

Crafting a new *chronicle*

Folly project weaves a touching narrative of femininity and time-honoured traditions.

About an hour north of Auckland, another stunning addition to the Brick Bay Sculpture Trail has been unveiled near Snells Beach. Each year, architecture students and recent graduates are invited to submit concepts for an innovative folly creation.

Once the top design is selected by a panel of judges, the winning team is tasked with bringing their concept to fruition. For many, it is their first opportunity to not only take an architectural concept from an initial sketch to a fully-realised build but often their first time taking a hands-on approach to the construction process.

Femme-ly Velues, a name that plays on a well-known idiom, nods to the winning project's expression of both femininity and feminism. And in many ways, this folly is a celebration of the growing presence of women in architecture and construction. Designed and built by Claire Ford, Elise Cautley and Jennifer (Jen) Gao, having an all-women winning team was a first for the Brick Bay Folly Project in the competition's nine years of existence. Their concept pays homage to weaving, knitting and sewing – meticulous crafts which rely on carefully-honed skills frequently passed down through matriarchal bloodlines. Just as textiles are characterised by intricacy and rely on many tiny parts to create the final impression of the finished piece, the folly's loom-like tripartite form demonstrates a clever balance between its matrix of subtle construction details and its impactful sum effect. As the design evolved, so did its complexity, mimicking the gradual building of layers like the warp and weft within a piece of weaving. Painted in a vibrant assortment of Resene hues that convey traditional notions of femininity, the design manages to stay true to the playfulness, joy and whimsy that folly projects are intended to evoke.

"The project was an exciting proposition for us all when we first saw it," says Architect Pip Cheshire, who served on the judging committee and as a mentor for the winning team. "The combination of rigid and flexible materials, the importance of the loomed fabrics' curve and the flamboyant colouring all gave pause for reflection."

Resene
Jordy Blue

Resene
XOXO



One of the most interesting elements of the design isn't an especially obvious one. Jen, Elise and Claire managed to construct the base of their looms by upcycling timber from a previous folly project, *The Nest* – which itself was constructed out of recycled timber from yet another winning folly, *The Wood Pavilion*. Elise says that reusing this timber was part of the team's plan from their folly's conception. "We were familiar with the competition's history and had seen the success of material reuse from *The Wood Pavilion* into *The Nest*, and then to *Femme-ly Velues*. It inspired us to look into what it meant to pass down material, skill in building and treasures through generations, and what that meant for our interests as designers," she explains.

"Recycling is one of the core values of the Brick Bay Folly competition and we were really inspired by the opportunity to give parts of the old folly a new life in our design," says Claire. "Given our concept, it felt very fitting to be able to have part of the previous folly present in this new generation that sits on the same site. As *The Nest* was deconstructed, we were also able to see that the screws and some of the fixings used were in extremely good condition and we made some minor last-minute changes to our design details

so we could reuse those as well. Though much of that hardware is hidden in the structural connections that ended up in the foundations or painted over at the very top of the structure, it's important to us that we were able to make use of them."

With half of the folly constructed from recycled materials, Claire, Elise and Jen were able to minimise time spent processing many of its timber components. "Because we had an eye on recycling from the very start of the process, we selected our colour scheme to complement the base in Resene Toorak, which was a colour used on the previous folly. It is a beautifully rich deep brown which sits so nicely next to the other vibrant hues in the colour scheme and really grounds the work," Claire explains.

"We were really surprised by what great condition the timber we inherited was in and all we really had to do was select pieces and cut them down to size in pretty much the same way we did for the pieces of new timber. The paint was in a great condition – even after four years on site," she adds.

After the recycled lengths of timber were cut to size, the team sanded down the newly-cut surfaces and gave each piece a good clean before repainting any exposed areas in Resene Lumbersider Low Sheen

left and opposite: Designed and built by Claire Ford, Elise Cautley and Jennifer (Jen) Gao, *Femme-ly Velues* is constructed with new and upcycled timber, equine canvas, stainless steel tension wire, steel rods, new and upcycled hardware and a palette of Resene paint. After a period of design experimentation, consultation with project mentors and careful refinement of the construction details, the finished folly is a fanciful tripartite structure described by the team as 'a small family of looms' which honours the heritage of textile craft among women. To prime their surfaces prior to painting, the team used Resene ArmourX GP Metal Primer for the steel and Resene Quick Dry primer for the timber and canvas. Resene Lumbersider Low Sheen waterborne paint was used for the colour coats tinted to Resene XOXO, Resene Bright Spark, Resene Jordy Blue, Resene Studio, Resene Colour Me Pink and Resene Toorak. Resene Toorak, which was also used to paint the structure's base, references the previous follies built on the site, *The Nest* and *The Wood Pavilion* – parts of which were recycled to construct *Femme-ly Velues* in an effort to reduce waste and extend the lifecycle of the materials. Images by Sam Hartnett, www.samhartnett.com.



tinted to Resene Toorak. Due to time constraints, they needed to use new timber for the folly's brightly-coloured 'weft stiches' which are painted in Resene Lumbersider Low Sheen tinted to Resene XOXO, Resene Bright Spark, Resene Jordy Blue, Resene Studio and Resene Colour Me Pink. "This approach allowed us to process the new timber in Wellington before we arrived on site in Auckland and keep a tight turnaround from the old folly coming down and the new folly being installed," says Claire.

For Elise, the biggest challenge was managing expectations about the project. "The scale and style of project was unlike anything we had done before – we had quite a few iterations of the program, and even that went out the window daily! Being realistic with our own abilities and managing tasks to meet our deadlines were daily challenges."

Jen agrees that balancing their daily to-do list against deadlines was the trickiest part. But like many Brick Bay Folly teams in the past, she says that developing a familiarity with the construction side and working at a scale beyond simple home DIYs took her out of her comfort zone. "It was really very fun and challenging, and with the guidance of our resident builder, Claire, it was amazing! We were constantly developing deeper appreciations for contractors," she says.

Being the most comfortable one on the team with building, Claire found the problem-solving demands of the project to be its most challenging aspect. "Like with many building processes, we would often solve one problem only to discover the next problem beyond it. What stands out as the trickiest though was the foundations, which we did not expect would take as much time and energy as they did. We chose a compacted gravel foundation for its reduced long-term impact on the site but did not factor in how much longer this would take than a traditional concrete foundation. In the end, one of our mentors found some more person power to throw at the problem and we managed to compact the 10m³ of gravel we needed around the posts – most of which had to be done by hand. Because the design has quite a unique structure and no one involved had really built anything quite like it before, there were a lot of things which came up on site, but we found the key to any problem really is creative thinking, clear communication and a can-do attitude," she says.

The team hopes that by putting in the hard yards to construct the gravel foundation, the same gravel can be excavated at the end of the installation period and reused in subsequent follies as another way of reducing the carbon footprint on future projects.

As with other Brick Bay Folly projects in the past, the *Femme-ly Velues* team learnt plenty about Resene paints and



coatings as they progressed through the construction process. "I learnt a lot about not taking shortcuts," says Elise. "With so many pieces and a lot of work to paint them all, we came up with a system to get them done as efficiently as we could – painting them in sections, face-by-face, and staggering the coats."

Jen's favourite part of the experience was being a part of a unique opportunity that's outside the realms of typical daily architectural life. She says the project taught her that paint can be a cure-all and that she appreciated getting a firsthand look at the way light plays off colours to create new hues. "A good brush can really help you in saving paint, give you a high-quality finish and makes application easier," she adds.

For Claire, among the most satisfying moments was when the structure of the folly finally took shape. "When the tall posts were stood into their holes in the foundation, it was the first time any of us had really seen the scale and the vibrancy of our design and it was such an exciting and reassuring moment. The paint colours fit so well together and really matched the vibrancy of the site. All of a sudden, we could see how the human scale responded to the project. I was really confident in the design prior to the build, but once I could see it surrounded by the trees, the new

relationships and viewpoints it suggested, and the way the purple and the greens went so well together, it felt real and successful straight away," she says.

Elise says her favourite part was adding the colour coats. "I loved painting all the pieces. It was lovely just setting up in the garage on a weekend morning with a podcast and getting on with it. I also loved working through design development with the team. It led to some great discussions about the folly and beyond. I learnt a lot about my design style while working with the team."

Resene has been a sponsor of the Brick Bay Folly Project since the competition first began and provides products, painting and staining tools, mentorship and technical support – something the *Femme-ly Velues* team members continue to be thankful for. "Resene's support for the arts is a huge one and the company's customer service is great, be it via the reps or the helpline," says Jen. "I've definitely called them in a panic on the weekend!"

"I really love how Resene is involved in so many different parts of the community through sponsorship and that this is reflected in the breadth of the colour and product ranges they offer. No matter what sort of project you are working on, Resene will have just what you need," says Claire.

Elise says she values Resene's advocacy for bold projects and confident colour choices. "I'm all about audacious colours. I also appreciate the ongoing support of education and webinars. The technical support is quick and helpful, which was so valuable on this project and continues to be valuable to my work. I also love to see Resene's support of adjacent fields, like with New Zealand Fashion Week, and I enjoy the creative names for the paint colours when I'm browsing in the store, too."

Keith Mann, adjunct lecturer and head of the architectural workshop at Unitec's School of Architecture, has also been a mentor for many Brick Bay Folly teams in the past. While this all-women team might be a first for the competition, he is certain it will not be the last. "The architecture industry needs to continue to attract and retain talented young women through fostering diversity and advancing gender equality. It's important that it's not just about visibility but about creating an inclusive and supportive environment where all individuals can thrive and contribute their best, as the representation of women in architecture and the building industries plays a crucial role in shaping the future of these fields." ^{BW}

For those interested in seeing *Femme-ly Velues* in person, the folly can be experienced as part of the Brick Bay Sculpture Trail. Visitor information and the latest news on the Brick Bay Folly Project can be found at www.brickbay.co.nz.



meet the team

Resene
Blackberry



Elise Cautley

Elise grew up in Nelson. At seven years old, with a Barbie doll in one hand and Lego blocks in the other, she assertively told her mum she wanted to be an architect – despite not knowing what that was. Elise believes architecture to be one of the best mediums for storytelling, something she has been passionate about her whole life. She currently works for Architecture HDT in Wellington.

What she hopes to work on in the future

“I’d love to design a stage, a film set or an exhibition! My dream projects are those that combine architecture with art, theatre and performance.”

Her favourite Resene colour

“My current favourite colour is Resene Feijoa. It’s the colour of my kitchen cabinets! But if I ever had an opportunity to paint the beams of a coffee shop renovation in Central Wellington, that would be my first pick. I’m all about audacious colours.”



Claire Ford

Born and raised in Christchurch, Claire was no stranger to home renovations when she was growing up – and no one was surprised when she planned to go to architecture school from early on. Since graduating with her Master of Architecture from Victoria University of Wellington, she has been working as a carpentry apprentice. Once qualified, she plans to leverage these practical trade skills alongside her architecture degree.

What she hopes to work on in the future

“I am most interested in how architecture impacts the physical and mental wellbeing of its occupants and that happens across all scales and programmes.”

Her favourite Resene colour

“One of my favourite Resene colours is Resene Blackberry, which I think would look fantastic in a personal library with trims in Resene Soiree.”



Jennifer (Jen) Gao

Jen grew up in Auckland and says she always wanted to be an architect. She currently works for Jack McKinney Architects in Auckland.



What she hopes to work on in the future

“Probably the type of projects I currently work on, family homes (be it primary or their occasional beach/rural house). I love the intricacies of getting to know a family and curating their dream home! The home becomes the backdrop for so many of our memories with our favourite people and can really impact our day to day lives!”

Her favourite Resene colour

“A little boring perhaps, but my favourite is Resene Rice Cake! After a lot of trial and error, I’ve found it to be the perfect white. It has a soothing balance of warmth and brightness that pairs well with natural textures and materials. I’ve recently used this in my own home and we love it.”

opposite and above: Comprised of woven canvas and latticed timber components strung together with steel cables and rods, *Femme-ly Velues* gives the impression of softly draped fabric. A joyful palette of Resene XOXO, Resene Bright Spark, Resene Jordy Blue, Resene Studio, Resene Colour Me Pink and Resene Toorak was used to paint the timber that makes up the looms. To maintain the vibrancy of these hues, Elise, Jen and Claire applied a finishing coat of Resene Clearcoat UVS to provide extra protection from harmful UV radiation.

-  Resene Rice Cake
-  Resene XOXO
-  Resene Soiree
-  Resene Feijoa
-  Resene Jordy Blue
-  Resene Toorak

