road, Ōhoka (previously from within a Futuro house displayed at the Christchurch Botanic Gardens)

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<sup>6</sup> Don Bassett, 'Form Follows Fantasy: The Futuro House in New Zealand', *Art New Zealand*, Spring 2019, n.171, p. 104.

<sup>77</sup> Milford Wayne Donaldson, Donaldson Futuro, booklet for California Registered Historical Landmark Dedication 16 April 2022, p. 34; Bassett, Spring 2019, p. 104.

<sup>8</sup> Futuro Facts, typescript by Futuro Homes (NZ) Ltd, not dated.

<sup>9</sup> Donaldson, April 2022, p. 35.

Helsinki plastics firm, Polykem Ltd (Oy Polykem Ab), was granted mass-production rights to create Futuro houses.<sup>10</sup> While the first prototype was built in early 1968, it was only when the third one was manufactured that the name 'Futuro' was born.<sup>11</sup> The spectacular design went into production world-wide.

The smooth surfaces, requiring little maintenance, came in a range of through-dyed colours. The Futuro plans were largely open space, except for partitions for the kitchen and bathroom areas, and streamlined plastic recliners positioned around the periphery could be also used for sleeping.

Despite their spaceship like appearance, Suuronen was adamant that his inspiration was grounded in efficient mass production of practical housing solutions, rather than thinking of sci-fi or alien themes. The public and media thought otherwise and the Futuro was eagerly embraced for its flying saucer connotations. This was the era of space exploration and in July 1969 the Apollo 11 moon landing screened on live television.<sup>12</sup> When the Futuro debuted in the United States in mid-1969, its arrival by helicopter was described as in the papers as 'looking more like a flying saucer than a home'.<sup>13</sup>

By 1969, manufacturing rights were being sold to developers outside Finland. Around 30 companies in 20 countries bought the rights to Futuro construction.<sup>14</sup> The Futuro captured the attention of many, including artists and the rich and famous. German conceptual artist, Charles Wilp, owned a Futuro in Düsseldorf where he entertained famous guests including the princes of Kuwait, Andy Warhol and Arthur Paul, the publisher of *Playboy* magazine.<sup>15</sup> A Futuro featured in the September 1970 issue of *Playboy*, as the magazine wanted to do a story on it as a vacation retreat for 'the sophisticated bachelor'.<sup>16</sup> The US\$14,000 portable playhouse turned out to be the most popular feature that magazine had run in 1970, demonstrating appeal of these units in parts of the United States.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Dalzell, 1976.

<sup>11</sup> Donaldson, April 2022, p. 35.

<sup>12</sup> *Press*, 22 Jul. 1969, p. 26.

<sup>13</sup> *Philadelphia Bulletin*, 30 May 1969, p. 33.

<sup>14</sup> Julie Dalzell, 'Space Age Housing', *Designscape*, No. 86, 1976, p.41.

<sup>15</sup> The Wilp Futuro is demolished but it was documented by Wilp and further information and photos can be found on URL: [https://thefuturohouse.com/images/gol/collection/dazzledorf\\_page\\_82\\_83.jpg](https://thefuturohouse.com/images/gol/collection/dazzledorf_page_82_83.jpg)

<sup>16</sup> *Playboy*, Sep 1970, pp. 180-181, reproduced in [https://thefuturohouse.com/futuro\\_house\\_concept\\_and\\_design.html#nzmanufacturing](https://thefuturohouse.com/futuro_house_concept_and_design.html#nzmanufacturing) (accessed 20 Jul. 2023)

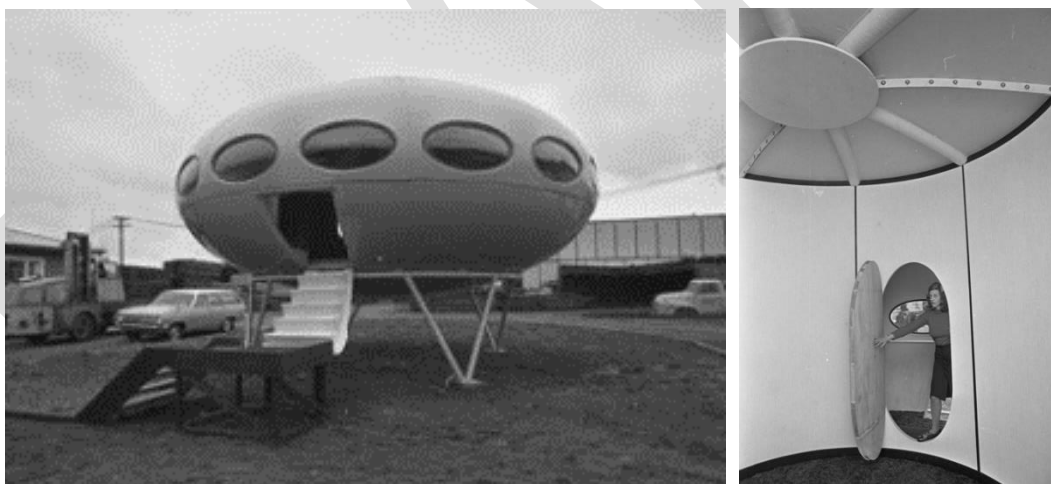
<sup>17</sup> Milford Wayne Donaldson, 16 April 2022, p. 34.



Australasia followed the international trend. In Australia, businessmen imported a single Futuro House from Finland in circa 1970 and from that a set of moulds were created to manufacture brand new Futuro house units.<sup>18</sup> While production was straightforward, difficulties in satisfying local regulations, coupled with peculiarities of the design – for example the problem of accommodating standard furniture – meant that, ultimately, the Futuro house was not a success in Australia. Even those involved in the original production and distribution in Australia are unsure how many were made, but it seems that the total number was probably seven plus the original Finnish one that was imported.<sup>19</sup> It is not clear if any were produced in Australia after 1974.<sup>20</sup>

### *New Zealand production*

In 1972, a newly established Christchurch company, Futuro Homes (NZ) Ltd, gained the licence from Polykem Ltd to build Futuros in New Zealand and the Pacific.<sup>21</sup> The business offices were at St Asaph Street and their factory was at 122A Wainoni Road, where they made all 12 of New Zealand's Futuro houses, using Matti Suuronen's moulds.<sup>22</sup> By August 1973 the first had already been made and featured in the local *Christchurch Star* newspaper.<sup>23</sup>



A Futuro house made at Wainoni Road factory, 22 August 1973, CCL-Star-1973-2049-018-023N-02 (reproduced with permission of Star Media)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Built Heritage Pty Ltd, 'Assessment of Heritage Significance: Futuro House, 465 McDonalds Road, South Morang', Draft report as at 29 Sep. 2015, pp. 10-13.

<sup>19</sup> Built Heritage Pty Ltd, 'Assessment of Heritage Significance: Futuro House, 465 McDonalds Road, South Morang', Draft report as at 29 Sep. 2015, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> Australian magazine, *Woman's World*, 2 Jan. 1974 has an advertisement for ordering a Futuro Home <https://thefuturohouse.com/images/colquhoun/wild-horses.jpg> (*Woman's World*, 2 Jan. 1974, p. 28).

<sup>21</sup> Declaration of compliance with requirements of Companies Act, signed 29 August 1972 – date of incorporation 4 Sep. 1972 (Archives New Zealand, Code R7744676, Box 100, Record 133863); Bassett, p. 106.

<sup>22</sup> *Press*, 3 Nov. 1975, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> 'Futuro pad ready for launching', *Christchurch Star*, 22 Aug. 1973, p. 6.

By early 1974 two or three of the New Zealand-made Futuros were being show-cased as eye-catching features at grounds associated with the Commonwealth Games held in Christchurch. Two were located near the entrance to the Games at Queen Elizabeth II Park.<sup>24</sup> One of these, greeny-blue in colour, was a fully furnished show home (sponsored by Seiko watchmakers) and the other, coloured yellow, was used by the Bank of New Zealand (BNZ), the Games' major sponsor.<sup>25</sup>



Futuro houses at QEII Park, Doug Wickham, 24 Jan-2 Feb. 1974, Christchurch City Libraries, Ref. CCL-Pearce-Slides-016.



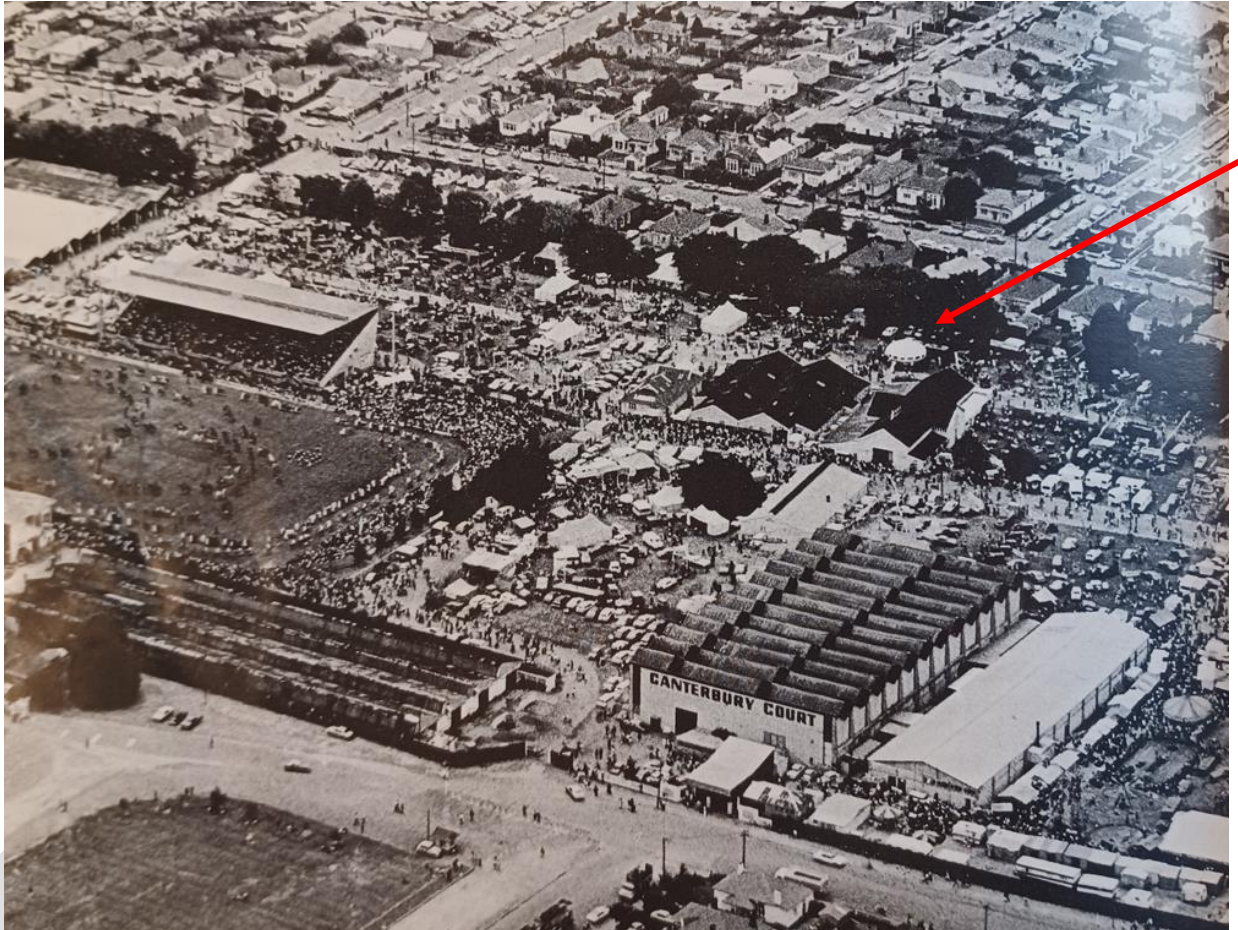
Bank of New Zealand, Commonwealth Games branch, Feb. 1974 (Bank of New Zealand Archives)

<sup>24</sup> Bassett, p. 106.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*



A third Futuro - a white one – appears to have been by the Games’ boxing venue, Canterbury Court, Addington.<sup>26</sup> It can be seen in an aerial image in a 1974 publication produced about the Commonwealth Games, although the image itself may date to later in 1974, for example when the November agricultural and pastoral show was being held.<sup>27</sup>



*Official History of the Xth British Commonwealth Games, Christchurch New Zealand, January 24-February 2, 1974*, published in late 1974 (illustration, page 362). Red arrow marks the location of a white Futuro house within the showgrounds near Whiteleigh Avenue.

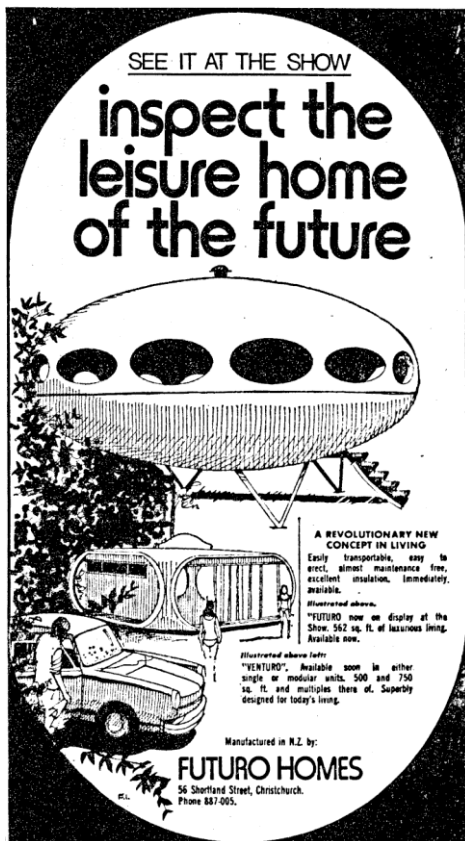
The white Futuro seems to have remained at the site, or at least was brought back by late 1974, as it was advertised as being on display at the Agricultural and Pastoral Show at Addington Showgrounds in November 1974, where attendees were invited to ‘inspect the

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<sup>26</sup> A. R. Cant (ed), *Official History of the Xth British Commonwealth Games, Christchurch New Zealand, January 24-February 2, 1974*, 1974 (illustration, p. 362); Press, 25 Jan. 1975, p. 23.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* The more customary role of Canterbury Court at that time was as part of the facilities used for Canterbury’s agricultural and pastoral shows and industrial exhibitions.

leisure home of the future'.<sup>28</sup> The Futuro show home - presumably the same one - was again advertised at the showgrounds in August the following year.<sup>29</sup>



### 'Futuro' facts

**All Sales Enquiries**  
Please telephone 50-957

**Specifications**  
Total weight of 'Futuro' is 5,500 lbs. Diameter at window height is 26 ft. 9 inches. Overall height is 14 ft. 6 inches, on the supporting structure, on a flat surface. The 'Futuro' may be readily adapted to a sloping site.

**Fibreglass Insulation**  
'Futuro' is particularly well insulated against cold and heat, with 'through-jointed' Fibreglass material needing little upkeep.

**Designed in Finland**  
'Futuro' was designed in Finland by Matti Suuronen (SAFA architect).

In N.Z. the sole licensees are:  
Futuro Homes (N.Z.) Ltd.,  
P.O. Box 4244, Christchurch,  
New Zealand.  
Telephone 887 005  
Cables "Futuro"

"Futuro" is a new type of house built for those who require a ski-lodge, beam house, or country retreat. Made of Fibreglass-reinforced plastic, it needs only minimum upkeep. And because it is constructed in sections, it can easily be transported and put up on any site.

**Simple Design**  
Fibreglass has design capabilities beyond most other materials. It's light, yet extremely strong. It resists fatigue, chemicals, and won't corrode or rust. It won't contain things whatever you put in it. It's colour can be built in and therefore everlasting. Yet the cost is low. The choice of floor covering is yours, depending on taste and the location, whether it be in the country, up in the snow, or down by the sea.

The atmosphere of open living in the 'Futuro' Home is accentuated by the clean uncluttered design of internal fittings.

Utility areas are superbly compact in design, and do not intrude in the central living area.

Left: 'See it at the Show' advertisement for Futuro Homes, *Press*, 9 Nov. 1974, p. 17

Right: Cover and factsheet of Futuro Homes (NZ) Ltd brochure, not dated, scan held Bank of New Zealand Archives

Promoting their 'Futuro Leisure Home of reinforced fibreglass', Futuro Homes (NZ) Ltd emphasised their low initial cost, virtually no maintenance, outstanding insulation and security when unoccupied. Said to be easily transported and ideal for hill side sections, with no site preparation required, they were advertised as being immediately available.<sup>30</sup> The exterior and interior was made of fibreglass - including built-in furnishings - and colours available were white, blue, gold or red.<sup>31</sup>

To begin with, the company was busy and optimistic. It gained the rights to the construction of not only the ellipsoid Futuros resting on concrete mounted steel legs but also the Venturo,

<sup>28</sup> *Press*, 9 Nov. 1974, p. 17.

<sup>29</sup> *Press*, 28 Aug. 1975, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> *Press*, 3 May 1975, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Futuro Facts, typescript by Futuro Homes (NZ) Ltd, not dated, Bank of New Zealand Archives.

a rectangular, modular building, also self-supporting but on standard foundations.<sup>32</sup> The Venturo design was originally planned to be produced before the Futuro but a mishap to the moulds *en route* from Finland postponed Venturo production until late 1975.<sup>33</sup> The only company in New Zealand with the capacity and licence to make the Finnish-designed Futuro houses, it claimed its designs were the most advanced outside of Finland and that they had the potential to produce two houses a week and possibly even more.<sup>34</sup>

The Futuros were advertised as taking around 120 'man hours' (or three men, five days) to erect on site – the designs could be one or two bedroomed. In July 1974 the price in New Zealand for a Futuro was \$9,500 for a shell only or \$11,980 for a fully furnished unit, though this didn't include the cost of cartage or erection.<sup>35</sup> Prices increased the following year.<sup>36</sup> In mid-1975 the government announced its Housing Corporation would provide loans for private individuals to buy Futuro houses.<sup>37</sup>

One of the early New Zealand-made Futuros was a white one made and installed in hillside Huntsbury, Christchurch, for author and journalist, Marjory Staples, and her husband, Richard.<sup>38</sup> After finally getting through 'red tape' of planning regulators unused to this type of building, it took some time for the couple to sort installation errors and other gremlins before they could say that they had '...adapted to space age living'.<sup>39</sup>

In 1976 Futuro Enterprises, working under parent company Futuro Homes (NZ) Ltd, had a staff of 20 – General Manager, David Hamilton, came from a background in plastics; Brian Moseley, Project Manager; Brynn Beechey, manager; a secretary; two people in the erection team and 14 in the factory.<sup>40</sup> Des Walker was responsible for new design and development

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<sup>32</sup> *Press*, 9 Nov. 1974, p. 17.

<sup>33</sup> Dalzell, 1976.

<sup>34</sup> *Press*, 19 Jul. 1975, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Bassett, p. 106.

<sup>36</sup> As Dalzell, 1976, p. 43 explains in her 1976 article: 'Unless bought as shell only (\$10,555 instead of \$14,600) the Futuro model comes with standard furniture, fittings and servicing, where applicable, to customers' own colour choices. 'Standard' means entrance foyer with control for the automatic extension stairs to get down to ground level, bedroom with built in double bed, cupboard and wardrobe, kitchen which is not partitioned off from the main living area, bathroom with fibreglass shower floor, lavatory, wash basin, and living area with generous fibreglass shelving around the perimeter, except where standard upholstered seating is mounted.'

<sup>37</sup> *Press*, 19 Jul. 1975, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Rosaline Redwood, *He Was There Too: Reminiscences of a Christian Journalist*, 1999, pp. 10-17.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Dalzell, 1976, p. 41; Letter to Messrs Allott Reeves & Co, 5 June 1981 (Archives New Zealand, Ref. CHWGRR, Record 1669,



through Futuro Homes NZ Ltd and the hope had been that a factory would be opened in the North Island.<sup>41</sup> A 'Futuro Space Home (moonhouse)' was displayed at the New Zealand Building Field days at Mystery Creek in Hamilton, in 1976 and 1977, but no factory was established in the North Island.<sup>42</sup>

David Hamilton enthused that the main draw-card of their product was the instant housing, ready for occupation within two weeks of ordering.<sup>43</sup> This, along with the attractions of portability for relocation, permanent materials, no maintenance and competitive pricing helped 'to allay first impressions of spacy, gimmicky structures not really intended for the real world'.<sup>44</sup> Compared of other low cost housing of the time, such as Keith Hay Homes, Futuros were said to have cost advantages – with Futuro houses costing around \$18 per square foot (.09 square metre) compared with \$20 for a similar size in summerhill stone.<sup>45</sup> Hamilton said he felt Futuros may well last 100 or 150 years, off-setting a conscience about the use of non-renewable fossil fuels in the manufacture of fibreglass.<sup>46</sup>

New Zealand Futuros were promoted as having a wide range of potential uses - 'Vacation House; Motel Units; Ski and Resort area Lodges; temporary Class Rooms and Housing; Portable Housing for Air Force, Military and Forestry Personnel; Boys' and Girls' Camp Bunks; Tourist Housing and Guest Cabanas for Swim Clubs; Foreign Government and Migrant Housing; Commercial Sales Offices; Guest House; Teenage House; Studio'.<sup>47</sup> Some of these alternative uses could be seen as the Bank of New Zealand temporary space bank, car yard offices, and portable research stations and accommodation for the Ministry of Works and Development in Canterbury and Central Otago.<sup>48</sup>

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CH801 Series 3310.b). Futuro Enterprises (Christchurch) Ltd was incorporated in November 1974 but did not trade straight away.

<sup>41</sup> Dalzell, 1976.

<sup>42</sup> *Press*, 9 Feb. 1977, p. 4. It was being displayed by Regent Homes Ltd, a Thames-based company incorporated in late 1967 when Futuros were little more than an idea in Matti Suuronen's mind.

<sup>43</sup> *Press*, 13 Dec. 1975, p. 42; Dalzell, 1976.

<sup>44</sup> Dalzell, 1976.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>47</sup> Futuro Facts, typescript by Futuro Homes (NZ) Ltd, Bank of New Zealand Archives.

<sup>48</sup> There is a Project file for a Ministry of Works and Development for 'Alexandra/Futuro Homes (NZ) Ltd' (email from Alex Vakhrousheva, WSP to Heritage New Zealand, 11 Sep. 2023), and newspaper notices record Ministry of Works and Development's intention to transfer a Futuro to Mid Canterbury High Country (*Press*, 4 Feb. 1978, p. 23).



The demand for Futuros as actual houses did not escalate as anticipated, however. By 1976 Futuro Homes (NZ) Limited found themselves between two markets – not so many New Zealanders could afford between \$14,000 to \$20,000 for a holiday home and, despite an alliance with Housing Corporation, it didn't seem to make inroads with the housing market.<sup>49</sup> Many felt they were too radical a design, impractical for daily living. In 1976 a yellow demonstration Futuro on site at the factory in Wainoni Road was revamped internally to show that the interior could be designed to meet individual tastes.<sup>50</sup> However, a commentator at the time pointed out the resulting 'rather confused identity: the shag pile carpet, the heavily patterned wall paper on specially built curving wood internal wall panels to replace fibreglass wall panels', all making for 'schizophrenic additions to de-plasticise the interior'.<sup>51</sup>

A significant unexpected downturn in the building industry and the rapid escalation of costs in its petroleum-based supplies of raw materials meant that Futuro house production in New Zealand appears to have ceased in the mid-1970s and, by 1987, both Futuro Homes (NZ) Limited and Futuro Enterprises had gone into liquidation.<sup>52</sup> Even after the companies were dissolved, the occasional potential client was enquiring about their kitset home options.<sup>53</sup>

What happened in New Zealand was a reflection of the fate of Futuro manufacture globally. The oil crisis of 1973 resulted in the price of plastic tripling, meaning the Futuro became too expensive to market to the masses.<sup>54</sup> This is generally the reason cited for the worldwide failure of the product, though there were also critics of the design and its unsuitability as mass-produced accommodation. While Futuros attracted mass interest, internationally they also saw hostility. Some felt they were too unnatural for their rustic environments, and in

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<sup>49</sup> Dalzell, 1976; Letter 12 May 1981 from N. C. McLeod, Commissioner of Works, to Sales Manager Futura (sic) Enterprises Ltd, Archives New Zealand, Ref. CHWGRR, Record 1669, CH801 Series 3310.b.

<sup>50</sup> Dalzell, 1976, p.43. Aerial Photographs show a Futuro on the Wainoni Road site from 1975 but it is not shown in an aerial of that site the following decade (Canterbury Maps)

<sup>51</sup> Dalzell, 1976, p.43.

<sup>52</sup> Letter from F.S. Allott to Provisional Liquidator, 18 Nov. 1980; Letter I.F. Allott to B.N. Nalder, Department of Justice, 21 Nov. 1980, Letter on Mobil Oil New Zealand Limited letterhead from R. W. L. Makeig signed as a Director of Futuro Enterprises (Chch) Ltd, 26 Nov. 1980, to Department of Justice; Letter from A.N. Cumming to Department of Justice, 25 Nov. 1980 (Archives New Zealand, Ref. CHWGRR, Record 1669, CH801 Series 3310.b). Mr Makeig was deemed effectively the nominee director of Mobil Oil. *Press*, 15 Apr. 1987, p. 73; *NZ Gazette*, 14 May 1987, p. 2177.

<sup>53</sup> Letter from A. F. van Leest, Cromwell, to Futuro Enterprises Ltd, 2 Dec. 1983 (Archives New Zealand, Ref. CHWGRR, Record 1669, CH801 Series 3310.b).

<sup>54</sup> Arthur Quarmby, *The Plastics Architect*, *Docomomo Journal*, (66), 2022, <https://doi.org/10.52200/docomomo.66.13>

the United States, Futuro houses were banned in some cities by zoning regulations.<sup>55</sup> Banks were reluctant to finance them. Public perception began to shift from plastic as being a miracle material to an ecological concern. Polykem came close to collapse, and it (including moulds) was bought by Suuronen, who then sold to a company named Exel Oyj, now known as Exel Composites.<sup>56</sup>

In New Zealand, attempts were later made to take up production elsewhere. In the 1990s, in the North Island, some effort was given to try to reignite 'spaceship house' production, but nothing eventuated.<sup>57</sup> Futuro house enthusiasts still had the small pool of the New Zealand-made Futuros from the 1970s – and potentially ones from overseas – as possibilities for purchase. The very fact that they were designed to be relocatable meant that New Zealand's 12 Futuros moved around in much the same way as other Futuros did globally. And, just like the international Futuros, they met with mixed fate or have murky histories. Some have had a long life on a single site - for example, a Futuro that has been used as a bach in Warrington, North of Dunedin, since the 1970s, and the original Futuro house which has been *in situ* on Huntsbury Hill in Christchurch, since the mid-1970s (and has been joined in in the early 2000s by another relocated Futuro to create a larger dwelling of two connecting Futuros).<sup>58</sup> Shortly after the closing of the Commonwealth Games, tenders were invited for the sale 'as is, where is' of the two Futuro units at Queen Elizabeth II Park, the Bank of New Zealand one shifting to Parapara Beach near Collingwood in September 1974 for fit-out to create a home, though it is no longer in that location.<sup>59</sup> This shifting around is more typical of Futuro house histories. Most have not stayed in one location and plotting their movements is something of a challenge. It appears that are ten still in New Zealand, in various conditions and states of assembly.

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<sup>55</sup> Bywater and <https://www.southernthing.com/the-story-of-futuro-houses-and-where-you-can-still-see-them-in-the-south-2636621051.html>

<sup>56</sup> URL: [https://thefuturohouse.com/futuro\\_house\\_concept\\_and\\_design.html#nzmanufacturing](https://thefuturohouse.com/futuro_house_concept_and_design.html#nzmanufacturing) (accessed 20 Jul. 2023)

<sup>57</sup> Bassett, p. 107

<sup>58</sup> Aerial images showing 115 Huntsbury Avenue, Christchurch (Canterbury Maps); Rosaline Redwood, *He Was There Too: Reminiscences of a Christian Journalist*, 1999, pp.10-17.

<sup>59</sup> The tender notice read, 'These units, one coloured Golden Yellow, the other Kentucky Blue, are constructed of double skin G.R.P. with an insulation layer between, and can be readily unbolted from the support ring into 16 segments suitable for transport by road, rail or sea. Both units are carpeted and each unit is 562 square feet in area (approx.). There are no interior fittings' - *Press*, 27 Feb. 1974, p. 17 and 26 Sep. 1974, p. 7.

### *Area 51 Futuro House*

The Futuro that it now known as Area 51 Futuro House has been at several different locations and had multiple utilitarian functions since it was first produced in Christchurch in the mid 1970s. It is believed to have been constructed in 1974 or 1975, as one of the 12 produced in the Wainoni Road factory, and while its very first use is not known, it is not out of the question that it could have had a role associated with the early 1974 Commonwealth Games and/or as the show home that was displayed at the Addington Showgrounds in November 1974.<sup>60</sup>

By 1977 (or late 1976) it was in place at Lincoln College (now Lincoln University), approximately 20 kilometres south-west of Christchurch.<sup>61</sup> In fact, images show that there were two white Futuro units, 'parked up' side by side, adjacent to some other buildings.<sup>62</sup> There was also at least one Ventura (the other fibreglass modular product being made at that time) at this site.<sup>63</sup>

One recollection is that the Lincoln 'flying saucer' structures were installed or 'parked up' by Ministry of Works for their Water and Soil staff, possibly as part of an intended collaboration with Lincoln College.<sup>64</sup> Ministry of Works had a close association with Lincoln College over a long period. One aspect, from the 1950s, involved officers of the Catchments Boards and Soil Conservation Division of Ministry of Works initiating field studies including in the high country.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Press*, 9 Nov. 1974, p. 17

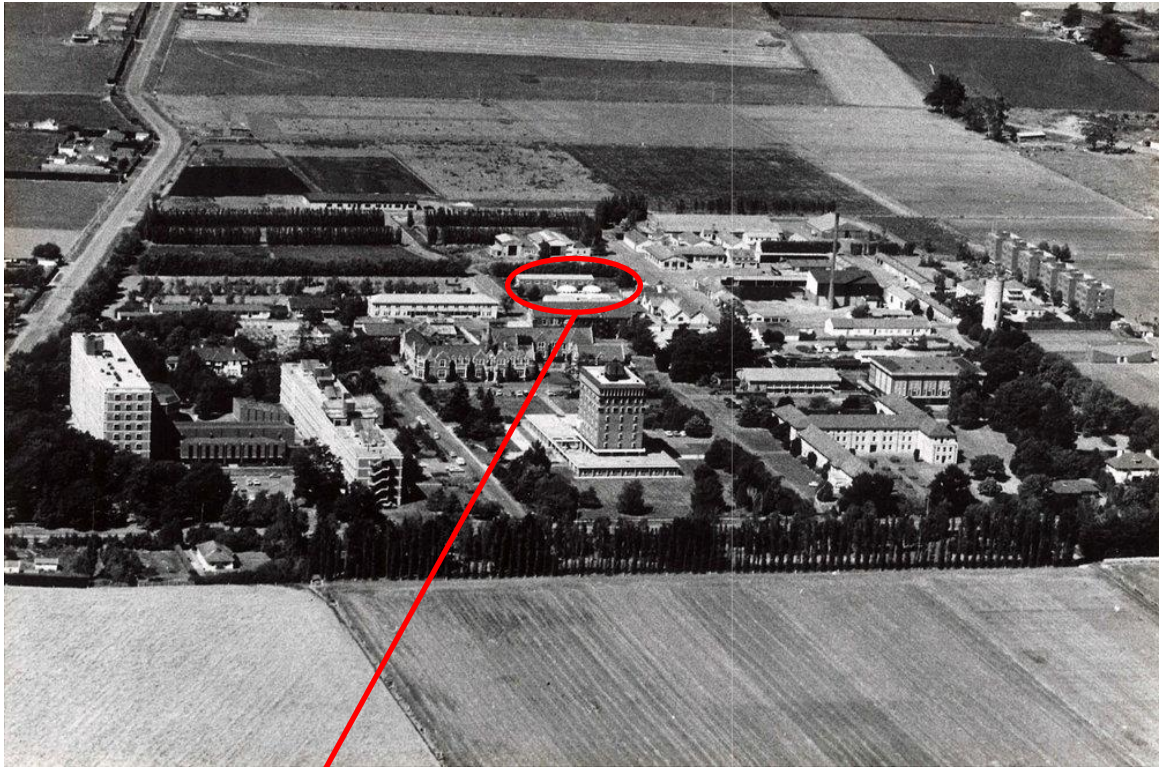
<sup>61</sup> Lincoln University Library has a good source of aerial images of the campus. The Futuros are not shown in two aerials dated 1975, nor in one dated 3 March 1976 but are in an aerial dated 'circa 1976' and others dated 1977.

<sup>62</sup> A number of aerials dated 1977 and 1978 show the two Futuros: <https://livingheritage.lincoln.ac.nz/nodes/view/3904>, <https://livingheritage.lincoln.ac.nz/nodes/view/3904>, <https://livingheritage.lincoln.ac.nz/nodes/view/4017> and another at <https://livingheritage.lincoln.ac.nz/nodes/view/4003>. An aerial photograph of 9 March 1979 shows the two Futuros are no longer at the Lincoln College site (URL: <https://livingheritage.lincoln.ac.nz/nodes/view/88845> accessed 7 Sep 2023)

<sup>63</sup> There is a photo from an unknown source that Nick McQuoid has that shows the corner of a Futuro and what looks like a Ventura behind, with snow on the ground, at Lincoln campus (not dated but potentially from the 'Big Snow' of 1978?).

<sup>64</sup> Vince Bidwell, who was on the staff of the New Zealand Agricultural Engineering Institute (NZAEI) from Sep. 1974 and who remembers the 'flying saucer' structures when they arrived – email to R. Burgess, Heritage New Zealand, 29 Aug. 2023.

<sup>65</sup> I. D. Blair, *The Seed They Sowed: Centennial Story of Lincoln College*, 1978, p. 204.



Aerial view of Lincoln College late 1970s, Living Heritage Tikaka Tuku Iho, Ref: <https://livingheritage.lincoln.ac.nz/nodes/view/10835>

In 1978 the Ministry of Works and Development was looking for a contractor to shift a Futuro Fibreglass Unit – ‘no demolition involved’ from Lincoln College up to ‘Middle Rock Farm’ near Lake Coleridge, adjacent to the Dry Acheron Stream.<sup>66</sup>

*Press*, 4 Feb. 1978, p. 23

**Ministry of Works and Development**

CONTRACT 6990: MINISTRY OF WORKS AND DEVELOPMENT

RELOCATION OF “FUTURO” FIBREGLASS UNIT FROM LINCOLN COLLEGE

THE work consists of the relocation, including uplifting from Lincoln College (no demolition involved), transportation, new concrete foundation and fixing to these on a site on “Middle Rock Farm” near Lake Coleridge adjacent to the dry Acheron Stream, all as per contract documents.

Tenders, closing with the Secretary, District Tenders Board, Ministry of Works and Development, P.O. Box 1479, Christchurch, at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, February 21, 1978, are invited for the above work. Envelopes containing tenders should be endorsed “Tender No. 6990.”

Particulars available from Contracts Clerk, Ministry of Works and Development Office, Second Floor, Government Buildings, Worcester Street, Christchurch.

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<sup>66</sup> *Press*, 4 Feb. 1978, p. 23.

This shift to the high country location around 80 kilometres north west of the Lincoln campus, appears to have taken place in late 1978 or 1979.<sup>67</sup> The Futuro sat at the back of Middle Rock Farm's water intake and functioned as a low-key Ministry of Works research station associated with monitoring water conditions in the creek.<sup>68</sup> A Ministry of Works water and sediment discharge recording station was constructed in the late 1970s or 1980 downstream of where Dry Acheron Stream exits from its mountainous catchment – a v-shaped weir, a sediment storage basin, and rock dam structures all formed part of this station.<sup>69</sup> This is likely where the Futuro was situated for a few years.

It was only occasionally used by Ministry of Works and some time in the 1980s it fell into the hands of Tony Crowe, owner at the Dry Acheron, a sub-division of Middle Rock Farm.<sup>70</sup> At Dry Acheron's yard it was used to store dog food.<sup>71</sup> In around the late 1980s or 1990, helicopter pilot, Richard Mee, was flying over the Dry Acheron site and he spotted the Futuro and decided to purchase it.<sup>72</sup> It was taken apart, trucked over the Haast Pass and flown down the Paringa River, South Westland, by helicopter pilot Alan Bond, where it was reassembled for use by the Mee family as a whitebaiting and fishing hut.<sup>73</sup> The Futuro remained in this remote location in the ownership of the Mees until 2018 when it was purchased by Futuro aficionado, Nick McQuoid.<sup>74</sup>

The difficult task of retrieving the Futuro from such a remote location is well documented – it was reached by jetboat and had to be dismantled using battery-powered tools, charged on a

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<sup>67</sup> An aerial image dated March 1979 does not show any Futuros on the Lincoln campus site.

<sup>68</sup> Lyn Nell from Middle Rock Farm, email to R. Burgess, Heritage New Zealand, 28 Aug. 2023; Ministry of Works had some role in stream sediment transport studies at Dry Acheron Stream, as mentioned in the *Press*, 21 Jul. 1984, p. 69 and 29 Nov. 1986, p. 67.

<sup>69</sup> George Griffiths and D. Murray Hicks, Water and Soil Science Centre, Ministry of Works and Development, Christchurch (1980). 'Transport of sediment in mountain streams: Performance of a measurement system during a two year storm (Note)', *New Zealand Journal of Hydrology*, 19, pp. 131-136.

<sup>70</sup> Lyn Nell from Middle Rock Farm, email to Robyn Burgess, Heritage New Zealand, 28 Aug. 2023.

<sup>71</sup> Tim Mee, pers. comm. 16 Aug. 2023.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Richard Mee is shown as owner of this bach on road reserve in 2017-2018 (Ordinary Council Meeting Agenda, Westland District Council, 25 Jan. 2018, p. 57: <https://www.westlanddc.govt.nz/sites/default/files/25.01.18%20-%20Council%20Agenda.pdf>; Bassett, p. 109; Emma Dangerfield, 'Canterbury entrepreneur tackles weird and wonderful restoration project', *Stuff*, 10 May 2019; Thomas Bywater, 'How the Futuro UFO house landed in New Zealand,' *New Zealand Herald*, 19 Dec. 2022.



solar panel.<sup>75</sup> It was then taken out by helicopter, boat and lastly on trucks to its new home in Ōhoka in 2018.<sup>76</sup>



Dismantling the Futuro at the Paringa River site, McQuoid collection of photographs, 2018.<sup>77</sup>

In its new location at McQuoid family land at 56 McRoberts Road, Ōhoka, McQuoid and his contracting friends spent a year full-time renovating the Futuro, including making new moulds for wall partitions, moulding new entrance stairs and fitting Perspex window replacements.<sup>78</sup> Like the removal, the restoration and renovation project was documented and images and recordings shared through social media. McQuoid's inspiration for the colourful interior is a colourful vintage photograph from the collection of graphic artist Alfred E. De Martini Collection, along the lines of Suuronen's prototype Futuro 000, which had an interior of predominantly purple and red (including cushioning on the chairs and beds and the carpeting).<sup>79</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Thomas Bywater, 'How the Futuro UFO house landed in New Zealand,' *New Zealand Herald*, 19 Dec. 2022.

<sup>76</sup> Bassett, p. 109; Emma Dangerfield, 'Canterbury entrepreneur tackles weird and wonderful restoration project', *Stuff*, 10 May 2019; Thomas Bywater, 'How the Futuro UFO house landed in New Zealand,' *New Zealand Herald*, 19 Dec. 2022.

<sup>77</sup> URL: <https://thefuturohouse.com/Futuro-Paringa-River-New-Zealand.html>

<sup>78</sup> URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFUTeiED9KM> ; *Stuff*, 10 May 2019 – Canterbury entrepreneur tackles weird and wonderful restoration project; URL: <https://thefuturohouse.com/Futuro-Rangiora-New-Zealand.html#oho082022> (accessed 17 Jul. 2023).

<sup>79</sup> Lydia Beerkens, 'Matti Suuronen's 'Futuro' – Prototype 1968 after 50 Years' *Docomomo Journal* 66, pp. 60-61; URL: [https://thefuturohouse.com/images/martini/de\\_martini\\_13c.jpg](https://thefuturohouse.com/images/martini/de_martini_13c.jpg) (accessed 29 Aug. 2023)



McQuoid's childhood curiosity with a local Futuro house has grown into an all-consuming endeavour to acquire and restore Futuro houses in New Zealand. He's owned three Futuros - but no more than two at a time - and has been described as a 'premier owner' of these internationally sought-after structures.<sup>80</sup> In 2012, McQuoid bought his first Futuro, a white one that had been at Kaimaumau in Northland, which he partly did up and on-sold to David Walsh in Tasmania, and then his second in 2013 (the yellow Bank of New Zealand one from the Commonwealth Games site, which had been in storage in Australia since the 1990s) which he holds in storage awaiting restoration.<sup>81</sup>

The one affixed to land at 56 McRoberts Road, Ōhoka, McQuoid has named Area 51 Futuro House and the place has been developed as resort-style accommodation. In 2022 it won the category of New Zealand's best unique listing on Airbnb. The name Area 51 is in reference to a secret United State Air Force base in Nevada often associated with conspiracy theories and stories about UFOs and aliens (Area 51 is its map location).<sup>82</sup> There is another restored Futuro, now in Los Angeles, that was for a time in Rockland, Wisconsin, where it operated as an Airbnb, also called 'Area 51 Futuro'.<sup>83</sup>

## 2.2. Physical Information

### *Current Description*

Set in fenced resort style grounds, with plantings, swimming pool, sauna and quirky memorabilia, in rural Ōhoka, North Canterbury, the setting of Area 51 Futuro has been created from 2019 by the Futuro owner, Nick McQuoid, on family land at 56 McRoberts Road.

Recognisably a Futuro of international design, the smooth white fibreglass building is ellipsoid in shape with 16 ovoid bubble windows and an entrance door accessed by a retractable air-stair hinged opening. The structure is eight metres long and four metres high, and it sits on a raised metal ring.

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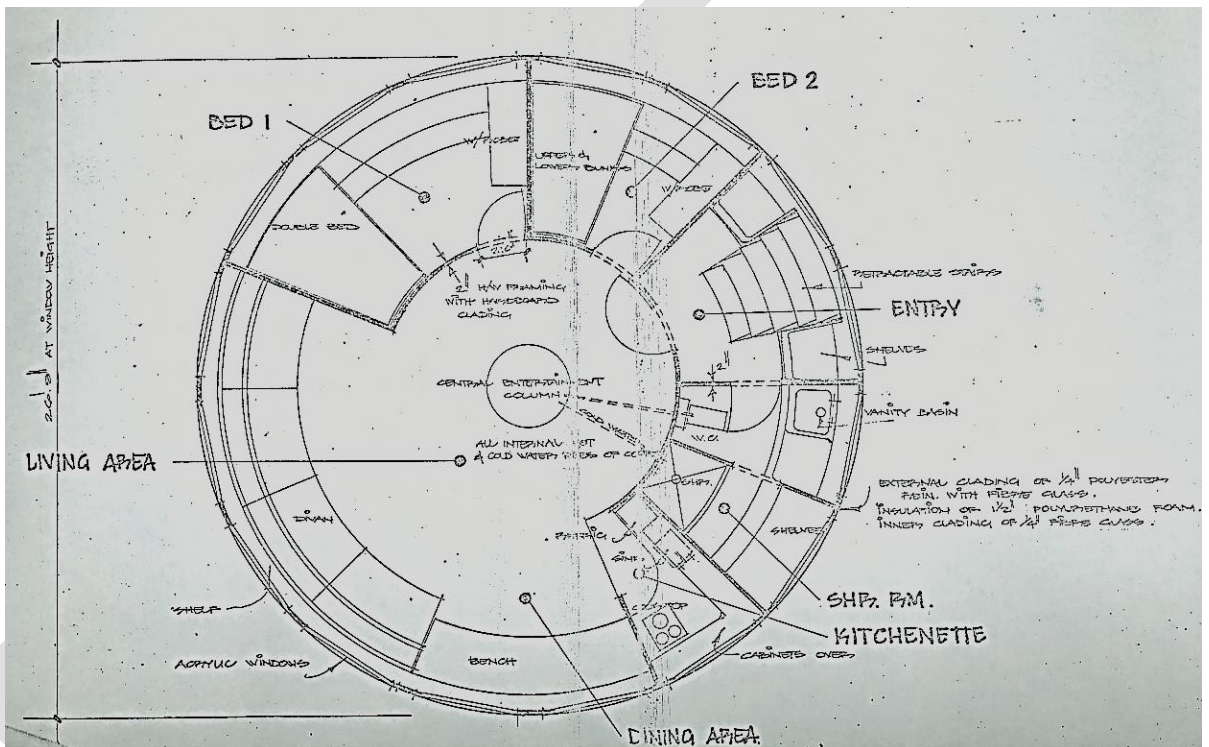
<sup>80</sup>McQuoid also currently owns a 'Googie Hut' from Antarctica, which looks very much like a Futuro but is not strictly the same – it is currently in storage in the South Island (Nick McQuoid, pers. comm. 25 Sep. 2023).

<sup>81</sup> Bassett, p. 109.

<sup>82</sup> BBC News, What is Area 51 and what goes on there?, 19 Sep. 2019, URL: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-49568127> (accessed 27 Jul. 2023)

<sup>83</sup> Donaldson, 2022, p. 41.

Its predominant construction material is fibreglass, a type of glass fibre-reinforced plastic that was innovative for house building when Matti Suuronen designed Futuro houses. A 1975 article in the *Press* described the construction materials: ‘The roof and corner sections are large double-skin mouldings of fibreglass with fibreglass insulation. The floor is an insulated composite beam construction of marine-grade plywood and wood, all fascia parts showing covered with fibreglass mouldings’.<sup>84</sup> Area 51 Futuro House conforms to this, being constructed out of fibreglass on the outside, with an insulation foam in between, and then another layer of fibreglass on the inside.<sup>85</sup>



Plan from General Specification for Futuro Unit (Futuro Homes (NZ) Ltd, not dated, Bank of New Zealand Archives)

The floor plan is 51 square metres.<sup>86</sup> The interior layout comprises a large living area, with retro white bench seating, a compact kitchen space (with cupboards, shelves, bench and sink all moulded in fibreglass), toilet and shower room fibreglass bathroom, and two small sleeping areas.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> *Press*, 19 Jul. 1975, p. 1.

<sup>85</sup> URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFUTeIED9KM> (accessed August 2023).

<sup>86</sup> The New Zealand Futuros were 51 square metres (560 square ft) - Dalzell, 1976. The current windows are Perspex replacements fitted in 2019.

<sup>87</sup> McQuoid made the retro white plastic seats from a mould supplied by fellow Futuro enthusiast, Craig Barnes, in London (Barnes' Futuro house featured on George Clark's *Amazing Spaces* television show in 2014).

The interior reflects Matti Suuronen’s original vision and the purple and red colours of the renovation reflect the joyous experimental feeling the era. Iconic décor includes a shagpile rug, Luigi Colani hybrid table-chair, Verner Panton lights, and a late 1960s Egg Chair.<sup>88</sup>



Living area, with entrance foyer at left and kitchen at centre back. (N. Jackson, 26 August 2023, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga)



Left: Fibreglass bench, sink, floor and walls of bathroom; Right: doorway leading into one of the bedrooms (R. Burgess, 23 June 2023, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga).

<sup>88</sup> The moveable furniture is not included in the extent of the List entry.

### *Construction Professionals*

Matti Suuronen (Architect), born 1933, died 16 April 2013. Finnish architect, Matti Suuronen, was a pioneer in the processing of reinforced plastic for construction. The best-known example was the ellipsoid-shaped Futuro house, which he designed in 1968. Around 100 Futuro were built globally.<sup>89</sup>

### *Construction Materials*

Fibreglass, metal, timber, Perspex

### *Key Physical Dates*

- c.1974-1975 Construction at Wainoni Road factory
- c.1977-1978 'Parked up' at Lincoln College campus
- c.1978-1980s In relocated position at Dry Acheron Stream
- c.1980s In relocated position at yard, Dry Acheron Station
- c.1990-2018 In relocated position at Paringa River site
- 2018-2019 Relocated to Ōhoka, restored and renovated

### *Uses*

- Accommodation House
- Accommodation Residential Buildings – other
- Accommodation Hut/shack (Former)
- Agriculture Shed (Former)
- Research Scientific Facilities - other

## **2.3. Chattels**

There are no chattels included in this List entry.

## **2.4. Comparative Information**

### *Prefabricated Buildings in New Zealand*

Area 51 Futuro House is an example of a prefabricated building. Prefabrication is a method of construction where the elements of a building are manufactured at a different place from

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<sup>89</sup> Exhibition Centre WeeGee, URL: <https://www.espoo.fi/en/nayttelykeskus-weege/futuro-house> (accessed 13 July 2023).

the final location. New Zealand has a long history of utilising pre-fabrication ('prefabs') for its buildings. A notable early example is the Waitangi Treaty House, which was brought from Sydney in 1833 as a pre-cut frame with fittings and most materials.<sup>90</sup> In nineteenth century colonial New Zealand, prefabricated cottages were available to migrants from all backgrounds. From the 1880s the New Zealand Railways Department became a major producer of prefab housing and by the 1920s Railway Houses were being produced and transported by rail. From 1937 the State Housing programme utilised pre-cut framing and unlined wall panels made in joinery factories and trucked to site – a prefab technique that involved the combination of pattern book designs, unskilled labour and pre-cut prefab techniques. Ministry of Works prefab worker housing was especially notable from the 1940s, with large projects such as hydro-electric schemes provided easily relocatable prefabricated worker housing. Contracting companies also began prefabricating homes at an affordable price – Keith Hay Homes, Conecta and Lockwood. Keith Hay built his first relocatable home in 1949 and the company Keith Hay Homes still continues in the twenty first century as company producing homes to standard plans in their various building yards ready for shifting to their final site.<sup>91</sup> Another company also still operating in the 2020s, Lockwood, emerged in the 1950s as a solid timber component-based system manufactured in a factory and transported for final assembly on site.<sup>92</sup> While not particularly influencing architectural design in New Zealand, Futuro houses sit as an adventurous alternative option, albeit short-lived, in our history of prefabricated and relocatable buildings.

### *Plastic houses*

The rapid growth of the petroleum industry in the twentieth century resulted in the use of plastic materials in the building industry, especially following the Second World War.<sup>93</sup> In the United States, the land-tied Monsanto House of the Future was built in 1957, demonstrating the versatility of modern plastics, at least as an exterior skin.<sup>94</sup> Futuro houses, on the other hand, were all-structural glass-reinforced polyester plastic portable homes – inside and out. Plastic exemplified a modern lifestyle – clean, functional and fun – and architects and industry leaders envisioned a future of fully plastic mass-produced housing. However, the cheap exploitation of plastics proved to be beyond the control of Western economies and the

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<sup>90</sup> Nigel Isaacs, 'House assembly – prefabrication and factory manufacture', *Build*, October/November 2008, p. 95.

<sup>91</sup> URL: <https://www.keithhayhomes.co.nz/about-us/celebrating-85-years/> (accessed August 2023)

<sup>92</sup> URL: <https://lockwood.co.nz/the-history-of-lockwood-homes/> and <https://www.ezylinehomes.co.nz/history-of-transportable-homes-in-new-zealand/> (accessed August 2023).

<sup>93</sup> Carola Hein, 'The Global Petroleumscape and its impact on Design Practice', *Docomomo Journal* 66

<sup>94</sup> Donaldson, 2022, p. 35; URL: <https://www.yesterland.com/futurehouse.html> (accessed 1 Aug. 2023).



cost of oil made plastic housing prohibitive as a cost-effective solution. By the 1980s, fully plastic housing came to be seen as less than desirable.<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, while it is recognised that mass-produced plastic does have serious environmental consequences, it does remain in use for certain elements of building.<sup>96</sup> By the 1990s plastic objects came to be considered suitable as heritage objects, and this included Futuro houses.

### *Futuro Houses: International Design Icons*

Futuros can be found throughout the world, on almost every continent. They are considered part of an anti-*in situ* architectural movement and this fact that they were designed to be portable, readily transported from one location to another, means that it is hard to keep track of them and count how many remain in existence.<sup>97</sup> As of 2023, throughout the world, there are about 68 surviving Futuro houses, with perhaps only about 40 being in reasonable condition.<sup>98</sup> In Finland, there are five surviving Futuro houses and others can be found throughout Europe, in the United States, New Zealand, Australia and Japan.

A common theme is that after being used by their first owners for a few years, many have been shifted around and quite a number have undergone a period where they've been somewhat neglected. They sort of fell out of favour. Over time, however, the Futuro house design began to be recognised as a space-age icon and a whole fan-base has developed.

Some specific Futuros have recognition as art objects and/or as heritage places. Suuronen's original 1968 after-ski Futuro was exhibited at the Vienna Secession in 1996, marking its place as art.<sup>99</sup> A restored Futuro house (the Donaldson Futuro) is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and as a California Historical Landmark on the California Register of Historical Resources.<sup>100</sup> In New Jersey, United States, another Futuro House ('Space Bank

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<sup>95</sup> Plastic does still have a place in construction, however, for example Palliside is a product made from 100% recyclable uPVC (Polyvinyl chloride, a widely produced synthetic polymer of plastic) and has been made and used for weatherboard cladding in New Zealand since the late twentieth century. Plastics are also used for insulation, piping, flooring and decoration. URL: <https://palliside.co.nz/> (accessed Sep. 2023).

<sup>96</sup> Carola Hein, 'The Global Petroleumscape and its impact on Design Practice', *Docomomo Journal* 66, 2022.

<sup>97</sup> Timothy James Keepers, 'The Rebirth of a Semi-Disintegrated Enterprise: Towards the Future of Composites in Pre-Synthesized Domestic Dwellings; and the Societal Acceptance of the Anti-In Situ Architectural Movement' (2010). USF Tampa Graduate Theses and Dissertations, URL: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/etd/1678> (accessed 7 Aug. 2023).

<sup>98</sup> URL: <https://www.espool.fi/en/nayttelykeskus-weegeef/futuro-house#the-new-life-of-the-futuro-house-49175> (accessed 13 July 2023) URL: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/homed/houses/112505522/canterbury-entrepreneur-tackles-weird-and-wonderful-restoration-project> (accessed 1 Aug. 2023)

<sup>99</sup> Pamela Voigt, 'The Futuro: History, Design and Construction in Finland and the USA', *Docomomo Journal* 66, 2022.

<sup>100</sup> National Register of Historic Places – URL: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/database->



Futuro', dated 1973) has received a 'Certification of Eligibility' to show that it is individually eligible to be listed in the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places.<sup>101</sup>

Around five Futuro houses are in public collections. The Futuro prototype (No. 000) is at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam. In Finland, Futuro House 001, the first ever mass-produced Futuro house, is on display at the Exhibition Centre WeeGee in Espoo. The Design Museum in Munich (Die Neue Sammlung) has a Futuro. The Swedish Air Force Museum in Linköping has one of three modified Futuros that had previously been used as observation towers at practice firing ranges.<sup>102</sup> The University of Canberra, Australia, also has a refurbished Futuro house on its campus, which functions as a meeting place for students.<sup>103</sup> In addition, the founder of Tasmania's Museum of Old and New Art (Mona), David Walsh, purchased one of the New Zealand-made Futuros and relocated it to a seaside location near Marion Bay in Tasmania where it has been restored in the early 2020s.<sup>104</sup> While not formally in a public collection, Walsh intends to make it available to the public 'at an exorbitant fee', one day.<sup>105</sup>

In New Zealand, it appears there are ten Futuros surviving in various states.<sup>106</sup> As of 28 July 2023, they are believed to be at the following places:

1. **Ōhoka, Canterbury** - Area 51 Futuro

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[research.htm#table](#) (accessed 24 Jul. 2023); Milford Wayne Donaldson, The Donaldson Futuro: Rescue, Relocation and Restoration Challenges, in *Docomomo Journal* 66, 2022, p. 51

<sup>101</sup> Certification of Eligibility Letter from State of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to Willingboro Recreation and Parks Department, 24 Feb. 2022 and email from Andrea Tingey, New Jersey Historic Preservation Office to Robyn Burgess, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, 8 Aug. 2023.

<sup>102</sup> In 1970 the Swedish Air force ordered three modified Futuro Houses to be used as observation towers at two practice firing ranges. Placed on top of tall concrete towers, these modified Futuros had fewer but larger reinforced elliptical windows. In 2016, the Futuro Houses were removed from the firing range and at least one was restored and is now on display, on a tubular steel base, at Flygvapenmuseum. Its door and interior fabric is a reconstruction (see: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O\\_ZyjVmeJrE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_ZyjVmeJrE) )

<sup>103</sup> URL: <https://www.canberra.edu.au/uc-alumni-canvas/canvas-articles/posts/5.-post-with-featured-image> (accessed August 2023).

<sup>104</sup> This Futuro was, for a time, in the ownership of Nick McQuoid, the owner of the Area 51 Futuro House at 56 McRoberts Road, Ōhoka – pers. comm. Nick McQuoid, June 2023. Tory Shepherd, 'It's back to the Futuro in Australia, where seven of the 'UFO houses' have landed', 2 Sep 2023, URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2023/sep/02/its-back-to-the-futuro-in-australia-where-seven-of-the-ufo-houses-have-landed> (accessed 4 Sep 2023).

<sup>105</sup> Tory Shepherd, 'It's back to the Futuro in Australia, where seven of the 'UFO houses' have landed', 2 Sep 2023, URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2023/sep/02/its-back-to-the-futuro-in-australia-where-seven-of-the-ufo-houses-have-landed> (accessed 4 Sep 2023).

<sup>106</sup> Bywater, 'How the Futuro UFO house landed in New Zealand', Dec. 2022; Nick McQuoid, pers. comm. 25 Sep. 2023; URL: <https://thefuturohouse.com/> (accessed Jul. 2023).

2. **Ōhoka, Canterbury** - Yellow (former BNZ Commonwealth Games) Futuro which is dismantled, awaiting restoration (currently but temporarily on same land parcel as Area 51 Futuro, after being returned to New Zealand from Sydney, Australia).<sup>107</sup>
3. **Warrington, Otago**. This white Futuro has been in this coastal hillside location since 1975.<sup>108</sup>
4. **Huntsbury, Christchurch**. A white Futuro has been in this hill location since the mid-1970s and was recently joined by the one below.<sup>109</sup>
5. **Huntsbury, Christchurch**. This white Futuro is on this same site as the one above (previously it had been near Kaikōura).<sup>110</sup>
6. **Pōhara, Tasman**. This white Futuro appears in Christopher Vine's publication *Nelson Observed: Portraits of a New Zealand Province* (1992).<sup>111</sup>
7. **Kaukapakapa, Auckland Region** (previously located at McLeans Island Road, Harewood, the Christchurch Botanic Gardens and before that on Fordingbridge Lane, Bexley (near New Brighton), Christchurch).<sup>112</sup>
8. **Auckland Region**. This Futuro, partly painted green, is possibly dissembled (previously located in Thames).<sup>113</sup>
9. **Christchurch Region?** This is a Futuro that was previously in Raglan (and before that it might have been the one that was in Mount Maunganui?)<sup>114</sup>
10. **Christchurch Region?** This Futuro was previously located in Richmond, Nelson.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Nick McQuoid, pers. comm. June 2023; Emma Dangerfield, 'Canterbury entrepreneur tackles weird and wonderful restoration project', *Stuff*, 10 May 2019: URL: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/homed/houses/112505522/canterbury-entrepreneur-tackles-weird-and-wonderful-restoration-project> (accessed Jun. 2023).

<sup>108</sup> URL: <https://thefuturohouse.com/Futuro-Warrington-New-Zealand.html> and <https://www.stuff.co.nz/travel/destinations/nz/central-otago-lakes/112667397/room-review-staying-in-the-spaceship-warrington> (accessed 28 Jul. 2023).

<sup>109</sup> URL: <https://canterburystories.nz/collections/archives/star/prints/1975/ccl-cs-3876> (accessed Jun. 2023).

<sup>110</sup> URL: <https://thefuturohouse.com/Futuro-Huntsbury-New-Zealand.html> and <https://discoverywall.nz/album/2491/58381> (accessed 28 Jul. 2023);

<sup>111</sup> URL: <https://thefuturohouse.com/Futuro-Pohara-New-Zealand.html> (accessed 28 Jul. 2023).

<sup>112</sup> This was briefly temporarily located at 56 McRoberts Road, Ohoka, when Nick McQuoid was assisting the new owner before it was transported to its new location in Kaukapakapa in 2022/2023 - URL: <https://thefuturohouse.com/Futuro-McLeans-Christchurch-New-Zealand.html> (accessed 28 Jul. 2023).

<sup>113</sup> URL: <https://thefuturohouse.com/Futuro-House-Auckland-New-Zealand.html#auck101720> (accessed Jun. 2023)

<sup>114</sup> URL: <https://thefuturohouse.com/Futuro-Raglan-New-Zealand.html#chch051821> (accessed 28 Jul. 2023)

<sup>115</sup> URL: <https://thefuturohouse.com/Futuro-Nelson-New-Zealand.html> (accessed 28 Jul. 2023)

## 2.5. Sources

### *Sources Available and Accessed*

There is a wide amount of material available relating to Futuro houses, including a constantly updated website, <https://thefuturohouse.com/> which provides location, information and photographs of Futuro Houses internationally. This website has a history timeline (flight log) of those known as well as a section on 'lost' Futuro houses and has been a source of information in writing this report. Helpfully, it includes information relating to a well-known yet difficult to access source on the Futuro house, Marko Home and Mike Taanila's *Futuro – Tomorrow's House from Yesterday*, published in 2002, as this book was not able to be viewed during the writing of this report. However, a YouTube trailer clip of a 1998 documentary film, *Futuro – A New Stance for Tomorrow*, directed by Mike Taanila, was viewed. Other video clips, for example, 'Research trip to Futuro House 001 at WeeGee, Espoo, Finland', 2013, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HAMCTLEcbg> have been accessed.

Personal communications and heritage agency reports covering consideration of assigning and potentially assigning heritage status to some specific Futuro houses were provided by Heritage Victoria (Australia), the U.S. National Register archivist, Milford Wayne Donaldson (owner of the heritage-listed Donaldson Futuro) and New Jersey Historic Protection Office.

Docomomo Journal 66 (published 12 Dec. 2022) on plastic heritage contains a range of papers by architecture, design and conservation specialists URL: <https://doi.org/10.52200/docomomo.66> ). Papers in the journal cover current thinking about plastics in Modern Movement Architecture and design and how the 'polymer era' has left a heritage, for good and for worse, that deserves care and consideration. These papers were accessed during the writing of this report.

Primary sources specific to New Zealand-made Futuros are scattered. Archives New Zealand in Christchurch holds files relating to the failure of Futuro Homes (NZ) Limited and Futuro Enterprises (NZ) Limited, and these were sighted. 1970s newspaper articles and photographs were accessed, including material relating to the 1974 Commonwealth Games. More recent media items about New Zealand Futuros, especially at times of sale or purchase, were also sighted - the veracity of some information in those varies. Bank of New Zealand Archives made available photographs of the space bank from the 1974 Commonwealth Games as well as a scan of specifications and plans produced by Futuro Homes (NZ) Ltd, for use in this report.

A scanned copy of Julie Dalzell's 1976 article 'Space Age Housing' in *Designscape* (No. 86, 1976) was accessed. This provides particular insight on the feeling at the time regarding the New Zealand Futuros and other fibreglass modules manufactured in Christchurch. Another useful publication covering New Zealand-made Futuros accessed is Marjory Staples' book written under her pen name, Rosaline Redwood – *He Was There Too: Reminiscences of a Christian Journalist* – where, in chapter 2 she recounts some of the nuances of installing and living in one of New Zealand's early Futuro houses (this house remains *in situ* in Huntsbury, Christchurch, and has since been joined by a second Futuro that was previously in Kaikōura). Don Bassett's *Form Follows Fantasy* article in *Art New Zealand*, 2019, was accessed and provides a helpful analysis of both early Futuro production in Christchurch and how later thoughts by 1980s Futuro-lovers to reignite production were fruitless.

Personal communications with staff from Lincoln University, the owners of Middle Rock Farm, Tim Mee (son of previous owner) and current owner, Nick McQuoid, have provided useful clues in efforts to piece together the previous movements of the building now known as Area 51 Futuro House. An episode of the television programme, *Living Big in a Tiny House* featured Area 51 Futuro House and this is available for viewing online at URL:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFUTeiED9KM>

#### *Further Reading*

Bassett, Don 'Form Follows Fantasy: The Futuro House in New Zealand', *Art New Zealand*, Spring 2019, n.171: pp.104-109, 113.

Julie Dalzell, 'Space Age Housing', *Designscape* No. 86, 1976

Donaldson, Milford Wayne and edited by Eileen Magno, *Donaldson Futuro*, booklet prepared to accompany the dedication of California Registered Historical Landmark No. 1062 on 16 April 2022.

Home, Marko and Mika Taanila, *Futuro – Tomorrow's House from Yesterday*, Desure, Helsinki, 2002

Pottgiesser, Uta and Wido Quist (Editors), 'Modern Plastic Heritage', *Docomomo Journal* No. 66 – 2022/1 (published 12 December 2022) – URL:

<https://docomomojournal.com/index.php/journal/issue/view/dj-66>

Redwood, Rosaline, *He Was There Too: Reminiscences of a Christian Journalist*, 1999.

### 3. SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT<sup>116</sup>

#### 3.1. Section 66 (1) Assessment

This place has been assessed for, and found to possess aesthetic, architectural, cultural, historical, social and technological significance or value. It is considered that this place qualifies as part of New Zealand's historic and cultural heritage.

##### *Aesthetic Significance or Value*

Area 51 Futuro House has aesthetic significance. Its striking design, with distinctive eye-catching smooth and shiny Space-age aesthetic and vibrant interior décor, appeals strongly to visual and tactile senses. It is this other-worldly aspect of the design that arouses fascination and wonderment, and it stands out rather than blends into its environment. Representing a utopian vision, it also evokes a feeling of nostalgia for a time when much seemed possible.

The aesthetic appeal of this fully renovated Area 51 Futuro House is reflected in numerous illustrated media articles, including being the focus of an episode of the popular television series, *Living Big in a Tiny House*.

##### *Architectural Significance or Value*

Area 51 Futuro House has architectural significance as a notable example of Modern Movement Futuristic architectural style, carefully restored and refurbished to reflect the European design aesthetic and mathematical pragmatism of its Finnish designer, Matti Suuronen. As a type, it has become an iconic representation of space-age architecture, with its ellipsoid shape, repetitious oval bubble acrylic windows and aircraft-style downward hinged door and airstairs.

In its form, plan, space, materials and style of furnishing, and in its habitable use, Area 51 Futuro House has all the elements of a Futuro house. It is an intact example, true to Suuronen's design intention, demonstrating the principal characteristics of this experimental prefabricated dwelling that was developed for mass-production around the world.

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<sup>116</sup> For the relevant sections of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 see Appendix 4: Significance Assessment Information.

### *Cultural Significance or Value*

Area 51 Futuro House has cultural significance. There is a solid fanbase for Futuros globally, including in New Zealand. They especially attract people interested in their novel design and retro-futuristic ideas. Right from early days of design, the name - Futuro - consciously spoke to modernity and expectations of what life was to become, notably mobility, increased leisure time and the benefits of new plastics. Although Matti Suuronen's design was a result of mathematical pragmatism, rather than UFO-inspired, Futuro houses globally attract and bring together those interested in space-age discovery and potential.

Futuros were designed at a time when just about anything seemed possible. Despite their versatility and simple concept, they didn't take off anywhere – in the end, only about 100 were ever built internationally. This makes them extremely collectable and desirable. Restored Futuros that can be visited and/or stayed in fall into a select group that allow visitors a special experience as to what Futuro houses were like in their hey-day. The fully renovated Area 51 Futuro House is a particularly good example, as it is made available to a wide and interested audience through hireage (in 2022 it won the category of New Zealand's best unique listing on Airbnb) as well as through social media. Area 51 Futuro House firmly places New Zealand on the map for Futuro lovers.

### *Historical Significance or Value*

Area 51 Futuro House has historical significance. It tells the story of a particular period in the 1970s, when New Zealand followed the international trend of manufacture and marketing of an innovative quirky sort of relocatable housing alternative – a new kind of prefab – that drew a lot of attention and showed promise but ultimately did not receive much uptake. This particular Futuro traverses New Zealand's experience with these novel fibreglass structures. It was constructed as one of the 12 produced by Futuro Homes (NZ) Limited, at their Wainoni Road factory in Christchurch, in circa 1974-1975. 1974 was the year of the British Commonwealth Games – the 'friendly Games' – held in Christchurch, where some of the earliest of New Zealand's Futuros (a yellow and a blue one) made were showcased at Queen Elizabeth II Park, where the athletes and spectators congregated. The white Futuro wasn't one of those but it's likely to have been built in this period and may have been the white one on display at Addington Showgrounds in 1974 and 1975. From the latter part of the 1970s, the white Futuro now known as Area 51 Futuro House served a variety of rather low-key utilitarian functions in several remote locations, first in rural Canterbury high country and later, for several decades, in South Westland rainforest. It wasn't until 2018-19,



when Futuro house aficionado, Nick McQuoid, purchased and carried out the mammoth task of dismantling and relocating it to Ōhoka that it began its road to revival for use as a very popular holiday house.

#### *Social Significance or Value*

Area 51 Futuro House has social significance. From the outset, Futuros were designed for people to spend time together and now, as rare and unusual structures from a limited time period, they continue to bring people together to experience and celebrate them. As part of the global collection of Futuros, Area 51 Futuro House does this particularly well as one of the world's few restored and renovated habitable Futuros available for a wider public to stay in. Through social media, it also has a strong connection with an active online community of people interested in Futuro houses.

#### *Technological Significance or Value*

Area 51 Futuro House has technological significance in its representation of modern plastic heritage. The complex materiality and innovative design of Futuros demonstrate a construction method for applied plastics during the 1960s and 1970s. The technology was experimental and innovative for its time. An important design idea for interior thermal control was the development of sandwich construction, whereby fibre-reinforced plastic was combined with polyurethane insulation.

Although originally marketed as easy-care and virtually maintenance-free, of the surviving Futuro houses throughout the world, many are currently in poor shape. Those that have been conserved provide helpful insight into the challenges and solutions of restoring and repairing plastic Futuro houses. The scarcity of conservation methods and processes for the plastics used in Futuro houses has been identified as a critical issue and therefore those Futuros around the world whose restoration and renovation has been well documented – including now Area 51 Futuro House – can inform conservation of other fragile and rare Futuro houses.

### **3.2. Section 66 (3) Assessment**

This place was assessed against the Section 66(3) criteria and found to qualify under the following criteria a, b, e, g, h, j. The assessment concludes that this place should be listed as a Category 1 historic place.

- (a) The extent to which the place reflects important or representative aspects of New Zealand history

Area 51 Futuro House reflects New Zealand's coming to the party of a global but short-lived optimistic vision that developed out of Finland in the late 1960s and was taken up in numerous countries around the world. The hope and expectation was that, with prefabricated mass production, families could live in these lightweight, inexpensive, durable, and easy-to-maintain plastic houses that could easily be moved as the family moved. New Zealand does have a long history of both prefabrication in buildings and of shifting existing buildings, often timber ones, from one place to another. Prefabrication, especially, has long been regarded as easy solution for urgent housing problems, as demonstrated by State Housing programmes of the 1930s. In that sense, then, Futuro houses follow a New Zealand historical trend. As elsewhere, the makers of the Futuros in New Zealand emphasised their low initial cost, next-to-no-maintenance, outstanding insulation, immediate availability and ease of transportability. However, the concept of plastic housing was new and there was reticence about their radical design as a home.

Like the rest of the industrialised world, New Zealand was deeply affected by the oil crisis of the mid-1970s, which suddenly increased the cost of plastics production (and relocation). This, combined with an unexpected downturn in the local building market, sealed the fate for New Zealand's short-lived Futuro manufacturing venture. Instead of being a functionalist solution for quick prefab housing, Futuro houses are now a sought-after collector's item.

- (b) The association of the place with events, persons, or ideas of importance in New Zealand history

New Zealand-made Futuros – including Area 51 Futuro House - are mostly important in the role they place as part of the international Futuro movement. New Zealand was one of many countries that exercised a licence to manufacture Futuro houses. Between circa 1973 and 1975, 12 Futuros were constructed in Christchurch and these found their way to places in both the North and South Islands. New Zealand Futuros are especially remembered for their striking position at the gates of Queen Elizabeth II Park during the Xth British Commonwealth Games held in Christchurch in 1974. Another white one was at Addington Showgrounds in that same year, which was another venue associated with

the Commonwealth Games but mostly associated with the very popular annual Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Show.

While the exact earliest use of the white Futuro now known as Area 51 Futuro House is not verified, its known history for much of its life has been as a utilitarian structure associated with some typical activities of rural New Zealanders in the high or back country - farming and fishing. Nick McQuoid's purchase and retrieval from South Westland and subsequent renovation represents both Kiwi ingenuity and lifestyle with the original design intentions.

While fibreglass prefabs might not be exactly what we want to build now, the concept of affordable, relocatable tiny homes is especially relevant in the twenty-first century as society grapples with a shortage of affordable housing and the need for managed retreat or relocation due to climate change. Existing Futuro houses may be part of the conversation in considering how that might be done.

(e) The community association with, or public esteem for the place

In its permanent new location at Ōhoka, Area 51 Futuro House has generated a lot of interest and is celebrated both in New Zealand and overseas. Even when it had relatively low-key functions, this white Futuro had captured the attention of back-country users and helicopter pilots who've flown over it in its various remote locations. Now, with its higher public profile and ever-increasing numbers of guests who have enjoyed staying at Area 51 Futuro House in Ōhoka, it is clear that there would be a real sense of loss if this place was lost.

More generally, the New Zealand-made Futuros of the mid 1970s are held firmly in the memories of many as oddly-shaped curiosities set up at important public events such as the 1974 British Commonwealth Games and the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Show. Some have served as holiday homes, a smaller number as permanent homes. What is certain is that, over the past five decades since Futuros were constructed, wherever they've popped up all around the country – for use as accommodation, car sales office, or as a rural hut – they have caused a double-take.

(g) The technical accomplishment, value, or design of the place

Area 51 Futuro House demonstrates excellence in design and technical accomplishment. The use of plastics in architecture is an innovation of the twentieth century. Plastic, by definition meaning 'flexible' and 'malleable', had possibilities other materials didn't, enabling the futuristic aesthetic of Futuro houses. Futuro houses represented a breakthrough in terms of design, fabrication and construction techniques that extended the limits of existing technology. Area 51 Futuro House is one of those 100 technically accomplished innovative Futuros ever made globally.

Conservation of Futuro houses itself requires innovation to deal with the nature of the material used. Due to recognised technical and historical complexity, those who have carried out conservation work at Futuro Houses (such as Area 51 Futuro House) contribute to the pool of knowledge that is being gathered about the specific sorts of requirements of these buildings. Nick McQuoid's extensive restoration and renovation effort has aided the preservation of the somewhat unusual resource as plastic building and has raised the profile of the 'family' of Futuro houses.

(h) The symbolic or commemorative value of the place

Area 51 Futuro House represents an optimistic vision of a future that never came to pass. The structural plastic design of Futuro houses represented a utopian way of thinking, where it was thought that durable plastic housing, furniture and hardware would make life easier, and provide more leisure time. Even in their name - Futuro - they symbolise strong confidence in the future. The first Futuros made were in the time of televised screening of man's first walk on the moon. New Zealand-made Futuros of the 1970s continued the space-age symbolism and this remains a strong association for Area 51 Futuro House.

(j) The importance of identifying rare types of historic places

Area 51 Futuro House is demonstrably rare on a global scale, with fewer than 100 units ever known to have existed worldwide. A number of those have been destroyed, in poor condition, significantly altered, dismantled or remain unlocated. About 68 known Futuro houses remain in various corners of the world, around ten of which are in New Zealand. Futuro houses that are both habitable and fully restored or renovated to Matti Suuronen's original vision are particularly rare.



### *Summary of Significance or Values*

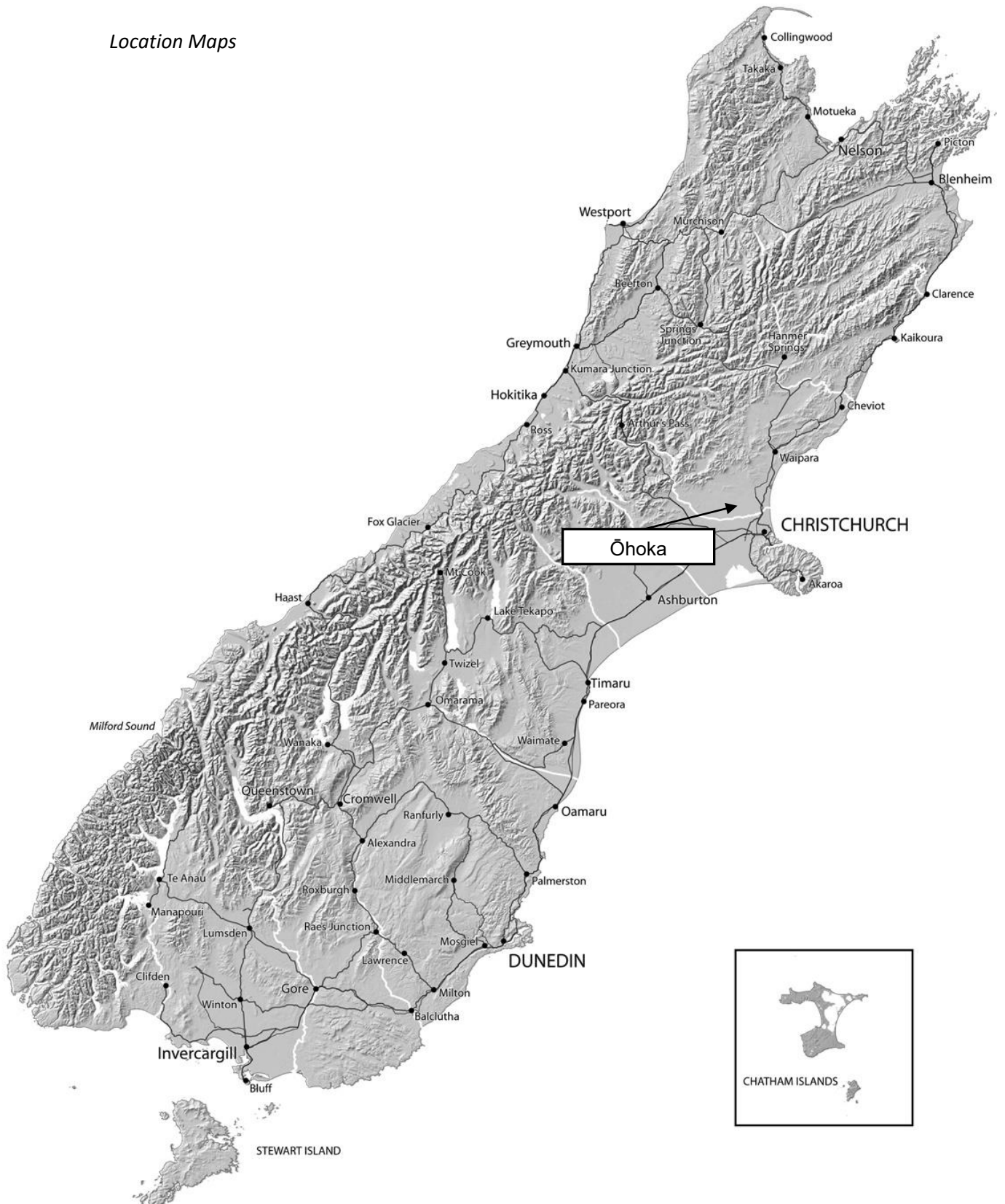
Area 51 Futuro House has outstanding heritage significance as a rare and unusual type of building with peculiar international resonance. As one of only approximately 68 surviving Futuro units internationally, Area 51 Futuro House is in a rarer subset as a renovated habitable Futuro house that showcases the vision of its Finnish designer, Matti Suuronen. The building is a celebration of the innovative design aspects of the time and the era generally.

Because Futuros were designed to be easily moved and changed location throughout their historic use, they belong to a rare class of heritage places where the heritage significance is almost entirely in the structure, rather than being contingent on its physical location. Area 51 Futuro House tells this story well, as a New Zealand-made Futuro unit serving multiple functions in various locations around the South Island before 'landing' at its Ōhoka location, where it is now experienced as a place to be visited and stayed in.

## 4. APPENDICES

### 4.1. Appendix 1: Visual Identification Aids

#### *Location Maps*



*Detail from Map of the South Island, showing all known locations of Area 51 Futuro House*



1. Christchurch, from circa 1974-1975
2. Lincoln, circa 1976-1978
3. Middle Rock Farm/Dry Acheron (2 places), circa 1978-1990
4. Paringa River, circa 1990-2018
5. Ōhoka, since circa 2018



*Map of Extent*



The extent of the List entry is only within the area shown by the bold red circle marked by the red arrow. Neither the movable furniture within the Futuro, nor the remainder of the land parcel associated with 56 McRoberts Road, Ōhoka, is included in the extent (Canterbury Maps aerial image).



**RECORD OF TITLE  
UNDER LAND TRANSFER ACT 2017  
FREEHOLD  
Search Copy**



**Identifier**                    **CB41B/1114**  
**Land Registration District** **Canterbury**  
**Date Issued**                13 June 1996

**Prior References**  
CB38A/67

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**Estate**                        Fee Simple  
**Area**                         1.8260 hectares more or less  
**Legal Description**        Lot 1 Deposited Plan 71457  
**Registered Owners**  
Michael Leonard McQuoid and Dawn Catherine Maria McQuoid

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**Interests**  
7595335.2 Mortgage to Westpac New Zealand Limited - 29.10.2007 at 3:34 pm

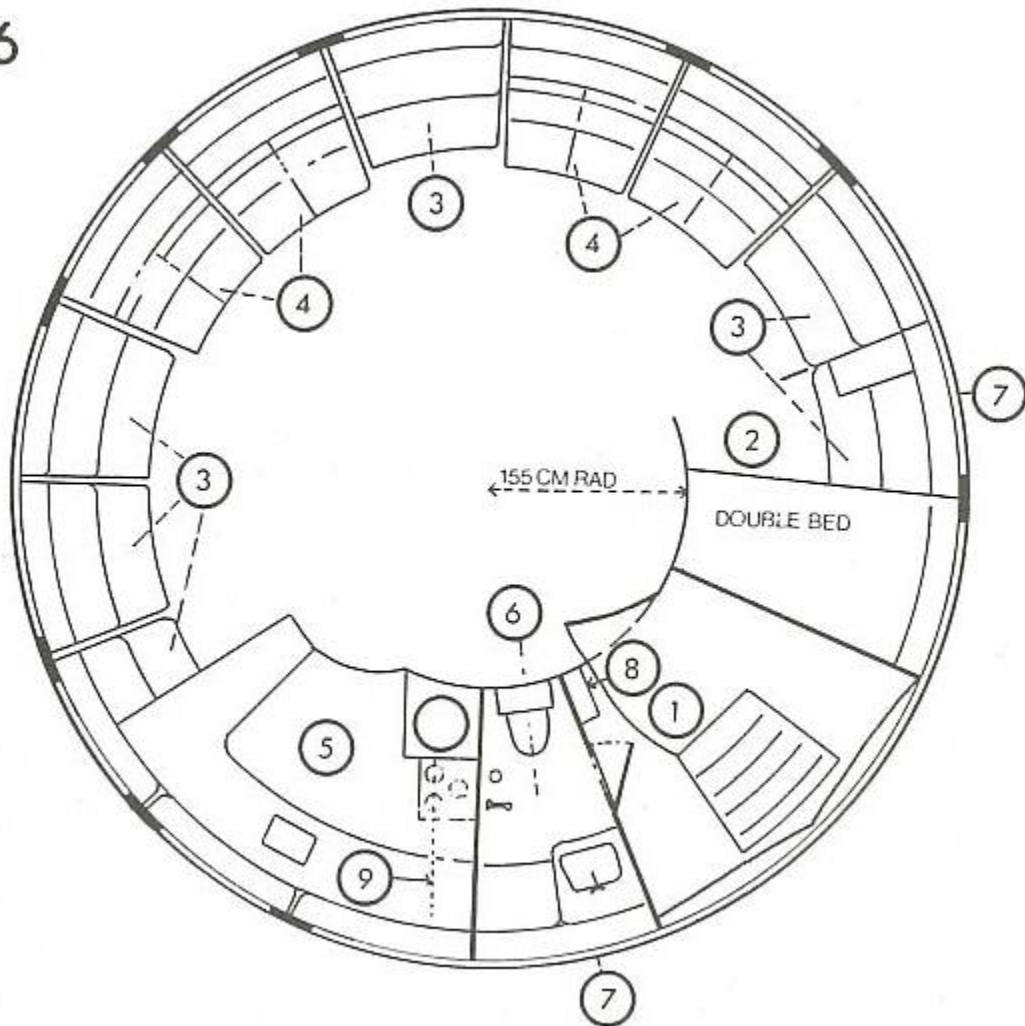




## 4.2. Appendix 2: Visual Aids to Historical Information

### Historical Plans

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Typical plan for one-bedroom Futuro unit showing 1, entrance foyer; 2, bedroom; 3, fibreglass shelving; 4, seating; 5, kitchen; 6, bathroom; 7, opening windows; 8, service cupboards; 9, cupboard over range. In Julie Dalzell, 'Space Age Housing', *Designscape*, 1976, figure 6, p. 43

Historical Photographs



1977 Lincoln College Aerial view, dated between 1 January and 31 December 1977, Lincoln University, Living Heritage Tikaka Tuku Iho, URL: <https://livingheritage.lincoln.ac.nz/nodes/view/88947> (accessed 7 Aug. 2023). Arrow marks the location of two white Futuros (detail above) on site at that time (one of which is the one now known as Area 51 Futuro House, Ōhoka).





Futuro at Paringa River site, Nick McQuoid, 2018



Dismantled Futuro from Paringa River at start of long journey to its Ōhoka destination, Nick McQuoid, 2018

### 4.3. Appendix 3: Visual Aids to Physical Information

#### *Current Photographs of Place*



Area 51 Futuro House, R. Burgess, 23 June 2023 (Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga)



Area 51 Futuro House by night, N. Jackson, 26 August 2023, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga





Kitchen area showing original fibreglass moulded bench, sink, cupboards and shelves (R. Burgess, 23 June 2023, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga)



Kitchen area (N. Jackson, 26 August 2023, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga)



Living area (N. Jackson, 26 August 2023, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga)

#### 4.4. Appendix 4: Significance Assessment Information

Part 4 of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014

*Chattels or object or class of chattels or objects (Section 65(6))*

Under Section 65(6) of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, an entry on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero relating to a historic place may include any chattel or object or class of chattels or objects –

- a) Situated in or on that place; and
- b) Considered by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga to contribute to the significance of that place; and
- c) Proposed by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga for inclusion on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero.

*Significance or value (Section 66(1))*

Under Section 66(1) of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga may enter any historic place or historic area on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero if the place possesses aesthetic, archaeological, architectural, cultural, historical, scientific, social, spiritual, technological, or traditional significance or value.

*Category of historic place (Section 66(3))*

Under Section 66(3) of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga may assign Category 1 status or Category 2 status to any historic place, having regard to any of the following criteria:

- a) The extent to which the place reflects important or representative aspects of New Zealand history
- b) The association of the place with events, persons, or ideas of importance in New Zealand history
- c) The potential of the place to provide knowledge of New Zealand history
- d) The importance of the place to tangata whenua
- e) The community association with, or public esteem for, the place
- f) The potential of the place for public education
- g) The technical accomplishment, value, or design of the place
- h) The symbolic or commemorative value of the place
- i) The importance of identifying historic places known to date from an early period of New Zealand settlement
- j) The importance of identifying rare types of historic places
- k) The extent to which the place forms part of a wider historical and cultural area

Additional criteria may be prescribed in regulations made under this Act for the purpose of assigning Category 1 or Category 2 status to a historic place, provided they are not inconsistent with the criteria set out in subsection (3)

Additional criteria may be prescribed in regulations made under this Act for entering historic places or historic areas of interest to Māori, wāhi tūpuna, wāhi tapu, or wāhi tapu areas on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero, provided they are not inconsistent with the criteria set out in subsection (3) or (5) or in regulations made under subsection (4).

NOTE: Category 1 historic places are 'places of special or outstanding historical or cultural heritage significance or value.' Category 2 historic places are 'places of historical or cultural heritage significance or value.'