

Fig.104



Fig.105

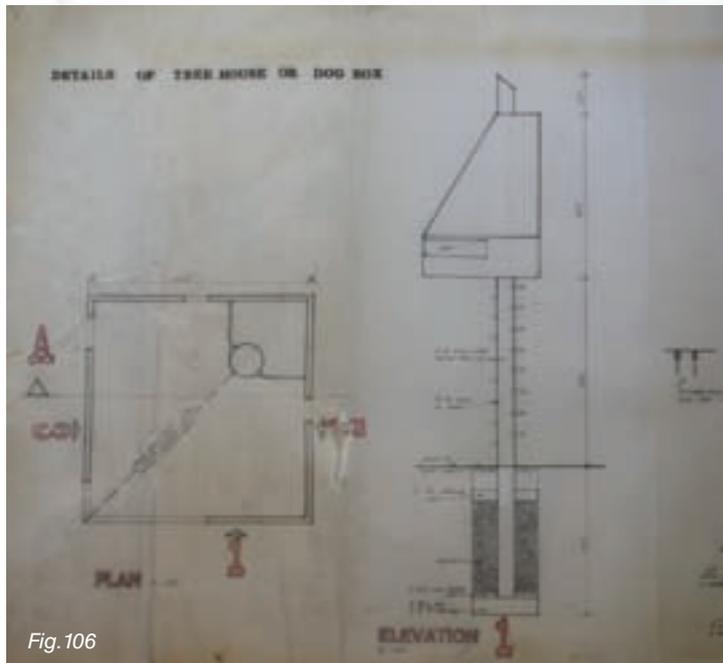


Fig.106

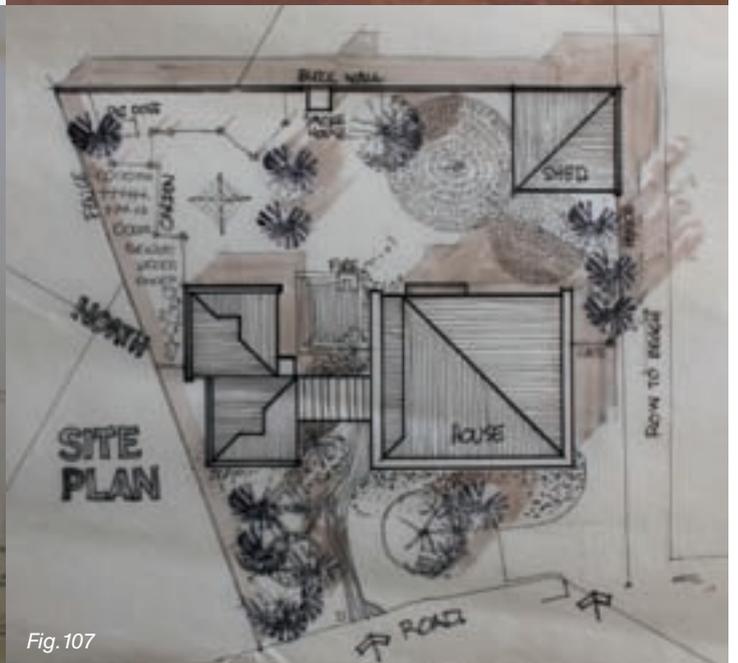


Fig.107

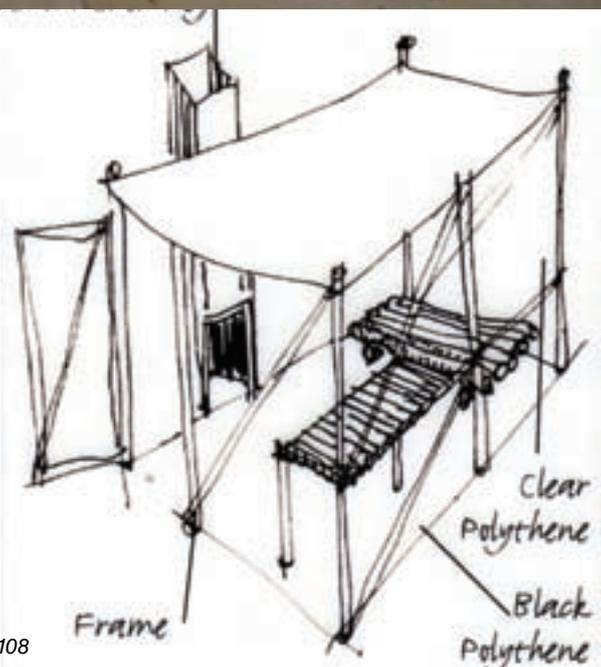


Fig.108



Fig.109

- Fig.104 Sketch, typical DOC Hut, New Zealand, sketch N.Simmons, 2011
- Fig.105 Typical bivvy, camping, Simmons family holiday, c1972
- Fig.106 'Details of Tree House or Dog Box, addition to NS009\*64-S05, Simmons House, c1970
- Fig.107 NS009\*64-S05, Simmons House Site Plan, sketch, N.Simmons, includes Stage 2
- Fig.108 Sketch of typical bivvy, N.Simmons, 2009
- Fig.109 Bivvy, Ureweras, c1984

## 2.1 Man Alone and the Early Work

‘When he wants to escape he heads down to the Ureweras, where he’s often called on to ‘design and build’ temporary huts. He loves this kind of design – unpretentious, functional and light on the landscape – although he admits black polythene, often the only waterproof cladding material on hand, is a bit of an environmental no-no.’<sup>1</sup>

Central to Simmons’ design process is his reference to the remote hut. In several articles for a local newspaper,<sup>2</sup> journalist Jesma McGill calls attention to the design approach and lifestyle of Simmons and has mentioned his hut experiences. Simmons does not call upon the hut typology in a theoretical sense, for him it has always formed a physical part of his lifestyle and is a real and practical influence.<sup>3</sup> The hut for the working classes does not represent an isolated, sublime condition, rather it is a working building, and part of an everyday experience as temporary living quarters or a working base. For Simmons, from a working class background, the hut operates on both levels - he appreciates the contemplative and artistic aspect of the hut experience, with its ritualised interior, while at the same time regarding its practical, functional aspects in a non-idealised way. In placing his work in context, it is clear that Simmons is not interested in the language of building as an intellectual discourse, rather the hut or bivvy provides, for him, pleasure in the consideration of essentials for dwelling, and as a study in structural harmony.

The hut is not separated from Simmons’ life experience, and therefore for him not a fetishised or theorised object. However, he does regard the elements of the hut as being the core of the home – the single space, the fireplace, the table and the sleeping platform for sleeping.

In an article by Jesma Magill for *Our Homes Today*, Simmons is quoted:

“In my mind, I return to this simple concept every time I design. All you need for a house is a spreading roof like an umbrella, over the box or boxes, with indoor-outdoor living and verandahs.”<sup>4</sup>

This description is in fact quite elaborate, as his drawings and descriptions are often less so, and it also does not describe the singular interior, so often at the core of his projects. To consider the influence of the hut on the work of Neil Simmons, the wider context of the developing ‘man alone’ nationalist identity, to which the hut is central, is reviewed and several examples of Simmons’ earliest works are assessed in chapter 2.2.

At the core of all architectural traditions in New Zealand history seems to be the landscape itself. Pound argues convincingly that ‘landscape’ has in fact become our culture, rather than the location for culture. He examines this through New Zealand arts and literature from 1930 to 1970, and how they have contributed to an evolving portrayal of our national identity being the land itself.<sup>5</sup>

‘The silence so often spoken of through two centuries, the intolerable emptiness, is now also the silence, the empty space, the absence of a truly New Zealand painting and writing, and of a New Zealand audience for them. The remedy, then, for this

<sup>1</sup> McGill, Jesma ‘Keeping the Footprint Light and Tight’ *Times Newspaper*, November 19 2007.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B publications list for five articles written by Jesma McGill for which Simmons was interviewed.

<sup>3</sup> The isolated hut (usually constructed by the Department of Conservation) or hand-made bivvy in the bush is a completely familiar building type to Neil Simmons. Hunting is an integral part of his life, and has been for over fifty years. He has hunted mainly in the Urewera district, but also in other areas of New Zealand including Northland and parts of the South Island.

<sup>4</sup> Magill, Jesma. ‘Simplicity Rules’, *Our Homes Today*, 11 November 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Pound, F. *The Invention of New Zealand. Art & National Identity 1930-1970*. Auckland University Press, 2009, 36-7.

Fig.110

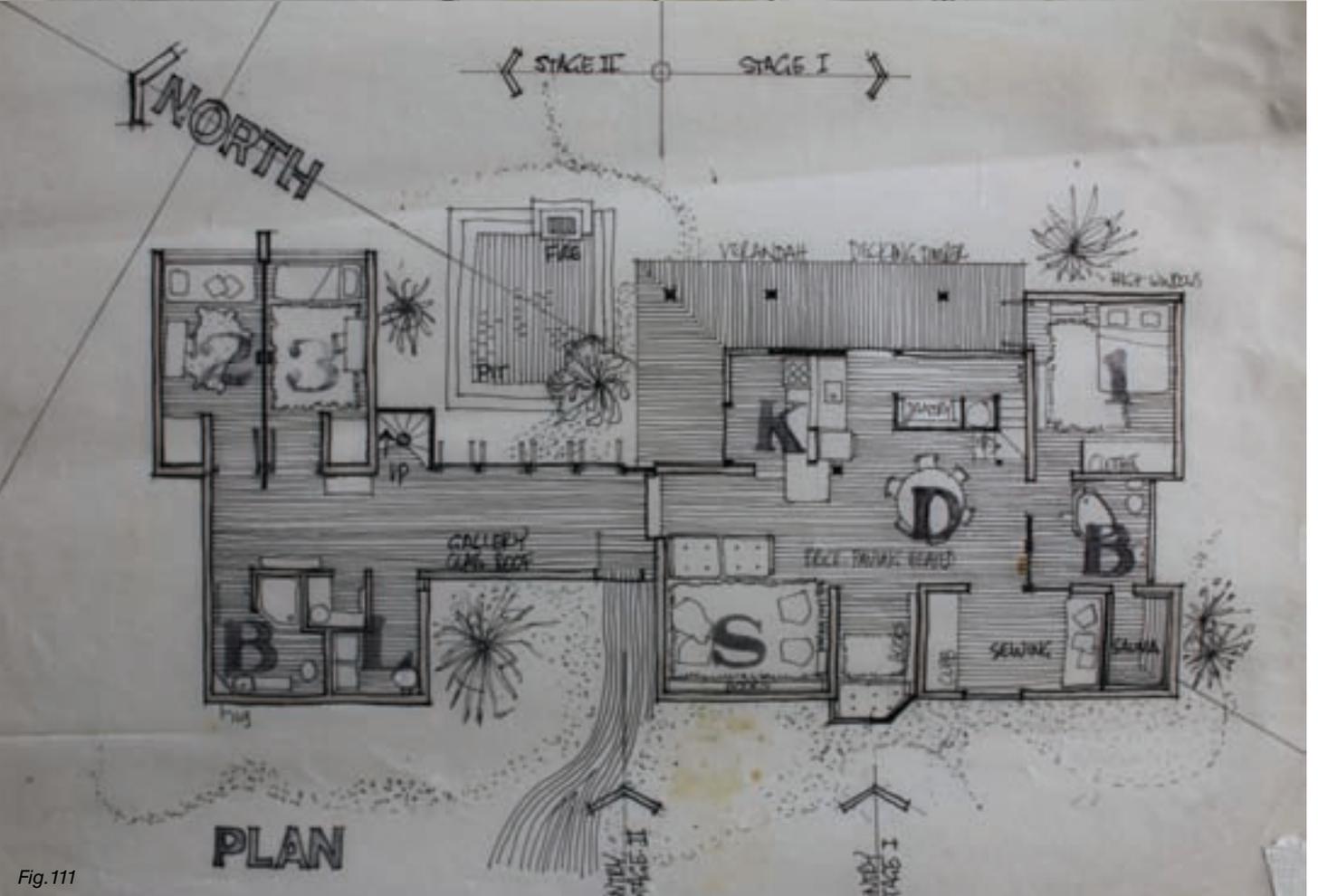
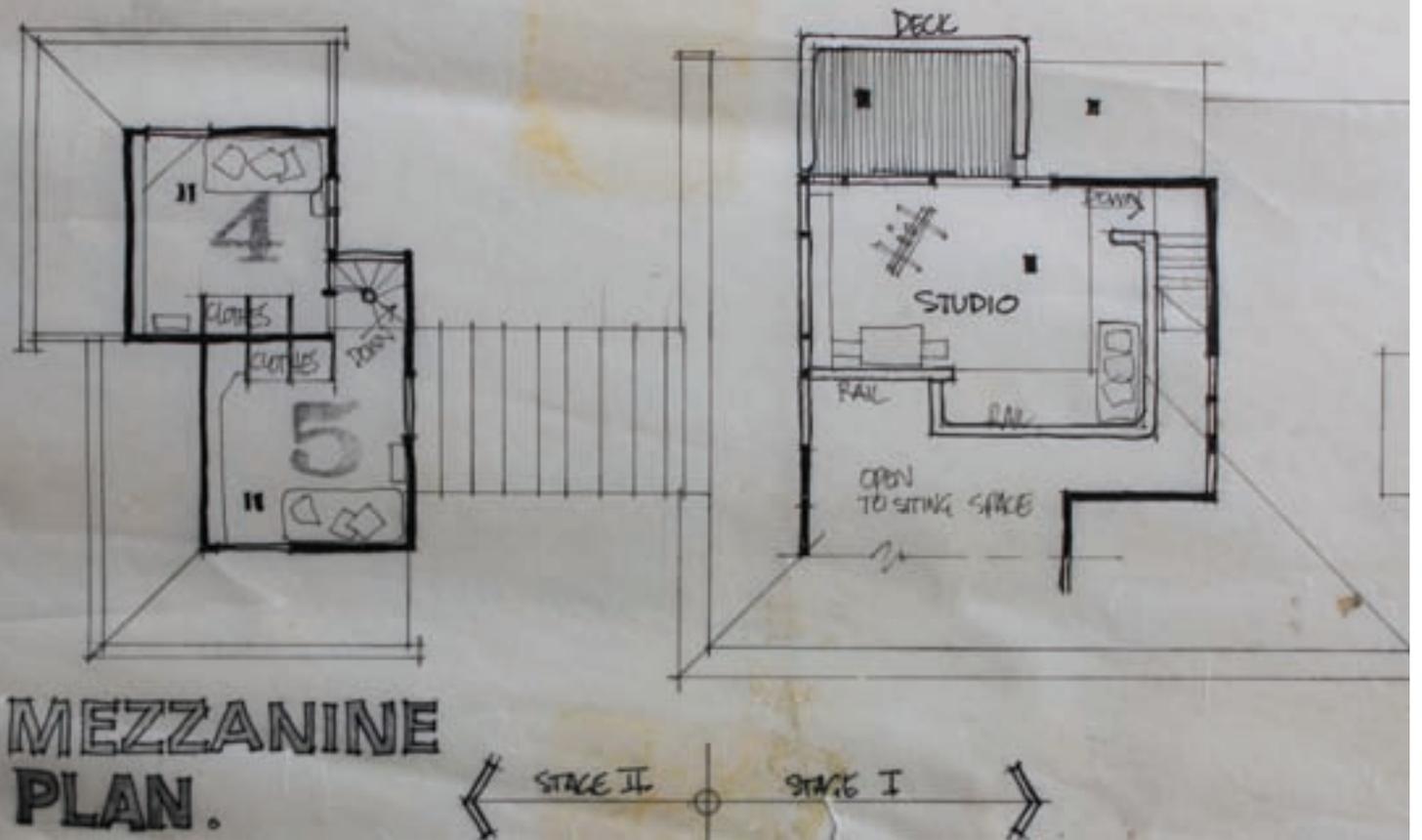


Fig.111

Fig.110 NS009•64-S05, Simmons House, Sketch Plan, Mezzanine, includes Stage 2, c1978

Fig.111 NS009•64-S05, Simmons House, Sketch Plan, Ground Floor, c1978

agony, is to make these empty lands speak, and visually to appear, and so to have a culture –and to have a task, proper employment for oneself at last, and the requisite recognition, in the consequent culture industry.<sup>6</sup>

Here Pound is articulating the point of view of the Nationalist identity, as developed throughout the twentieth century and supported through almost all arts and cultural fields. Pound provides examples to illustrate this developing identity and cultural definition, taken from literature as well as from the work of artists such as Colin McCahon<sup>7</sup> and Ralph Hotere.<sup>8</sup> Two of the qualities bound up in the New Zealand cultural discourse on landscape that are of concern to this study are identified as solitude and silence, and a tendency to mark a sublime condition of ‘man’ in isolation, engulfed in nature.

Pound labels this search for a vernacular style the ‘Nationalist identity’, and its proponents ‘Nationalists.’<sup>9</sup> His arguments around the arts can also be applied to the concurrent developing architectural identity, which keeps at its core stories about a wild and remote landscape, of either the dark ‘interior’ of native forest (where the hut is located), or the blurred edges where the land meets the sea (the site of the bach). Even today, when referring to New Zealand architecture, the image of a single dwelling set within a sublime landscape is assumed, despite several critical examinations of this myth<sup>10</sup>, and it is still common for New Zealand architectural discourse to begin with consideration of *the site*.<sup>11</sup>

Pound traces a thread from late 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial perceptions of the land,<sup>12</sup> as silent and isolated, through to a 20<sup>th</sup> century position which has claimed that very emptiness, so that it formed a basis to a (Pakeha) cultural identity;

‘The nineteenth-century ‘invention’ of New Zealand, much like its 20<sup>th</sup> century successor, was projected on to a land perceived as silent and empty.’<sup>13</sup>

Ideas of solitude and the sublime condition in the landscape developed, possibly as a result of the separation from what was regarded as a ‘civilized original’. Rather than a nostalgic position emerging, the solitude was celebrated and woven into the identity mythology of the ‘man-alone’ condition - This lack of nostalgia aligns with the modernist view of history, which was also at the basis of the developing national psyche.

<sup>6</sup>. Pound, F. *The Invention of New Zealand. Art & National Identity 1930-1970*. Auckland University Press, 2009, 36.

<sup>7</sup>. Colin McCahon (1919 -1987). Pounds says, for example, ‘This Christ in solitude is but another form of the ‘Man Alone’ theme of McCahon’s *The Listener* (Head) (fig. 1), of James Cook’s *En Route* (fig 5), and of Nationalist discourse at large.’ when discussing McCahon’s use of a solitary Christ figure in crucifixion scenes instead of portraying crowds. Pound, F. *The Invention of New Zealand. Art & National Identity 1930-1970*. Auckland University Press, 2009, 18.

<sup>8</sup>. Hone Papita Raukura (Ralph) Hotere (born 1931) Te Aupouri iwi (northernmost tribe of North Island, north of Kaitia and are one of the tribes of the Spirits Bay area.)

<sup>9</sup>. Pound, F. *The Invention of New Zealand. Art & National Identity 1930-1970*. Auckland University Press, 2009, 13. These labels have been used widely by others for at least forty years and have become part of a terminology used in discussion of arts, architecture and literature in New Zealand in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

<sup>10</sup>. Refer, for example, to Skinner, McCarthy, Pound. Skinner’s work ‘The Whare in the Bush. Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition’ *Fabrications* 18:1, 2008 is discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>11</sup>. An overview of Institute Journal cover images shows a majority of single buildings set within a (usually stunning) landscape. Institute awards tend to reward the residential type of high quality, detached buildings within a landscape setting. In *Home New Zealand* August/September 2010, to celebrate the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Home of the Year awards, Peter Wood looked at the fifteen winning projects. With only part tongue in cheek, he provided a list of the necessary ingredients for an award-winning building in New Zealand. The second and third items both refer to the landscape setting. (‘2. It shall have a view of the sea. 3. It shall occupy an achingly beautiful bucolic site.’) In Peter Wood’s ordering, the first item is ‘It shall be made of wood.’

<sup>12</sup>. Austin claims that generally, New Zealand architectural history either ignores the Maori component, or it claims it in a sense of ownership. He provides a literature review of the writings around the influence of Polynesian architecture on the architecture of New Zealand, and has discussed the tendency of New Zealand architectural writing to ignore this influence in ‘Polynesian Influences in New Zealand Architecture’ *Shifting Views. Selected Essays on the Architectural History of Australia and New Zealand*. Ed. Andrew Leach, Antony Moulis & Nicole Sully, University of Queensland Press 2008, -123131. Refer also to Deidre Brown ‘Post-European and Indigenous Architectural Histories in Aotearoa New Zealand’ published in the same text.

<sup>13</sup>. Pound, F. *The Invention of New Zealand. Art & National Identity 1930-1970*. Auckland University Press, 2009, 31.



Fig. 112



Fig. 113



Fig. 114



Fig. 115



Fig. 116

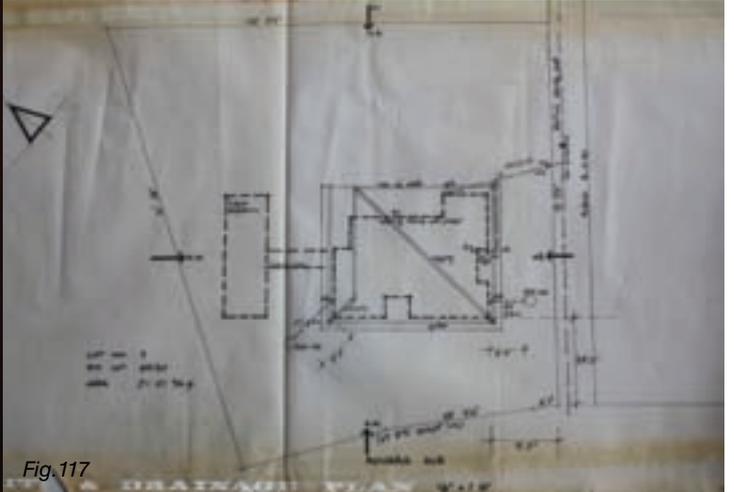


Fig. 117

- Fig. 112 NS009•64-S05, Simmons House, 1964, outdoor cooking area
- Fig. 113 NS009•64-S05, eave detail, 1964
- Fig. 114 NS009•64-S05, Fireplace and outdoor cooking pit, photo c2010
- Fig. 115 NS009•64-S05, interior, Kitchen
- Fig. 116 Outdoor cooking, N. Simmons, c1980
- Fig. 117 NS009•64-S05, Site Plan

In New Zealand architectural history, an accepted story involves ideas related to the nationalist identity - of solitude, pragmatism and stoicism – which are expressed in a simple building form: the bach and/or the pioneer hut.<sup>14</sup> This argument is laid out in Mitchell and Chaplin's *The Elegant Shed*<sup>15</sup>, where it is proposed that architecture in New Zealand is a constant search to re-make the shed, the most well-understood of all architectural forms in this country, into a thing of beauty.

‘Why then is the shed – a product of engineering if ever there was – an important source of post-war architecture, and the elegant shed a mythical goal? Because only since the 1940s have our architects been able to consciously elevate the pragmatism of their people and make art of it.’<sup>16</sup>

The timing of *The Elegant Shed* was such that it consolidated the bach / shed / hut as central to the national architectural identity during the post-modern era, before this idea could be deconstructed.<sup>17</sup> The discussion in this book around the simple timber history of New Zealand architecture is complex in that it reinforces the by-then established pragmatic timber modernism myth, yet concurrently recognised its end. The book and the television series can be seen as a bridge in the narrative around the shed between modernism and post-modernism.

‘But man alone has outstayed his welcome. He has accepted company and given up fighting...’<sup>18</sup>

The importance of Mitchell and Chaplin's text is highlighted by Peter Wood,<sup>19</sup> who suggests that it established a cultural foundation upon which further developments in the New Zealand tradition could be made.

To collapse New Zealand building typology into an amalgam of shed / hut / bach, however, is to combine building types which have social and physical differences. The shed can be distinguished from the bach and the hut in that it is a working structure, set within a tamed landscape - farmed or milled, or mown and clipped, as in the case of a suburban shed. The landscape settings for both the bach and the hut are usually wild, isolated locations. The bach is usually located at an edge between land and water, is either solitary or occurs in clusters, and has become associated with a type of domesticity.<sup>20</sup> Austin, in his *Fabrications* paper,<sup>21</sup> shows how the assumed tripartite basis for New Zealand architecture - the bach, the landscape, and The Group - is a nationalist identity story told from a Pakeha point of view.

<sup>14</sup> Clark and Walker point out that the use of the term ‘pioneer’ hut, to replace ‘colonial’ or ‘settler’ hut, became established from the 1930's onward, to align with and reflect the modernist use of pioneer. See *Looking For The Local. Architecture and the New Zealand Modern*. Victoria University Press, 2000, 29. Peter Wood points out that the term ‘bach’ became common after World War One, possibly because the building type offered ‘a version of domestic living that mimics’ the experiences of the returned servicemen. (He notes the first recorded use of its current form as being 1929, from *The Oxford English Dictionary, New Zealand edition*.) See Wood, P. ‘The Bach. The Cultural History of a Local Typology’, *Fabrications* 11:1, 2000, 53 and 45.

<sup>15</sup> Mitchell, D. and Chaplin, G. *The Elegant Shed. New Zealand Architecture Since 1945*. Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1984.

<sup>16</sup> Mitchell, D. From the Introduction, Mitchell, D. and Chaplin, G. *The Elegant Shed. New Zealand Architecture Since 1945*. Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1984, 9.

<sup>17</sup> The early 1980s has been identified as a turning point in New Zealand's cultural development, especially in relation to politics, race relations and economics. See McCarthy, Christine ‘...ponderously pedantic pediments prevail... good, clean fun in a bad, dirty world’: New Zealand Architecture in the 1980s: a one day symposium.’ Victoria University, Wellington, 2009. See also Robin Skinner ‘Larrikins Abroad: International Account of the New Zealand Architects in the 1970s and 1980s.’ in (Ed) Andrew Leach, Antony Moulis & Nicole Sully *Shifting Views – Selected essays on the Architectural History of Australia and New Zealand* University of Queensland Press, 2008, 109, for how this shift had effect on the presentation of the work of Athfield and Walker in architectural publications.

<sup>18</sup> Mitchell, D and Chaplin, G. *The Elegant Shed*. Oxford University Press, 1984, 104

<sup>19</sup> Wood, Peter ‘Watershed: of buildings and stories and elegant sheds.’ *Exquisite Apart: 100 years of architecture in New Zealand*. Walker, C. (Ed) Balasoglou Books/New Zealand Institute of Architects, Auckland, 2005, 72-80. This connection is mentioned by Robin Skinner, ‘The Whare in the Bush. Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition.’ *Fabrications* 18:1, 57.

<sup>20</sup> Refer, for example, to arguments presented by Peter Wood ‘The Bach. The Cultural History of a Local Typology’, *Fabrications* 11 2000 and Christine McCarthy in *The Bach. Interstices* 4, 1999.

<sup>21</sup> Austin, A ‘Kiwi Architecture: Modernism Recycled’, *Fabrications* Vol 14, No1&2, Dec 2004



Fig.118



Fig.119

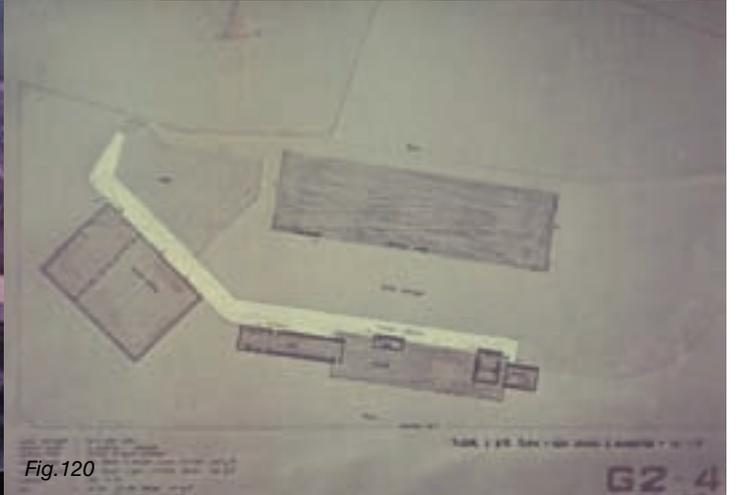


Fig.120



Fig.121

Fig.118 NS004•60-G02, Squash Courts, Grammar Old Boys Rugby Football Club, Parnell, Auckland, interior, c1960

Fig.119 NS004•60-G02, model, c1960

Fig.120 NS004•60-G02, Site Plan, c1960

Fig.121 NS004•60-G02, model, c1960

The hut tends to be located within some sort of landscape 'interior' and will usually reinforce its own interior condition through some form of ritualised behaviour.<sup>22</sup> If not located in the remote wild, the hut will typically be on the fringes of established domestic typologies,<sup>23</sup> and is constructed for inhabitation with intensity. The spatial focus within the hut is inward. It offers protection from the environment, rather than making attempts to connect with it through some version of indoor-outdoor flow. Ann Cline, architectural lecturer at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, describes in *A Hut of One's Own*<sup>24</sup> that the hut is traditionally a space in isolation, created either for the celebration of a ritual (for example tea-making, poetry, dance etc), or it is a structure for survival, constructed in post-war or disaster conditions.<sup>25</sup> Both hut types set up an intense interior, and both involve the election to separate from the mainstream, whether permanently or for a limited time. Cline argues that the separation desire may be prompted by either survival or an existential pursuit, and both versions have '...concern with the nature of human existence.'<sup>26</sup> This intensity of the interior links to arguments made later regarding interior darkness and shadow, and has similarities to the inward focus, ritualised space and interior darkness found in many structures of the Pacific region, as well as the New Zealand hut.<sup>27</sup>

### Timber Modern

It is proposed that the work produced by Simmons during the 1960s fits the sentiments of this era well, and that his character was perhaps a more accurate man alone figure than the constructed one of the nationalist myth. Simmons' desire for solitude has been fulfilled through his regular journeys into New Zealand's forest interiors as well as shaping his professional life. The post-nationalist criticisms of this time in New Zealand's history include the focus on a singular defining character, resulting in the exclusion of many. It is curious then that Simmons remained on the outside of the nationalist mainstream field in terms of architectural history, and it has become evident that through the course of this study this has been a self-imposed isolation. Looking at the few early examples of Simmons' work,<sup>28</sup> such as the Chapman-Taylor House<sup>29</sup> and the Smytheram House,<sup>30</sup> a particular kind of 'timber modernism' common to the era is recognised. The location of Titirangi was also not uncommon, reflecting at this time the desire for such remote forested landscape conditions and the availability of these cheaper sections to the young professional clients Simmons attracted at that time.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Refer to Anne Cline, *A Hut of One's Own: Life Outside the Circle of Architecture*. MIT Press, 1997.

<sup>23</sup> For example, the childhood tree-hut or ceremonial huts. Hut-dwellers can be considered by mainstream society to be slightly 'marginal' and are often the subject of childhood urban myths. Note, however, that hut-dwellers are not homeless – they have a place to dwell.

<sup>24</sup> Anne Cline, *A Hut of One's Own: Life Outside the Circle of Architecture*. MIT Press, 1997.

<sup>25</sup> Robin Skinner notes in 'The Whare in the Bush. Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition. *Fabrications* 18:1, 2008 that Peter Wood connects the bach-building eras as being post war eras. (1920's and 1950's.) Skinner uses James Garrett as an example of an architect using a bach as a retreat from an 'often brutal world.' (endnote 27) here noting the similarities between the bach and the hut.

<sup>26</sup> Anne Cline, *A Hut of One's Own: Life Outside the Circle of Architecture*. MIT Press, 1997, 17.

<sup>27</sup> Refer also to Tina Engels-Schwarzpaul, 'Restless Containers', *Interstices* 12, 2011, for discussion regarding intense interiority in Wharenui and Faletete structures. Refer also to Chapter 4.0 for discussion relating interior intensity with shadow and interior darkness.

<sup>28</sup> Refer to Section B Database 1.0 and 2.0 for a list of projects between 1958-1965. As the recording of projects in project books started in 1972, there are many projects from these early years, which are yet to be confirmed.

<sup>29</sup> NS006•62-C01. Mr & Mrs Chapman-Taylor, 107 Waima Crescent, Titirangi, Auckland.

<sup>30</sup> NS008•63-S03. John Smytheram, Atkinson Avenue, Titirangi, Auckland.

<sup>31</sup> Residential clients for Neil Simmons • Architect in his establishing years tended to be young professionals, before becoming established and so providing affordable homes for them was an important part of the brief. Other clients have been from outside of this middle class group, such as unmarried and divorced women, at that time less common than today. Simmons has had several clients from the Croatian community, due to his personal connection and his work with Danny Hrstich.

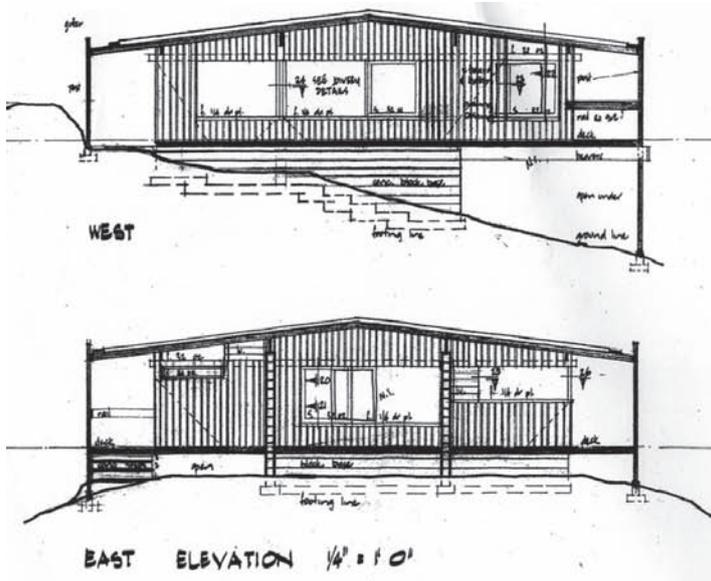


Fig.122

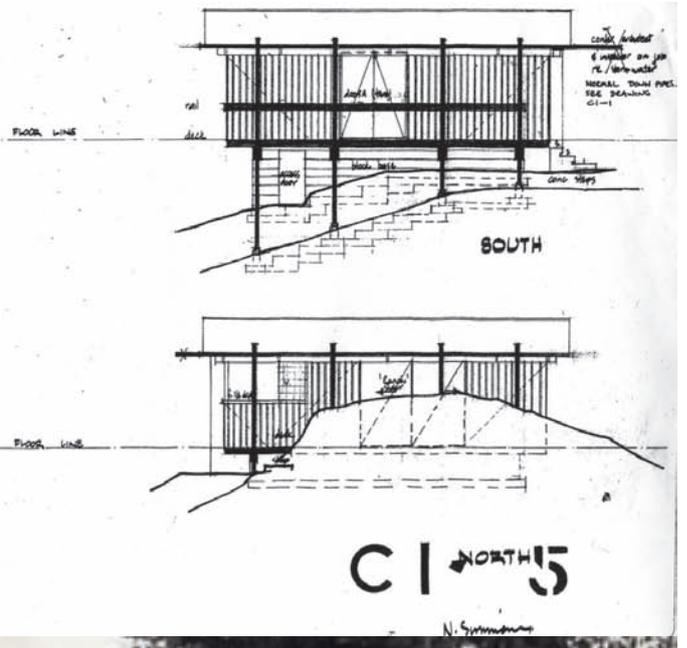


Fig.124

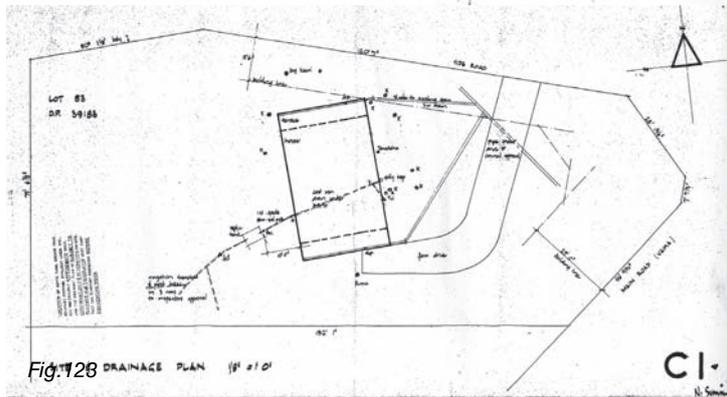


Fig.123 DRAINAGE PLAN 1/4" = 1'-0"



Fig.125



Fig.126

Fig.122 NS006•62-C01, Chapman-Taylor House, Elevations, 1962

Fig.123 NS006•62-C01, Site Plan

Fig.124 NS008•63-S03, Smytheram House, Titirangi, Auckland, 1963

Fig.125 NS006•62-C01, exterior, house among Kauri, 1962

Fig.126 NS008•63-S03, Smytheram House, exterior eave detail, 1963

Clark and Walker provide an overview of the development of the search for a New Zealand architectural vernacular in their chapter 'The New Pioneers' in *Looking For The Local*.<sup>32</sup> They demonstrate that the idea that a national identity could be found in early settler huts was well established by 1900 and has continued in various forms throughout the century,<sup>33</sup> and that the use of such words as practical, utilitarian, and simple in relation to a New Zealand architectural identity was also common as early as 1900. Between 1930 and 1970, concepts of modernism were part of the developing nationalist identity, and so became connected to the simple and pragmatic building types. Clark and Walker suggest that;

'By insisting that New Zealand's early timber forms were simple, truthful, and functional, this history claimed architectural modernism as a kind of national trait.'<sup>34</sup>

The modernist ideal was transcribed onto a physical, historical model, allowing them to be located well and truly within New Zealand and fulfilling the desire for a 'real' New Zealand architecture. This connection, between a pioneering ethic and a timber interpretation of modernist simplicity, is today most widely known through the work of Group Architects, who were based in Auckland.<sup>35</sup> Julia Gatley has evaluated their contribution to New Zealand architecture as being a central component to the developing timber modernist tradition, who included social concerns in planning combined with attention to technology and construction.<sup>36</sup> The early domestic work of The Group employs lean timber profiles, stripped-back detailing, long, sloping, spreading roof forms and open-plan spaces, and their work was hugely influential to the work of the Auckland region of the 1950's and beyond.

The pioneering hut as a kind of model on which to base a national style was utilised in the mid century, when art forms tended to display a search for a cultural marker, distinct from a European mainland tradition.<sup>37</sup> As Clark and Walker point out;

'During the 40s and 50s the pioneer past was recuperated in the search for a modern New Zealand vernacular. History was not merely a general context: it was the very ground on which the new New Zealand architecture had been built.'<sup>38</sup>

Since the 1950s and the domination of the Group initiatives in Auckland, a timber tradition has continued, albeit in landscape progressively less remote. This timber tradition can also be seen in Simmons' work, locating his architectural work firmly of its era. Examples of this are the Squash Courts building for the Grammar Old Boys Rugby Football Club<sup>39</sup> and the houses previously mentioned.

Despite a higher density of buildings in the landscape, an isolated condition is constantly alluded to through the depiction of detached buildings within an idealised remote landscape

<sup>32</sup> See Chapter Two 'The New Pioneers' in Clark, J. and Walker, P. *Looking For The Local. Architecture and the New Zealand Modern*. Victoria University Press. 2000, 25-34.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>35</sup> Quote from (ed) Gatley, J. *Group Architects. Towards a New Zealand Architecture*. Auckland University Press, 2010: 'Group Architects "the Group" for short – are New Zealand's most mythologised firm of mid-20th century architects. They are known for their provocative calls for a specifically New Zealand architecture and for their modern houses, often characterised by exposed timbers, open-plan interiors and new attention to indoor-outdoor living.'

<sup>36</sup> (ed) Gatley, J. *Group Architects. Towards a New Zealand Architecture*. Auckland University Press, 2010.

<sup>37</sup> This search for a distinct New Zealand quality became most pronounced in the mid century era, although it had been present since the late nineteenth century. It has been shown that the post war periods had a profound effect on the desire to establish a New Zealand culture, see Peter Wood (2000) 'The Bach. The Cultural History of a Local Typology', *Fabrications* 11:1, in which Wood describes how architectural development is linked to social and cultural developments of a nation, as well as the physical and spatial ones. Wood points out that New Zealand had its most prolific bach-building periods in the years immediately after the two world wars.

<sup>38</sup> Clark, J. and Walker, P. *Looking For The Local. Architecture and the New Zealand Modern*. Victoria University Press, 2000, 31.

<sup>39</sup> NS004\*60-G02. Grammar Old Boys Rugby Football Club (GOBRFC) Squash Courts, Ayr Street, Parnell. 1960-65.



Fig.127



Fig.128



Fig.129



Fig.130



Fig.131



Fig.132

Fig.127 NS073•78-M37, Male Pavillion, Whitford, exterior, 1978

Fig.128 Ns073•78-M37, exterior deck, 1978

Fig.129 NS073•78-M37, exterior pole and roof beam connection, 1978

Fig.130 NS073•78-M37, exterior, 1978

Fig.131 NS052•75-C09, Betsall-Cohen Interior, Trig Road, Whitford, 1975, (alteration to NSA house NS015•69-M05)

Fig.132 NS054•75-H35, Hrstich Townhouses, St Heliers, Auckland, exterior, 1975

setting. Often in built-up areas, photography will exclude the built context to provide an idealised condition of solitude. The solitude and silence connected to the landscape has perhaps also been lost in the real sense, however it continues to be re-stated in the continuing mythology around a hyper-masculine, loner identity, which has come to be abbreviated as the 'man alone' condition.

The 'man alone' figure derives from John Mulgan's 1939 novel of the same name and refers to a literary tradition in New Zealand that describes an individual man living in a raw environment, at odds with wider society.<sup>40</sup>

The last part to this sentence in Skinner's description of the man alone character rings most true of Neil Simmons, who has maintained his domestic and professional environments as raw as others have allowed. He has an introverted and slightly mischievous character, and takes delight in his outsider status.

There is a particular photograph which has been employed in architectural discourse in New Zealand since 1954, around the same time as the early Group projects,<sup>41</sup> to support this very connection between modernism, solitude, landscape and a timber tradition. This photograph is of a simple timber hut set amongst the flax within an isolated landscape, with a man reading on the verandah, alone. The man is Hans Peter Knutzen, the hut is located in Piha, and the photograph was taken ca. 1915-16,<sup>42</sup> however for almost a century the man and location has been unknown. This anonymity was important, as has been so well illustrated by Robin Skinner, in *Whare in the Bush. Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition*.<sup>43</sup> Titled either 'Whare in the Bush'<sup>44</sup> or 'Bach in King Country',<sup>45</sup> the unfixed location and un-named man have allowed for wide (mis)readings of the image, and which have been used to support the developing architectural mythology of 'man alone' in this country. Skinner examines the use and effect of the photograph by the architectural community - beginning with the HOMEBUILDING exhibition and its associated catalogue in 1954<sup>46</sup>, its re-use in 1966 for an exhibition held at the Building Centre<sup>47</sup> and then again in *The Elegant Shed* thirty years later,<sup>48</sup> as well as its display in the Architecture Library at The University of Auckland, and its discussion in various recent books and papers, including Clark and Walker's *Looking for the*

<sup>40</sup> Skinner, R. The Whare in the Bush. Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition. *Fabrications* 18:1, 2008, 58. See also Pound, F *The Invention of New Zealand. Art & National Identity 1930-1970*. Auckland University Press, 2009, 18, footnote 99: 'The *locus classicus* for this stock New Zealand theme is John Mulgan's *Man Alone*, Selwyn and Blount, London, 1939.'

<sup>41</sup> Refer to the 'List of Buildings and Projects 1947-1970' from (Ed) Gatley, J. *Group Architects. Towards a New Zealand Architecture*. Auckland University Press, 2010, 226-241.

<sup>42</sup> The photograph was taken by A.P. Godber. As mentioned in the Introduction, the image was named by Sandra Coney in *Piha: A History in Images* Auckland: Keyhole Press, 1997. Skinner provides a short overview of how the architectural community identified this image only recently. Refer endnotes 1 and 33 in Skinner, R. The Whare in the Bush. Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition. *Fabrications* 18:1, 2008, 71, 73. The connection was pointed out to Clark and Walker by Peter Wood – Refer Clark, J. and Walker, P. *Looking For The Local. Architecture and the New Zealand Modern*. Victoria University Press, 2000, 32. (footnote 48.)

<sup>43</sup> Skinner, R. The Whare in the Bush. Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition. *Fabrications* 18:1, 2008.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 63. Skinner refers to Clark and Walker, who have pointed out this title as a caption was given by A.P. Godber, in one of his Piha albums.

<sup>45</sup> This was the title given by James Garrett, the editor of the Exhibition catalogue for HOMEBUILDING 1814-1954, who sourced the image from the Alexander Turnbull Library. (Skinner, R, endnote 35, 73.) 'The King Country, or Rohe Potae, was originally a large tract of the western central North Island and comprised the tribal lands of Ngati Maniapoto Ngati Tama, Ngati Tuwharetoa (the portion lying west and south of Lake Taupo), the Waikato lands which escaped confiscation, and the northern fringes of Ngati Ruanui and Ngati Hau lands.' Retrieved <http://www.kingcountry.co.nz> 25/10/11.

<sup>46</sup> Catalogue ed. Garrett, J. *HOMEBUILDING 1814-1954: the New Zealand Tradition*. Catalogue of the Exhibition Group, School of Architecture, Auckland University College. Auckland: Pelorus Press, 1954. The exhibition was held at the Auckland Art Gallery. Refer Chapter 1.1, page 24.

<sup>47</sup> The re-use was by James Garrett and the exhibition was called 'Castles on the Ground'. The Building centre was located at that time in Victoria Street, Auckland. (See Skinner, 62.)

<sup>48</sup> Mitchell, D. and Chaplin, G. *The Elegant Shed. New Zealand Architecture Since 1945*. Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1984, 104. There was also a six-part Television series titled 'The Elegant Shed' prior to the publication of this book, screened in 30 minute segments on *Kaleidoscope*, TVNZ (1984).



Fig.133



Fig.134



Fig.135



Fig.136



Fig.137



Fig.138

Fig.133 NS049•75-G19, Griffiths Pole House, Cooks Beach, Coromandel, construction progress photo, poles, 1975

Fig.134 NS049•75-G19, construction progress photo, framing, 1975

Fig.135 NS049•75-G19, client, architect and builder, 1975

Fig.136 NS049•75-G19, exterior, 1975

Fig.137 Addition to NS049•75-G19, R25, Reid, 2006

Fig.138 NS049•75-G19, exterior from rear, 1975

*Local*.<sup>49</sup> The approach of the 1954 HOMEBUILDING exhibition aligned with the nationalist identity as identified by Pound, showing it to be a common pursuit and belonging not only to the Group but also to others of this era and earlier. The simple hut structure in the photograph was well suited to the timber-modernist ideals of the 1950's<sup>50</sup> and it was easily adopted as the image of this mythological ideal. Pound points out the nature of the invention that was being undertaken, and that this position was central and common to all of the New Zealand arts of the 20th century;

‘Absence, blankness, solitude, silence. Such, according to the Nationalist speakers themselves, was the origin of their quest to discover, or to invent, the true New Zealand.’<sup>51</sup>

Skinner summarises the overall curatorial intention of the 1954 exhibition as being one which reinforced the notion that a New Zealand pragmatism emerges from absence and solitude, and that pragmatism in itself is more highly valued here than sophistication.

‘Out of an isolated and lonely tradition, resourceful individuals had made makeshift primitive dwellings using available materials. While the result was unrefined, it was logical, honest and simple.’<sup>52</sup>

Skinner’s inclusion of the word “unrefined” refers obliquely to the criticisms levelled at New Zealand architecture by Nikolaus Pevsner, after his visit in 1958 when he described the tendency for timber detailing to be ‘raw’ and that ‘a certain crudity is called straightforwardness.’<sup>53</sup> Justine Clark reviews the subsequent furore around this criticism and notes that this event, too, has become part of our architectural folklore and adds to the argument for straightforwardness as another national trait.<sup>54</sup> In 1984, the photograph is included and discussed in the book *The Elegant Shed*, with the caption to the image capturing the intention of its use;

‘Man alone’ could never be better represented than in this anonymous photograph that is held like a banner for truth in the Auckland University School of Architecture.<sup>55</sup> As Robin Skinner has identified, the key word in this caption is ‘anonymous.’<sup>56</sup>

### Dismantling the Myth

While Mitchell and Chaplin cemented the photograph’s place as being representative of the ‘man alone’ for New Zealand architecture, they also hinted that the condition had, by 1984, ended, and that the singular and isolated male was now no longer alone in architectural folklore.<sup>57</sup> This first rattling of the accepted image has continued only very slowly, with further

<sup>49</sup> Skinner notes the inclusion of the photograph in E.M Farrelly’s *Architectural Review* (July 1986) book review of *The Elegant Shed*, Skinner, R. The Whare in the Bush. Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition. *Fabrications* 18:1, 2008, 59. Peter Wood ‘The Bach. The Cultural History of a Local Typology.’ *Fabrications* 11:1, 2000 and ‘Cultural Regionalism and the Development of the New Zealand ‘Bach.’ *Habitus 2000*, Perth, Gill Matthewson ‘Looking at the Icons’ *Formulation Fabrication*. SAHANZ, Wellington, 2000, 483 and ‘Sketching in the Margins’ in (ed) Walker, C. *Exquisite Apart: One Hundred Years of Architecture in New Zealand* Balasoglou Books, Auckland, 2005, 126.

<sup>50</sup> Although James Garrett was not a member of the Group, he was a student of similar era.

<sup>51</sup> Pound, F. *The Invention of New Zealand. Art & National Identity 1930-1970*. Auckland University Press, 2009, 31.

<sup>52</sup> Skinner, R. The Whare in the Bush. Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition. *Fabrications* 18:1, 2008, 61.

<sup>53</sup> Skinner, R. ‘Nikki Down Under: Impressions of Pevsner in New Zealand’ 1996 in Goad, P & Willis, J. (eds) *Loyalty and Disloyalty in the Architecture of the British Empire and Commonwealth: SAHANZ University of Melbourne*, 1996, 102-110.

<sup>54</sup> Clark, J. ‘Ephemera: The Elusive Canon.’ *Fabrications* Vol 14: No 1&2, 2004, 53,54. Clark provides an overview of the publications that cover the two original radio interviews with Pevsner, in which he refers to a conversation with Bill Toomath, a founding member of ‘The Group’.

<sup>55</sup> Caption to the photograph in question by A.P.Godber c1915-16. Mitchell, D. and Chaplin, G. *The Elegant Shed. New Zealand Architecture Since 1945*. Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1984, 104. (italics in original to show caption.) The source for the photograph was the Auckland University Architecture Library, and the photographer was not known to Mitchell and Chaplin.

<sup>56</sup> Skinner, R. The Whare in the Bush. Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition. *Fabrications* 18:1, 2008.

<sup>57</sup> Mitchell, D. and Chaplin, G. *The Elegant Shed. New Zealand Architecture Since 1945*. Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1984, 104. Skinner calls attention to this shift, see Skinner, R. The Whare in the Bush. Unpacking a

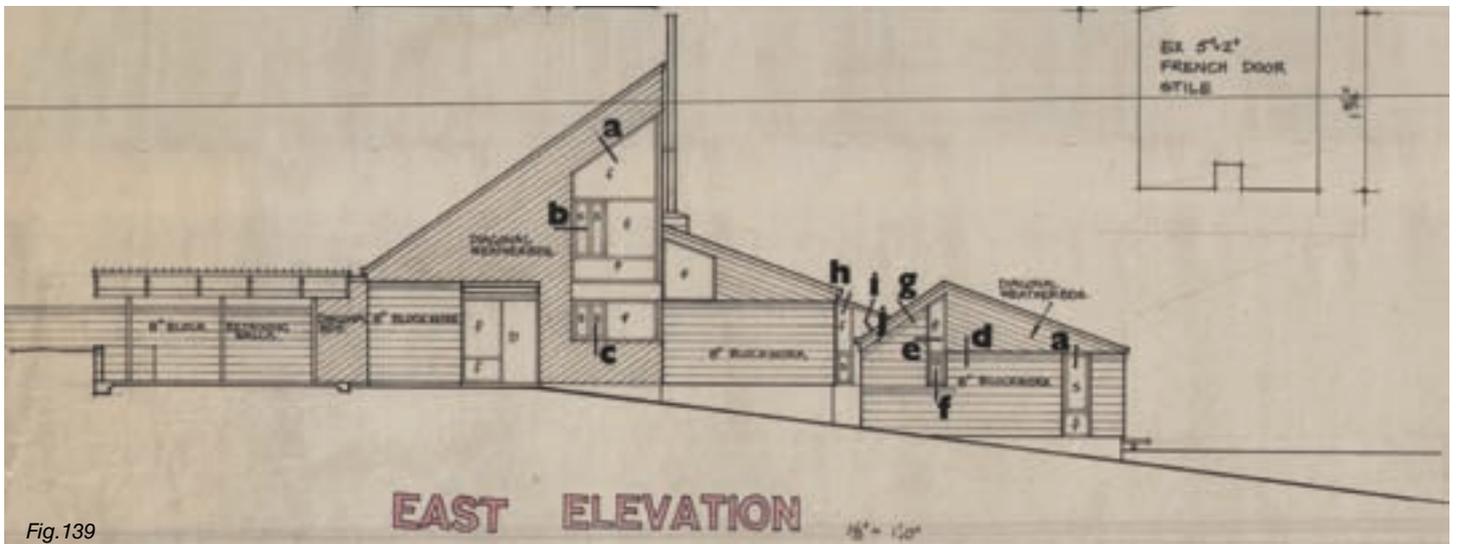


Fig.139

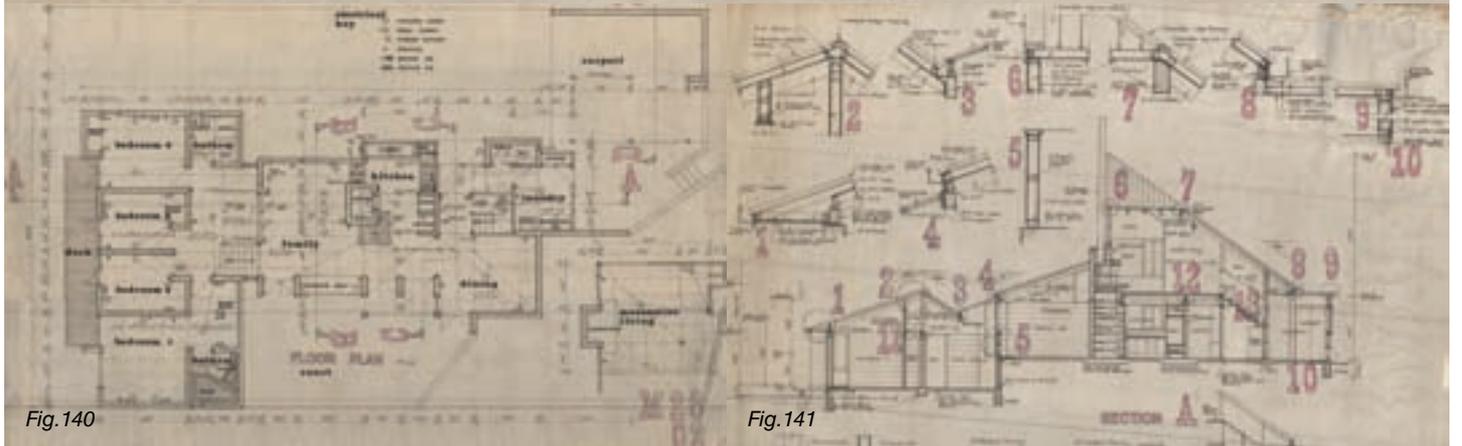


Fig.140

Fig.141

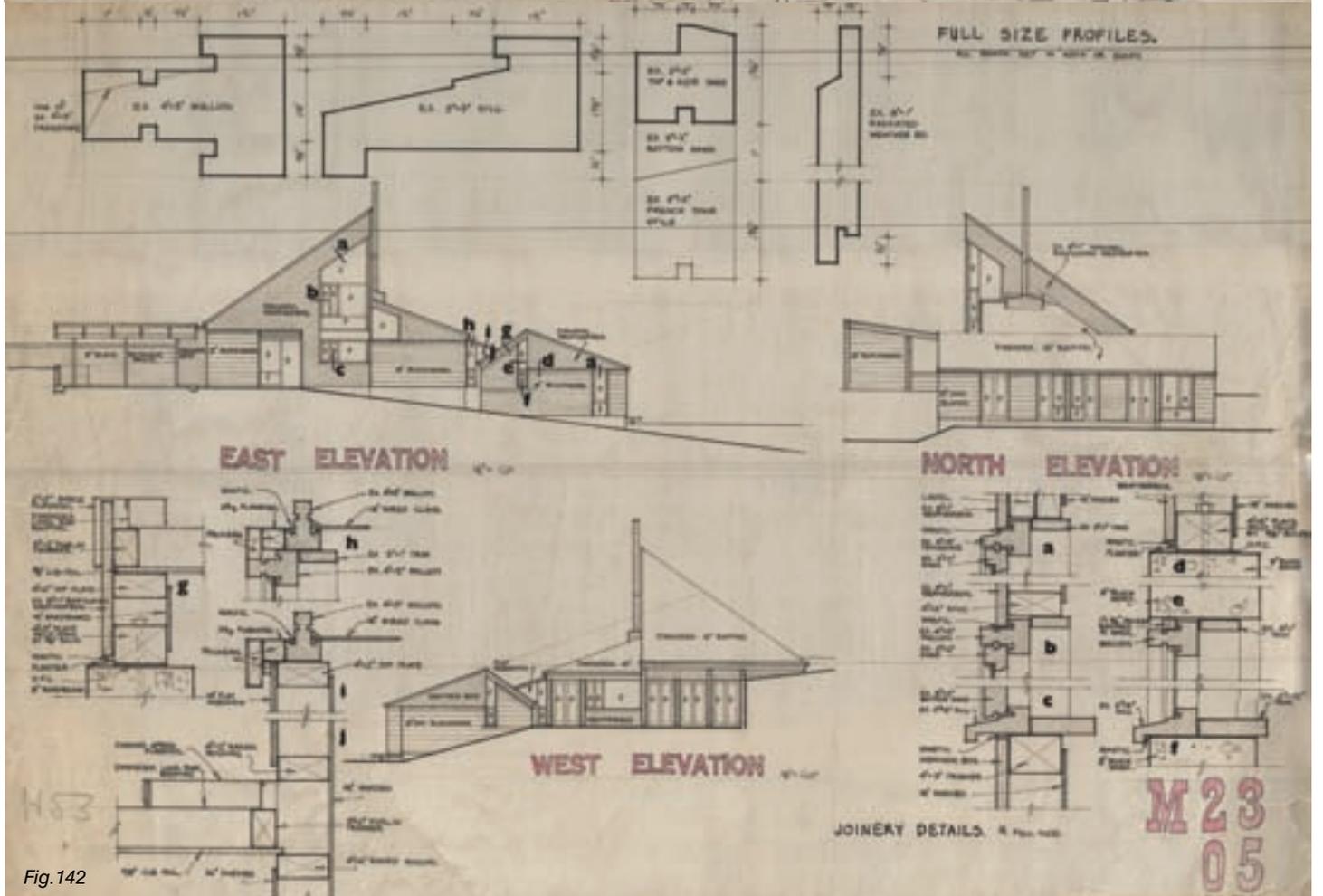


Fig.142

Fig.139 M23, Malloy House, Mairangi Bay, Auckland, East Elevation, 1972

Fig.140 M23, Plan, 1972

Fig.141 M23, Section A, 1972

Fig.142 M23, Elevations, Sheet 05, 1972

dismantling of the myth beginning to occur at the turn of the century, via *Looking for The Local*, where connection was made in an architectural publication between the image and its correct identification<sup>58</sup>, and in Skinner's thorough examination.

The man in the photograph is named (Mr Knutzen) and the location is defined (Piha), thus providing the ability to trace the identity of the photographer (A.P. Godber) and the date of the photo (c1915-16). This connection also provided access to further photos in the same album made by Godber – of the hut interior, context and rear exterior, and these have subsequently been used by Skinner to expose the misreadings of the 'man alone' image of New Zealand architectural tradition. Skinner looked closely at the Piha images and in doing so has managed to expose the myth of the photograph, with the act of bringing real information to the image. He indicates that the hut does not have a flat or low mono pitch roof, but is in fact a gable. The interior is not sparse or desolate but rather homely, and the context is not isolated but within a community setting.<sup>59</sup> Skinner also showed that Mr Knutz himself was not an outcast or a loner, but a man with a managerial position at the Piha Timber Mill, thus he was connected and of established social class. And through discussions with Coney, Skinner found that Mr Knutzen may have employed a housekeeper for the domestic duties required at the Piha hut; 'Rather than being *man alone* he was *man attended*.'<sup>60</sup>

Skinner has shown that this photograph was employed to illustrate the developing nationalist identity, at its height in the 1940s and 1950s.

'One cannot help but speculate that if the photograph had shown a hipped roof, then it would not have been held in such high regard by the mid-twentieth century modernists.'<sup>61</sup>

This revelation demonstrates that any cultural myth relies on an ability to dream within the framework of the myth, to allow the story to be told and re-told with little or no definition. For the myth to continue, the real and the myth must not be brought closely together, as the inevitable complexities that come with reality begin to break the myth down. Skinner has exposed this image as being something other than its well-used interpretation, and that the very myth itself has relied on the fact that the man alone is never identified, that he remains undefined and anonymous.

'This is a story that does not fit with the modernist narratives of primitive huts, men alone and simple and straightforward outcomes.'<sup>62</sup>

So the imagery of timber modernism and the man alone figure is dismantled when anonymity is removed. In painting and literature, Pound also reveals how the storytelling behind this imagery was constructed. He believes that the idea of the isolated, silent landscape experienced by the individual loner is a Nationalist myth, which belonged to and was fostered by the educated classes of the mid-twentieth century in New Zealand painting and literature;

'Yet, really, the whole painful 'silence', 'isolation' and 'blankness' business was an intellectual's construction.'<sup>63</sup>

Pound is indicating that for those such as the educated classes, the myth was created to support a certain identity, yet for the working classes, the myth was reality: the reality of the isolated hut formed part of an everyday experience. The dominant cultural identity, then,

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Twentieth Century Tradition. *Fabrications* 18:1, 2008, 58.

<sup>58</sup> Clark, J. and Walker, P. *Looking For The Local. Architecture and the New Zealand Modern*. Victoria University Press, 2000, 31-32. See also Skinner, 63.

<sup>59</sup> Skinner, R. The Whare in the Bush. Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition. *Fabrications* 18:1, 2008, 66-69.

<sup>60</sup> Skinner, R. The Whare in the Bush. Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition. *Fabrications* 18:1, 2008, 68.

<sup>61</sup> Skinner, R. The Whare in the Bush. Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition. *Fabrications* 18:1, 2008, 69.

<sup>62</sup> Skinner, R. The Whare in the Bush. Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition. *Fabrications* 18:1, 2008, 70.

<sup>63</sup> Pound, F. *The Invention of New Zealand. Art & National Identity 1930-1970*. Auckland University Press, 2009, 35.

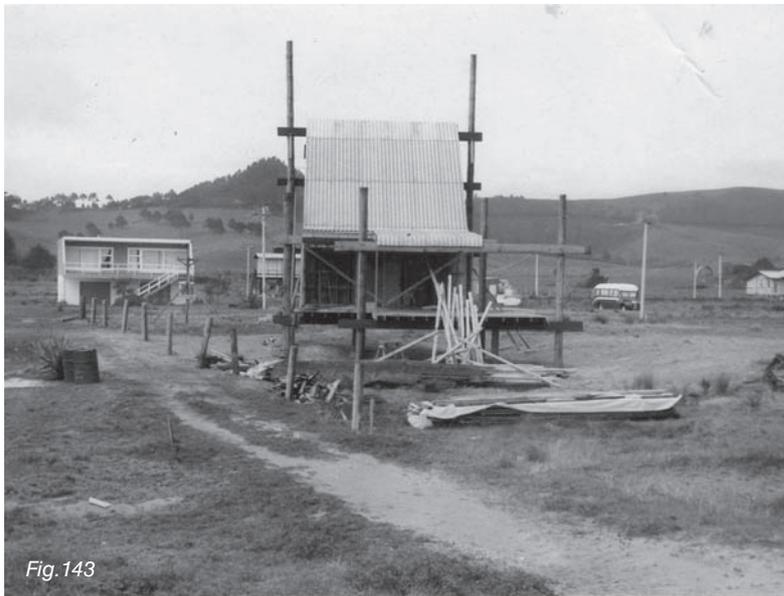


Fig.143



Fig.144

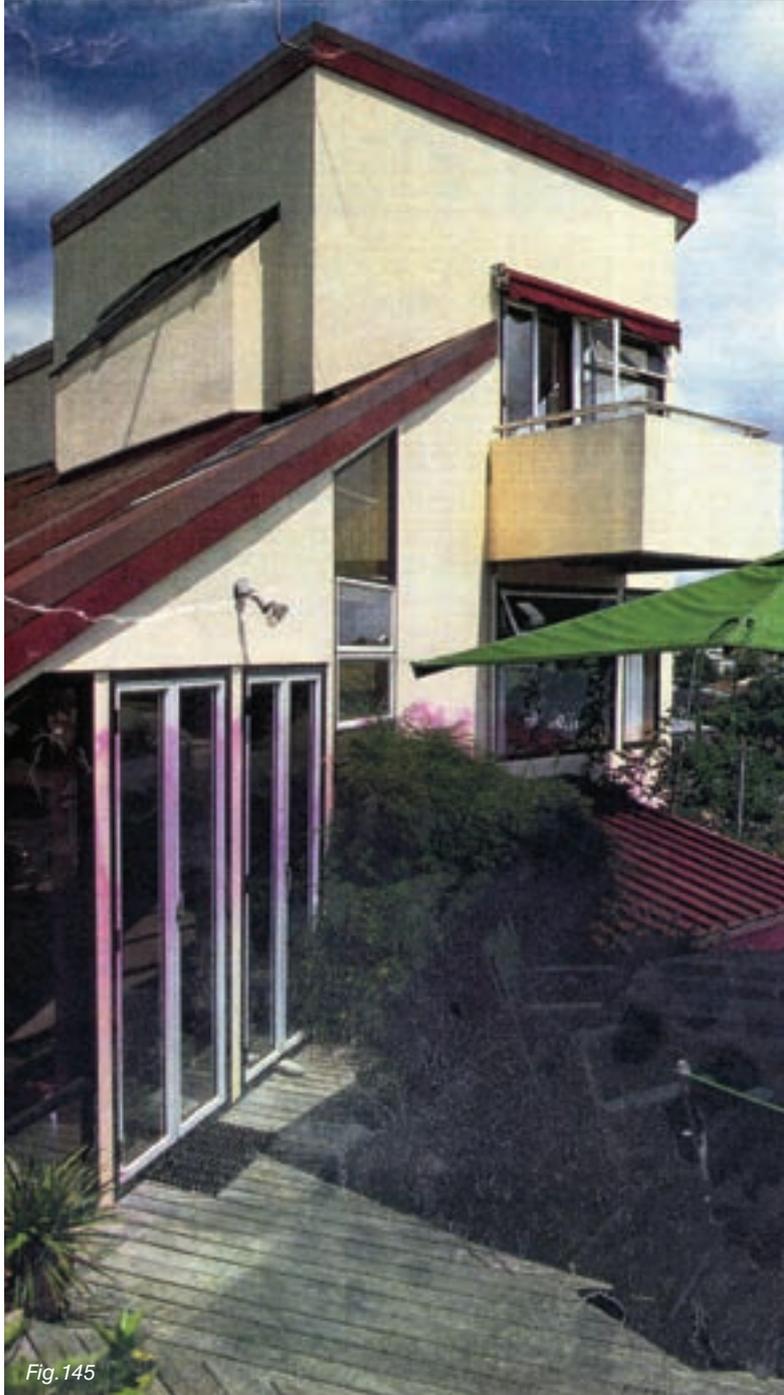


Fig.145

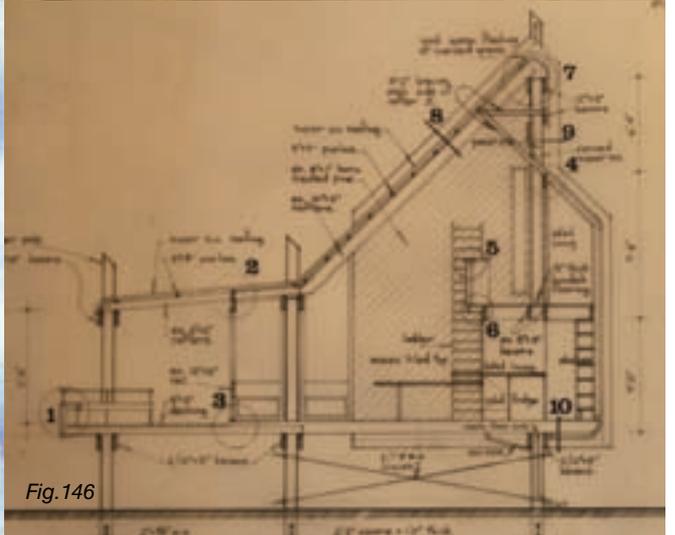


Fig.146



Fig.147



Fig.148

Fig.143 NS016•70-M16, Male Pole House, Cooks Beach, Coromandel, construction photo, 1970

Fig.144 NS016•70-M16, exterior, 1970

Fig.145 NS119•84-W32, Williamson House, North Head, Auckland, exterior, 1984

Fig.146 NS016•70-M16, Section, 1970

Fig.147 NS124•84-T28, Turoa Chalet, exterior, 1984

Fig.148 NS124•84-T28, Turoa Chalets, model, 1984

was an idealised version of a working class truth. Both Pound and Austin<sup>64</sup> remind us that this myth of the man alone is also a Pakeha story, as the land was not 'silent' but already occupied. They show that the myth was created during the shift from a colonial identity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to a nationalist one in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and that it did not form part of a bicultural or Maori identity.<sup>65</sup> The relationship between the land and the individual in Maori culture was already well established as being an embedded, connected one in contrast to ideas of silence, absence and disconnection.<sup>66</sup> The Pakeha eye gazes over '...what it sees as the land's emptiness,'<sup>67</sup> while the Maori eye, as Pound argues elsewhere<sup>68</sup>, does not gaze at all but is placed within the land itself. After all, the gaze is not possible without the idea that the object is able to be 'separate' from the self.

### The junction of the Man Alone myth with a (Larrikin) reality

The 'man alone' condition has been revealed, from a twenty-first century viewpoint, to be a construct that has relied heavily on an inability to locate any real space, time or personal identity, and that once definition has been given, the myth begins to unravel. What happens, then, when the review of the 'man alone' myth is started with a defined and identifiable person, located in time and place? It appears that architectural canon, and indeed, the profession, prefers the anonymous figure among the silent landscape.<sup>69</sup> How is the architectural narrative affected when a real 'rugged individualist', is located within an already occupied land? This clash - where the anonymous myth touches a real person - is the point where the discussion of the work of Neil Simmons is located.

In *Whare in the Bush*, Skinner uses the film *Sleeping Dogs* to illustrate the essential 'man alone' character, and to show that the characteristic continued to exist through the 1970's.

'In the 1980s, Roger Donaldson's film *Sleeping Dogs* (1977) portrayed an isolated individual railing against society and the state, renewing the trope's pertinence.'<sup>70</sup>

From 1975-1982, Roger Donaldson shared the premises at 152 Hobson Street with Hrstich, Curtis and Simmons.<sup>71</sup> Both *Sleeping Dogs* and his next film, *Smash Palace*, were made while the two-storey warehouse building was shared between Aardvark Films<sup>72</sup>, a furniture

<sup>64</sup> Austin, M. 'Notes on the Colonial City' (1991, 36) in *Fabrications 2*, 1992, 35-44. Austin says: 'This could be a way of avoiding the fact that the landscape was already occupied, or it could be that the inhabitants were seen as inseparable from the landscape to be dominated. In either case, the "noisy silence paradox" (in which the early settler claims New Zealand is totally silent, and then proceeds to list all the noises) is, I suggest, the silenced Maori voice.'

<sup>65</sup> See also McCarty, Christine 'The Bach.' *Interstices 4*, 2004, 1. 'Displaced within New Zealand, the Western primitive hut engages in the discourse of the colonial and architectural erasings of the Maori. Yet the pioneering hut is both the manifestation of the uncivilised and of the civilising forces which reconstruct a colonial landscape.'

<sup>66</sup> Pound, F. *The Invention of New Zealand. Art & National Identity 1930-1970*. Auckland University Press, 2009, 36. Pound says: 'Certainly it is not the 'we' of Maori, for whom this place is not an unrepresentable, unhistoric Sublime.'

<sup>67</sup> Pound, F. *The Invention of New Zealand. Art & National Identity 1930-1970*. Auckland University Press, 2009, 26.

<sup>68</sup> Pound, F. 'Frames of the Land' William Collins Publishers Ltd, Auckland, 1983, 12.

<sup>69</sup> There is a shift in architectural publications in the 1970s, where identifiable 'rugged individual' characters were not suppressed for the first time. The work of Ian Athfield (b.1940) and Roger Walker (b.1942) was celebrated by the international press for its rebellious and lively spirit. Refer to chapter 3.1 for further discussion regarding the decade of the 1970s in New Zealand and Athfield and Walker's leading role in it. Refer also to Robin Skinner 'Larrikins Abroad: International Account of the New Zealand Architects in the 1970s and 1980s (1999) in *Shifting Views Selected essays on the Architectural History of Australia and New Zealand* (ed) Andrew Leach, Antony Moulis & Nicole Sully, University of Queensland Press 2008, 103-111.

<sup>70</sup> Skinner, R. *The Whare in the Bush*. Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition. *Fabrications 18:1*, 2008, 58. *Sleeping Dogs* was based on a novel by New Zealand author C.K. Stead, called *Smith's Dream* (1971).

<sup>71</sup> Neil Simmons took the lease for the entire building at 152 Hobson Street from The Public Trust, in approximately June 1975, and moved into the First Floor Level with Hrstich and Curtis. Approximately one week after, Aardvark Films sub-leased the northern end of the First Floor from Simmons. They stayed until after the release of *Smash Palace*. (pers. comm. Neil Simmons 12/10/11.) The two-storey warehouse building was set back from Hobson Street with a driveway and had an open forecourt area mainly used for parking.

<sup>72</sup> Aardvark Films was the name of the film production company run by Roger Donaldson and partner, Mike Smith. Initially a photographic studio, the company moved into making television advertisements, documentaries and film. Aardvark Films was the Production Company for both *Sleeping Dogs* and *Smash Palace*, by which time Mike Smith had left the company. Note that Aardvark Films made a documentary in 1971 on Burt Munro titled 'Burt



Fig.149



Fig.150



Fig.151



Fig.152



Fig.153



Fig.154



Fig.155



Fig.156

Fig.149 NS112•83-T25, Turoa Chalets, construction progress photo, 1983

Fig.150 NS112•83-T25, construction progress photo, 1983

Fig.151 NS112•83-T25, construction progress photo, 1983

Fig.152 NS112•83-T25, construction progress photo, 1983

Fig.153 NS112•83-T25, exterior, 1983

Fig.154 NS112•83-T25, exterior, 1983

Fig.155 NS112•83-T25, exterior, 1983

Fig.156 NS112•83-T25, exterior, 1983

design company who occupied the Ground Level<sup>73</sup>, and Hrstich, Curtis and Simmons. The building was on the fringes of the city, and at that time Hobson Street was a series of small warehouse or manufacturing premises, occupied by low-rental retail outlets such as the Army Surplus Supplies Company, second-hand dealers, The City Mission and several trading outlets run by Auckland's Chinese community<sup>74</sup>, such as Wah Lee's, which has survived the re-development of Hobson Street.

The community in this building at 152 Hobson Street was fostered as a shared and creative one, with many stories swapped and experiences shared. Simmons recalls the building and forecourt area used as locations for the many advertisements made by Aardvaark Films, the special effects employed and the people involved.<sup>75</sup> Influence and crossover between the small community was inevitable, and Simmons wonders if some of his own stories took form in the films Donaldson made.<sup>76</sup> The theme of the renegade individual, set against mainstream society, was a shared concern in the 1970's, and one that was constantly discussed in this working environment. At one stage, architect Vince Terrini made a bamboo structure on the roof of the single garage building located in the carpark forecourt,<sup>77</sup> from where he distributed fake 'Banana Republic' banknotes, and it can be said that the occupants of this business community saw themselves as on the fringes of society. Simmons' hunting and camping lifestyle also contributed to this 'rugged individualist' reality. In a newspaper article on two Howick vets<sup>78</sup> going into retirement, the vets reminisce about several pig-hunting families in the Howick area, with their regular late-night visits to stitch the hunting dogs.

'Don still laughs about the family that rolled in with their dogs and the wild pig carcass strapped across the 4WD's bonnet.'<sup>79</sup>

Francis Pound addresses the nationalist characteristics in New Zealand art and literature between the years of 1930 and 1970, and indicates that by the 1970s there had occurred a shift in both the image of the solitary figure in its silent landscape and its presentation. There has always been a flip side to the solitary, rugged male of pioneering New Zealand, where as well as being the reflective, remote, anonymous 'man alone, he' was also possibly a hooligan. This aspect to the man alone character has been carefully managed and almost erased from the ideal and majestic version of the character and work portrayed by Colin McCahon in painting and The Group in mid century architecture, which was serious and worthy. However the hooligan was always present in the pioneering story, causing problems with alcohol, prostitution, fighting and gambling. These anti-social aspects to the unattached male drifter

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Munro – Offerings to the God of Speed.' (held in The Film Archive), and Donaldson went on to make *The World's Fastest Indian*, a feature Film on the life of Burt Munro (2005). Retrieved <http://www.exhibitionsservices.co.nz/exhibitiontours/show/dogs> 27/10/11.)

<sup>73</sup> DesignForces, (later DesignWorks) run by Michael Smythe, stayed until the late 1980s. (pers. comm. Neil Simmons 12/10/11.)

<sup>74</sup> Such as the cluster of buildings owned by the Doo Family and the Wah Lee Traders. The urban Chinese community in Auckland in the early Twentieth Century was based in Greys Avenue, near Hobson Street.

<sup>75</sup> For example, Simmons recalls an explosion that shook the building and prompted a large Police and Fire Brigade response. (The Police Headquarters is located on the corner of Cook St and Hobson Street). 'The explosion was a potato chip ad with Ian Mune dressed as a German Sea Captain. I was nervous opening their door expecting bits of bodies and blood but it was all smoke and Mune dripping in potato chips.' (pers. comm. Neil Simmons 12/10/11.)

<sup>76</sup> For example, one scene in *Smash palace* has the lead character played by Bruno Lawrence taking off his clothes and pushing them through the door of the house occupied by his ex-wife. Simmons recalls telling Donaldson his own version of this story - where he arrived home naked and carrying his clothes to the door after removing them item by item to give to his cold wife - and wonders if it had an effect on this scene.

<sup>77</sup> Vince Terrini became known for his bamboo structures – there is an item in *The New Zealand Herald* 23 February 1988 where he and Ivan Tarulevicz (instigator of the dome construction at Western Springs as a fourth year student in 1955) are shown constructing five 21m bamboo towers as preparation for the inaugural Dragon Boat race day, held on 6 March 1988.

<sup>78</sup> The two vets are Don Brazier and Mike Getting, from Howick Vet Surgery. Don Brazier became a client and several alterations were carried out for the Vet Surgery; B47 1983, H54 1983, H72 1993, H72(ii)1998

<sup>79</sup> Kelly, Marianne, *Times* 'Vets' farewell to friends' Monday April 18, 2011. While there were several families to which this memory could apply, it is very likely to be the Simmons family. The four wheel drive was a Land Rover.



Fig.157



Fig.158



Fig.159



Fig.160



Fig.161

Fig.157 NS123•84-H57, Harre Pole House, Titirangi, interior, 1984

Fig.158 NS123•84-H57, interior, 1984

Fig.159 NS123•84-H57, interior, 1984

Fig.160 NS123•84-H57, interior, 1984

Fig.161 NS121•84-V05, Ven Lu Ree Factory, Newton, Auckland, exterior, 1984

meant that the myth, in the late nineteenth and early 20th centuries, was altered via social and moral codes to become the worthy and heroic male of the nationalist myth. Marriage and work ethic were the social methods of control, with ideals of manliness kept alive through legend and mateship.<sup>80</sup> In the western world, the 1970s were a time of rebellion against authoritarian structures, freedom for individual rights and for a defiant attitude.<sup>81</sup> This allowed for the hooligan to reappear, and the national male identity, who in the arts was presented as quite serious, thoughtful and melancholy, was amended to include a sense of humour and general sense of larrikinism. This shift also occurred in the architectural media, where a rebellious and lively spirit was seen in a positive rather than a negative light, and by 1978 Ian Athfield (b.1940) had appeared on the cover of *Architecture New Zealand*,<sup>82</sup> and an article on Roger Walker (b.1942) was published in *Architectural Review*.<sup>83</sup>

So the work and character of Neil Simmons spans both versions of the Pakeha male man alone character in New Zealand: as a student in the mid 1950s, he was very influenced by the Nationalist position of the solitary, remote and contemplative man, and his work flourished in the 1970s as the larrikin aspect to his character, which had always been present, was able to be expressed. While Simmons is contemplative and enjoys his solitude, he also has the mischievous sense of humour that has come to be associated with the larrikin. There are many stories which could be told that describe the disconnect between the seriousness of the architectural profession at the time of his graduation and Simmons' brand of humour. In the offices of Newman, Smith and Associates in 1961, Simmons would employ his sense of humour to challenge the architectural discipline of the office and design ideology.<sup>84</sup> And earlier, while working for Kenneth Albert, an incident recalled by Sonia Simmons gives an indication of Simmons' response to compliance with what he regarded then as a corporate mainstream. Kenneth Albert had requested that Simmons wear a tie, as he had found his dress sense too casual for a professional office. The next day when Albert turned up at the office, he found Simmons working at his drawing board wearing a tie – but no shirt. Albert's response was to say that it was indeed a very hot day and made no more of it, revealing his own style of subtle humour.<sup>85</sup>

The anonymous, man alone figure of the nationalist myth had developed by the 1970s into a different type of renegade – one that could be seen as a real person. Simmons had by then established his practice and the decade suited his lifestyle and philosophies. Since university days, he had always taken time to retreat to an isolated hut for hunting trips, but it was not until the 1970s this was valued or visible in an architectural sense. Quite simply, the decade suited him.

<sup>80</sup>. Refer to Phillips, Jock *The Image of the Pakeha Male – A History*, Penguin, Auckland, rev. ed 1996, 40.

<sup>81</sup>. Refer to Chapter 3.1 for further discussion on political and environmental movements of the 1970s that illustrate this point.

<sup>82</sup>. *New Zealand Architect* no.3 1978, cover image.

<sup>83</sup>. Best, Alistair 'The Architecture of Ebullience' *AJ*, vol 168, November 1978, 881-91. For further discussion on this shift in attitude of the international press to New Zealand architecture, refer to Robin Skinner 'Larrikins Abroad: International Account of the New Zealand Architects in the 1970s and 1980s' (1999) in *Shifting Views Selected essays on the Architectural History of Australia and New Zealand* (ed) Andrew Leach, Antony Moulis & Nicole Sully, University of Queensland Press 2008, 103-111.

<sup>84</sup>. Interview with Mike Austin 31/8/11. Austin recalls Simmons' suggestion to the bosses Geoff Newman and Gordon Smith that perhaps this one could be painted purple, knowing full well that white was the only colour to be considered at that time.

<sup>85</sup>. pers.comm. Sonia Simmons 30/6/11. The compromise was for Simmons to keep a tie at work, ready to be worn for occasions when one was required.

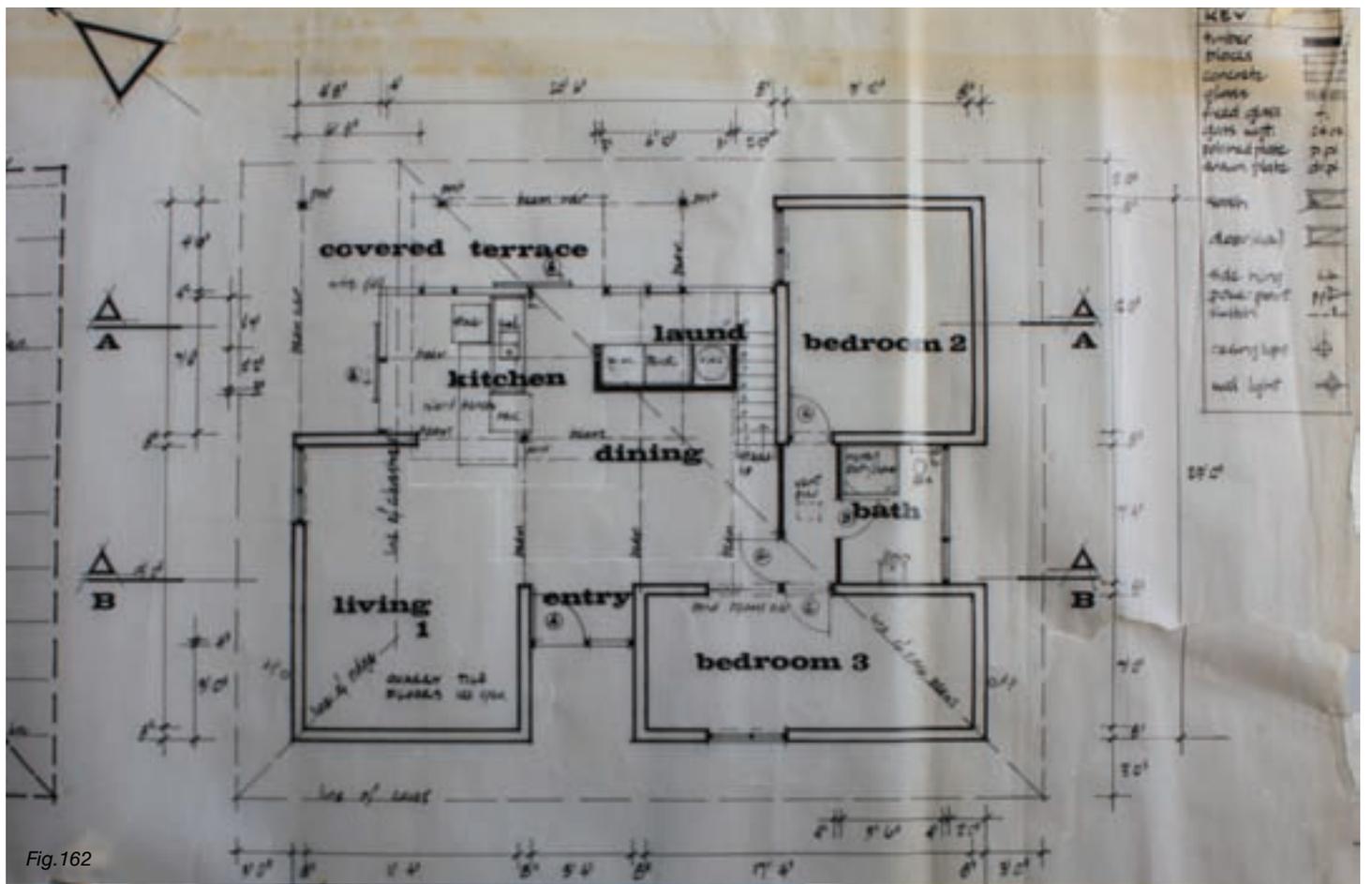


Fig.162



Fig.163



Fig.164

Fig.162 NS009•64-S05, Simmons House, Ground Floor Plan, 1964

Fig.163 NS009•64-S05, interior, central free space, 1964

Fig.164 NS009•64-S05, exterior, from east, 1964

## 2.2 Neil Simmons: Houses of the 1960s

As we have seen, the hut is for Simmons a kind of reality that embodies the man alone condition. For him, the suburb and the isolated hut had to co-exist in some manner and share the calendar year. In one sense they were combined – camping trips included hunting excursions and the domestic house was designed and is partially treated as a temporary campsite. But in another sense the separation was maintained – the family grew accustomed to his absences and professional life made way for Simmons' regular escapes to the bush. Many sacrifices have been made, on both sides, to support the family, architectural practice, and an individualist's life, and the complexities that arise when reviewing Simmons work tend to be due to this interface, of the maverick, professional, and the family man.

### Simmons Family Home 1964-1968<sup>1</sup>

#### The Kitchen

The domestic realm is often concentrated in the kitchen, still today one of the most gendered spaces in the home, and in the 1960s the kitchen was very much the realm of the housewife.<sup>2</sup> Yet in the Simmons house, the loner and maverick is always present in the casual layout of cooking and open spaces, set alongside a communal and oddly non-domestic kitchen layout. Firstly, there is an outdoor fireplace pit, which is treated as part of the wider kitchen area. The open concrete blockwork fireplace with a metal plate replaces the usual Kiwi barbeque and there is an old cast iron lidded pot used, by Simmons, for cooking. Secondly, the free-standing kitchen bench structure inside combines two benches back-to-back, effectively inverting the typical u-shaped kitchen plan typical to the 1960s.<sup>3</sup> There are no benches set against the walls, which are glazed and allow connection between the kitchen and the exterior fireplace pit and outdoor living. The efficiency triangle between the sink, oven and fridge is a diagram based on a single, usually female, occupant. In the Simmons kitchen, it is not possible to draw this efficiency triangle, as the three items are placed on a central unit and facing outward, rather than inward. This kitchen is, however, highly efficient with two people working at the same time, so that items can be passed from one side to another, utilizing the raised narrow bench set between the two back-to-back benches. Most importantly, the two people working at the same time in the kitchen are facing each other, enabling conversation. In this kitchen design, there is an awareness of the changing family structures in the 1960s and this places Simmons in the context of the 'third generation' of modernists, as defined by Dickson,<sup>4</sup> where awareness of social and personal issues had influence on design.

The benches, appliances<sup>5</sup> and storage are treated as a compact, single and sculpted block. The whole unit floats above the ground plane, allowing the light from the glazed walls to skid

<sup>1</sup> NSA009\*64-S05. Database 2.0 vi. Simmons House, 8 Rogers Avenue, Eastern Beach, Auckland.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see Carpenter, E and King, J *Kitchen Planning. A Home Science Extension Bulletin*. University of Otago 1962.

<sup>3</sup> . The typical kitchen of the era was based around the efficiency triangle between the sink, oven and fridge, which tended to produce u-shaped or galley kitchen plans. Examples of efficient kitchen planning can be seen in Carpenter, E and King, J *Kitchen Planning. A Home Science Extension Bulletin*. University of Otago 1962.

<sup>4</sup> Dickson, J D, 'Architectural Modernism in New Zealand 1960-1990', *Connections. The House in the Auckland Scene*. G4 Exhibiting Unit, Auckland 1998, 33. Refer to Chapter 3.1 Larrikin and the Work of the 1970s for further discussion of J.Dickson's definition.

<sup>5</sup> Generally, appliances are only included when they are considered by Simmons to be essential in the design of this kitchen. The oven has never been replaced once the original ceased functioning and instead cooking is managed on a griller and gas burners, possibly for him as a further reminder of outdoor cooking methods. Luxury appliances such as food processors do not get a place in the kitchen design, although items considered essential such as the fridge form part of the floating bench unit composition.

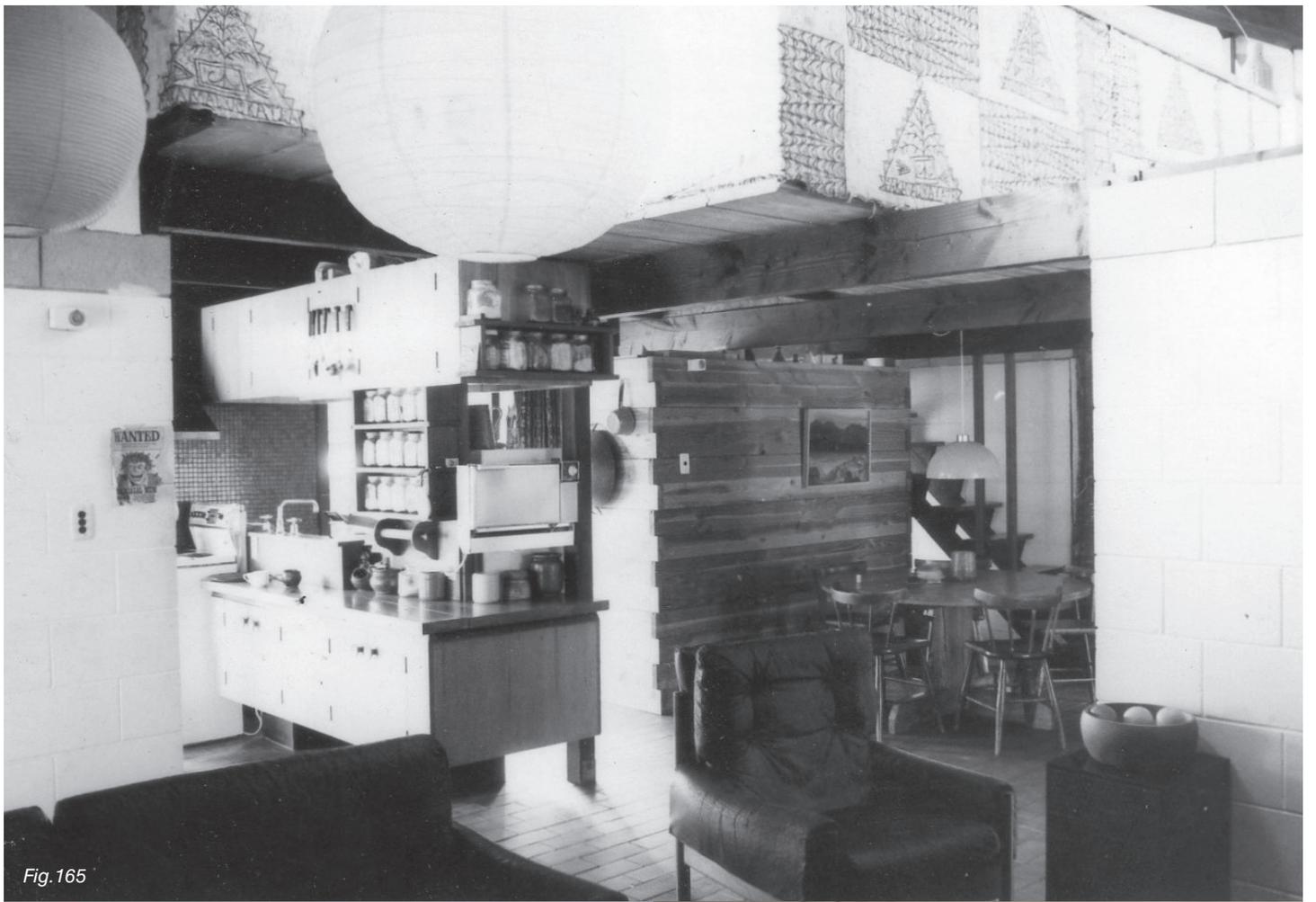


Fig.165



Fig.166

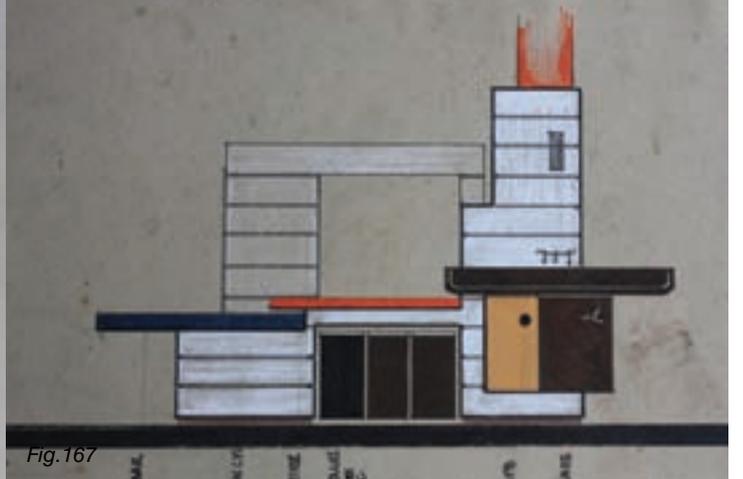


Fig.167

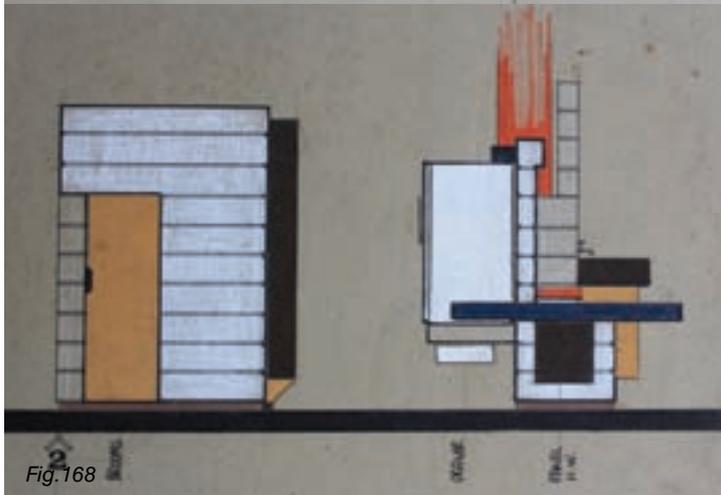


Fig.168

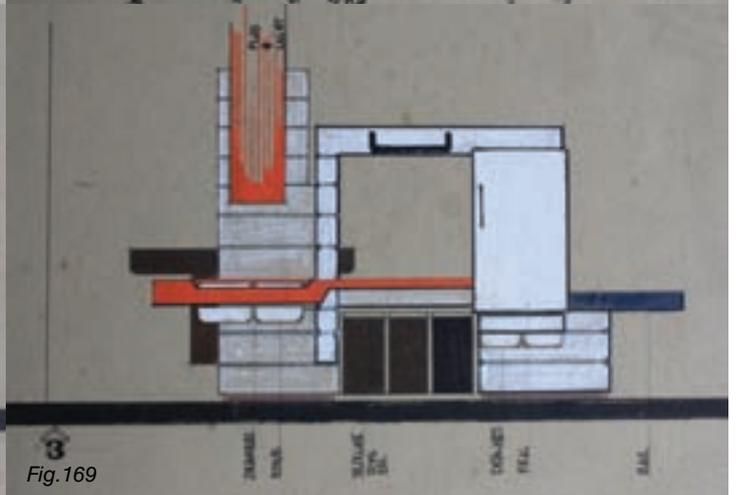


Fig.169

Fig.165 NS009•64-S05, interior, from Living towards Kitchen bench unit, 1964  
 Fig.166 Laminex Kitchen competition entry,, Plan, 1968/69  
 Fig.167 Laminex Kitchen competition entry,, Elev 1, 1968/69  
 Fig.168 Laminex Kitchen competition entry,, Elev 2, 1968/69  
 Fig.169 Laminex Kitchen competition entry,, Elev 3, 1968/69

across the brick tiles deep into the interior.<sup>6</sup> This separation of the solid unit from the floor also avoids the use of details that hint at domesticity, such as skirting boards and toe-space recesses.

### Boundary Condition

The building to landscape relationship of the Simmons house, to its beach and cliff locality, is one of blurred edges, with a resistance by Simmons to creating definite boundaries. Despite its suburban location, which has resulted in fencing between neighbouring sites, the treatment of the land between the house and the street is undefined and again casual. The front yard blends into the street edge with no controlled planting or boundary definition. This undefined treatment of the outdoor condition reflects his rejection of a certain kind of suburban control. For Simmons, the installation of the footpath and kerb and channel edging along Rogers Avenue in the early 1990s was a disappointment and a sad reminder to him of the absolute boundary edge.<sup>7</sup> In the front and rear yards of the Simmons house, canoes, boats, cars, bikes or trailers tend to be left in a composition of random order. Simmons' preference for the untamed approach extends to the planting, where the apparently undetermined landscaping creates a sense of purposeful meandering, common to many walking tracks through native New Zealand forest. The idea through all of these devices to avoid mark-making on the land, is that people are temporary and the land is the only constant.<sup>8</sup>

The boundary-less street ideal was already well-established by earlier State Housing landscaping design intentions. In a publication in 1949,<sup>9</sup> Cedric Firth calls for the elimination of street boundary fences, as they are detrimental to the growth of street communities. Firth believed that each front yard could become part of a shared larger yard, where the houses appear to exist on a communal piece of land. Note that while 'a more unified street picture'<sup>10</sup> was the aim for this approach, it was essentially combined with the fully fenced rear site, to provide outdoor privacy and safety for children. This combination of shared public and contained private space is employed in the Simmons House design, with outdoor private space provided to the rear, northern, part of the site.

The blurring of the street boundary contrasts completely with the solidity of the house itself along its public edges. The house is approached from the south-western side, and apart from several slit windows in strategic positions, the forms are closed to the street and this

<sup>6</sup> Simmons continued to design kitchens in this 'sculptural' way where possible. Refer to a Laminex Kitchen Design competition entry, which uses similar devices of solid sculptural forms composed centrally in free space. This competition may have occurred in 1968 or 1969. There are no records held by the NSA or the company, Laminex, as they closed down years later. The revived company, 'Laminex' has no records. This entry submission was placed second.

<sup>7</sup> Rogers Avenue in eastern Beach had, up until the early 1990s, a single footpath on the opposite side of the street to the Simmons house at number eight. Of course when the new footpath was to be installed, Simmons protested to the then Manukau City Council against the installation of kerb, channel and footpath, based on increased pressure on the stormwater system. There are no records of this transaction, as the personal relationship between the then Mayor Barry Curtis and Simmons meant that such protests were verbal. Pers. Comm. 23/6/11.

<sup>8</sup> This is similar in approach to some aspects of the Picturesque movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as defined by Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. 1756. The concept of the sublime is presented as the sense of (pleasurable) horror or extreme emotion felt in the presence of nature, and often nature considered ugly. Simmons' work has in some areas tended to a sublime condition, for example with his use of dark interiors, and the idea of the sublime is included in the Nationalist man alone argument. (Refer Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand Art & National Identity 1930-1970*. Auckland University Press, 2009, Chapter 2.1.) This is a wide field of interest however this topic will not be covered in this study.

<sup>9</sup> Firth, Cedric. *State Housing in New Zealand*. Ministry of Works, Wellington, 1949, 13. 'A serious obstacle to the creation of a successful New Zealand street scene has been the front fence of palings, or even post and wire, or the front hedge. In Housing Division developments, however, front gardens are treated on broad lines by eliminating front and dividing fences. The front garden, although an expression of individual ideas, is not viewed from the cottage garden aspect alone, but as part of a large community garden, each unit being a co-ordinated part of a community whole.'

<sup>10</sup> Firth, Cedric. *State Housing in New Zealand*. Ministry of Works, Wellington, 1949, 13.



Fig.170



Fig.171



Fig.172

Fig.170 NS009•64-S05, Simmons House, exterior from street, 1964

Fig.171 NS009•64-S05, exterior from street, 1964

Fig.172 NS009•64-S05, exterior from street, 1964

entry approach. The solid ground floor is slightly raised to cope with spring tides, but in some areas the earth is mounded against the concrete walls to relate the cave-like forms to the earth contours. The house walls behave as the division between street and interior. Once through the solid, cave-like walls at the entry, and briefly into an interior of darkness, the open north-eastern corner provides a blast of light not dissimilar to the opening of a cave viewed from within. The house opens casually to the sun, beneath the upward sloping roof form, and sliding and folding doors open the northern walls to the untamed outdoor areas beyond. While the concrete blockwork enclosed forms anchor the house to the land at its public interface, the entire northern-eastern corner of the Simmons house opens out, with the open outdoor living area similar to the open area in front of a tent in a camping arrangement, casual in layout yet receptive to constant activity.

When architecture in New Zealand is discussed, the term 'indoor-outdoor flow' is commonly used, which has meant that it now generally requires no explanation. The term describes the dissolution of the interior and exterior threshold, the very fabric that separates the outside from the inside. This is achieved in a variety of ways, usually involving layering the living spaces between outdoor and indoor, and careful control of the details at the threshold and the building to ground connection. Where good examples of indoor-outdoor flow minimize the threshold, they also usually tend to rely on a sense of structure to the outdoor area.<sup>11</sup> Details to support this reduced tension between the interior living and the exterior living spaces usually involve the reduction of height difference at the threshold step, and the continuation of flooring materials to both sides of the threshold.<sup>12</sup>

In the Simmons house, the two conditions of indoor and outdoor are always conceptually separate, despite also being connected by opening walls of glass in the north-eastern corner. There is a counter-position to the usual indoor-outdoor flow through the reinforcement of the tension between the exterior and the interior conditions. This can be seen in several ways, for example the concrete blockwork walls are thick and expressive of this separation, and the ground floor level is raised in relation to the exterior floor level. Stepping lightly to the ground is a casually treated but celebrated moment. Parts of the interior are dark and protected, contrasted with shafts of strong light allowed in through slot windows or entire glazed walls.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps most importantly, the outdoor is never tamed by the architecture.

Simmons will almost always lift the ground plane from the surrounding site, literally as a raised solid platform with embankments, due to his intention to separate the interior from the exterior. For Simmons, this ground forming is conceived of as a way of making the building belong to its site, by literally making the building base of materials familiar to its location. Environmental and functional reasons for this type of ground-forming obviously apply, for example tidal or flood plane levels, although this separation is important on a conceptual level also. This treatment of the floor slab as a prepared, raised ground, is not unlike the 'paepae' in Pacific architecture.<sup>14</sup> In the construction of a Samoan faletele, the first element to

<sup>11</sup> For example, In *The Elegant Shed* Mitchell & Chaplin discuss Marsh Cook's Osbourne House, 1979, with its Garden Room as being a good example of the minimized threshold between indoor and outdoor, aided by the Garden Room being treated as a living room in its own right – there is less hierarchy between the interior and the exterior. Mitchell, David and Chaplin, Gillian. *The Elegant Shed*. Oxford University Press 1984, 49.

<sup>12</sup> Another excellent example of the attention to detail at the threshold is in the Northland House by Gerald Parsonson, of Parsonson Architects Ltd, 2002

<sup>13</sup> Refer to chapter 4.0 for further discussion on this aspect of Simmons work.

<sup>14</sup> The term paepae here is used in its Samoan context, rather than the Maori meaning of threshold. Paepae in Samoan can be translated to mean 'where things are laid out to be seen.' It refers to the prepared stone platform which is built around the faletele (meeting house) and is usually 2-3 steps above surrounding ground level. The paepae is built last, after the timber house is completed, so rather than being a preparation of the site, it is a raising of the ground to meet the house. It is built by the family, rather than the architect/builder (tufuga) and is therefore not seen as part of the expertise of the crafting of the building, which is done in timber. The Maori



Fig.173



Fig.174



Fig.175



Fig.176



Fig.177

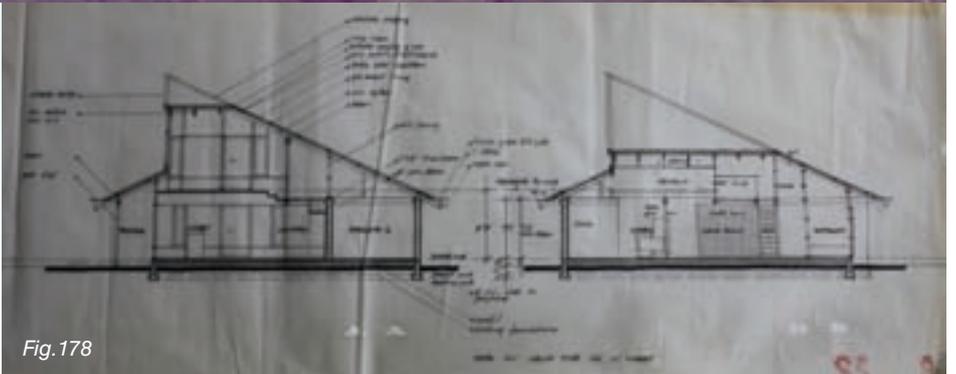


Fig.178

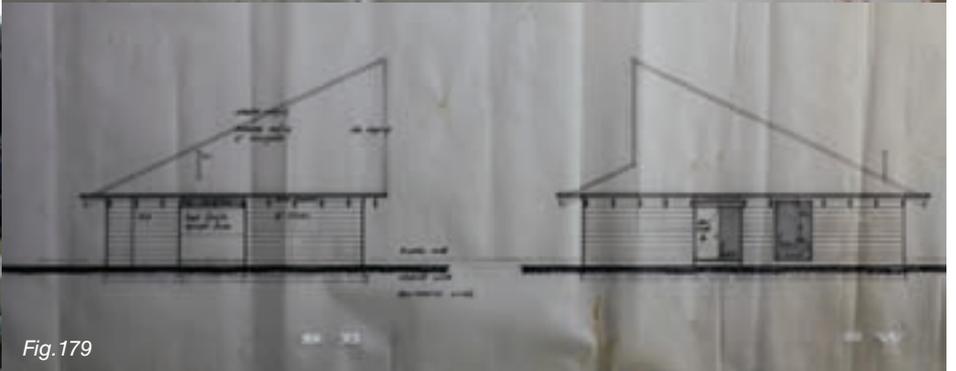


Fig.179

Fig.173 NS009•64-S05, exterior from rear (North) yard, 1964

Fig.174 NS009•64-S05, exterior, construction progress photo, 1964

Fig.175 NS009•64-S05, exterior, construction progress photo, 1964

Fig.176 NS009•64-S05, exterior, construction progress photo, 1964

Fig.177 NS009•64-S05, exterior from rear (North) yard, 1964

Fig.178 NS009•64-S05, Sections, 1964

Fig.179 NS009•64-S05-SE and Sw Elevations, 1964

be built is the central post or post, from which the entire roof is supported, and the last is the paepae, which connects the site to the vertical structure.<sup>15</sup> In Simmons' conception, a single vertical pole is connected to the raised mass platform at the beginning of construction, and the roof is suspended from the pole 'like an umbrella.'<sup>16</sup> From the position of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Simmons's work can be read with such a Samoan frame of reference, however it is not suggested that Simmons was aware of this connection throughout his early work.<sup>17</sup>

The planning of the Simmons house uses at its core a single, inward-directed space, although this space is undefined and unnamed. In creating this singular, seemingly empty central area, the interior of the house employs the inward intensity of the hut. This space is created via the three solid anchoring forms, which mark the corners of the house to the public edge, being set apart and the resultant cross-form of negative space in plan sets up this central area.<sup>18</sup> The density of the three corners to the house also form the structural base for the entire form, tying down the sloping roof. They also provide a contrast for the free space between each corner form, and each enclosed corner is in itself a room offering its own inward focus.<sup>19</sup> The fourth corner is left as open, free space and it is in this absent corner that the kitchen is located.

Such interior intensity has been discussed in relation to the hut, and it is also seen in architecture of the Pacific Region.<sup>20</sup> As Engels-Schwarzpaul has pointed out, there does often occur a misunderstanding between different cultural readings of the term interiority. In European terms, the interior can refer to a private and withdrawn condition, the separation of the individual from the greater world, while in a Polynesian sense the interior infers a collective sense of personal space.<sup>21</sup> In the Simmons house the intense interior is provided through the cleared space, which joins all spaces. A hint is given of this shared personal space within, through the rising roof form holding shadow beneath the eaves, indicating the dark interior held securely within.<sup>22</sup>

Concurrent to the timber modern influence of the Group, with their rational, idealistic proposals for an efficient and 'honest' architecture, was the theme of the universal in nature, infinity, and how the essential and so-called pure forms of design are present in natural forms.<sup>23</sup> For the Group, honesty referred to all aspects of design such as structure, cultural

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Dictionary gives the definition as: paepae 1. (noun) beam, bar, horizontal board, threshold of a house, door sill, orators' bench, speakers of the tangata whenua, horizontal beam of a latrine. 2. (noun) open container, dish, open shallow container.

<sup>15</sup> *The Samoan Fale*, (report) Unesco Office for the Pacific States and Unesco Principle Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 1992, 43, 44.

<sup>16</sup> Pers. Comm. Neil Simmons, 12/2/11.

<sup>17</sup> The first experience Neil Simmons had of any of the Pacific Islands was in 1986, when visiting Tonga for an architectural project. The client had selected Simmons as their architect via their contact with Neil's brother Gary Simmons, who has lived in Tonga and has long-standing connections with some families in the Tongan community, both in Tonga and New Zealand. (T32, house alteration for Princess Tilolevu, 1986.) There are important differences between Tongan and Samoan architecture, and the paepae concept referred to is discussed in relation to Samoan architecture.

<sup>18</sup> For further discussion of this space, considered to be personal and shared, see the discussion in relation to shadow and interior darkness in Chapter 4.0.

<sup>19</sup> Pers. Comm. Neil Simmons, 13/11/11. 'The mass concrete walls being private cells were meant to be monk like. (be alone with you own thoughts).'

<sup>20</sup> Refer Engels-Schwarzpaul, T 'Restless Containers: Thinking Interior Space – across cultures' *Interstices 12*, 2011, 17,18.

<sup>21</sup> Refiti, A 'Whiteness, Smoothing and the Origin of Samoan Architecture' *Interstices 10*, 2009, 9.

<sup>22</sup> The roof form, casual and soaring with its ever-present shadow beneath the deep eaves is possibly reminiscent of the Papua New Guinean houses of the Gogodala Region. Refer Chapter 4.0 Personal Reading: Shadow and Interior Darkness for further discussion on this aspect of the Simmons house.

<sup>23</sup> A book in Neil Simmons library, *Aspects of Form* ed. Lancelot Law Whyte Indiana University Press 3<sup>rd</sup> printing, 1966, presents how perfect solutions to complex structural engineering problems through microscopic views of nature and natural structures. For example, see page 53, fig. 2 'Bone from a vulture's wing, to show internal structure.'



Fig.180



Fig.181

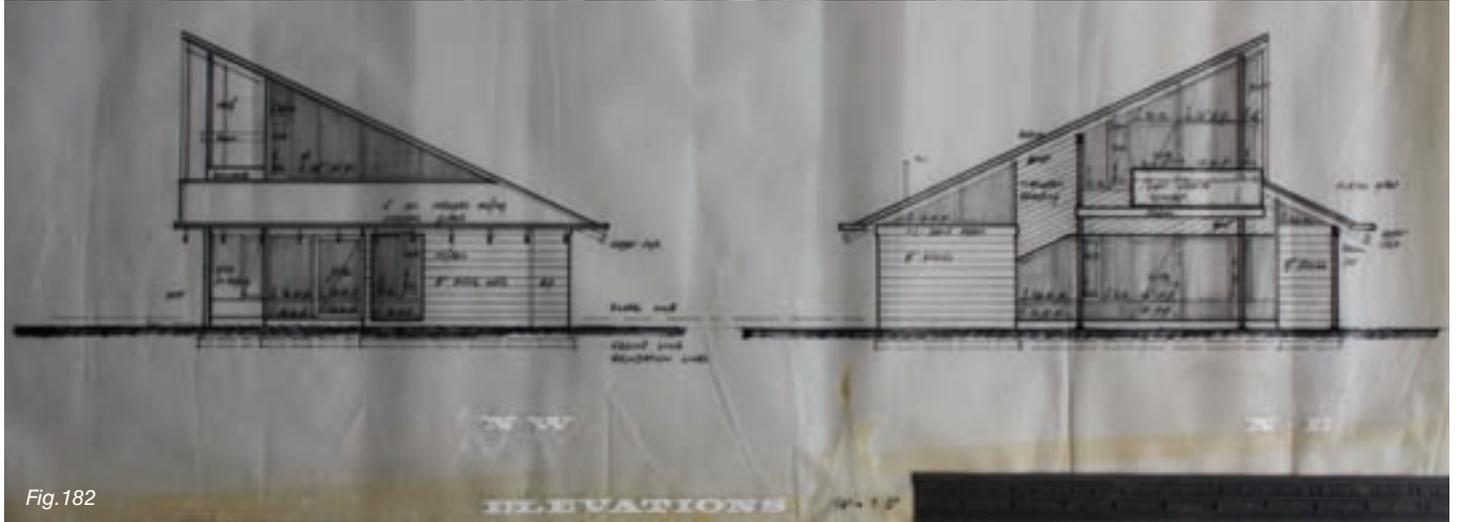


Fig.182



Fig.183



Fig.184

Fig.180 NS009•64-S05, exterior, north yard, 1964  
Fig.181 NS009•64-S05, exterior, north yard, 1964  
Fig.182 NS009•64-S05, NW and NE Elevations, 1964  
Fig.183 NS009•64-S05, exterior, deck step detail,  
Fig.184 NS009•64-S05, exterior step detail

identity and planning, and this search for fundamental design principals aligned with nature as the essential designer (or the god principle). Indigenous communities around the world were studied for their pure and essential developments in design of all types, from fabric to furniture, and especially to shelter. There was a re-evaluation of essential architectural types such as hut, 'tent' and 'cave', all considered as basic to the language of architecture throughout all cultures, in all their iterations.<sup>24</sup> Rudofsky's *Architecture without Architects*<sup>25</sup> became a source for many architects, Simmons included. Acknowledged sources for inspiration by Simmons include the Dogon villages in the Sudan, which are examples for Simmons of 'natural Town Planning' at its best.<sup>26</sup> In fact, the letterhead design for Neil Simmons • Architect has been, since the early 1970s, a template taken from the Dogon village image in Rudofsky's book.<sup>27</sup> Austin has suggested that a return to the vernacular at this time in the 20th century was also a way to escape from a continued international modernist style.<sup>28</sup>

Architects in New Zealand often maintain the family home as an ongoing, unfinished project. Athfield's home in Wellington is a good example of this, and his home is regarded as a continual experiment. The Simmons House is another example of this constant unfinished, in which the house continually changes due to the changing ages of the children and grandchildren and occupancy, but also in order to maintain the house as an ongoing architectural experiment. There are obvious reasons for a family home to change, such as the changing ages of children followed by their departure. It is of interest that over the years, each member of the family has at some time used every bedroom. By 1975, the 80 square meter footprint of the original house had been added to with a new building housing four bedrooms.<sup>29</sup> This addition is connected to the original through an extension of the axis central to the original plan. A glass-roofed gallery link connects the two forms, a device Simmons often uses.<sup>30</sup> The planning to the 1975 addition is compact, without the free space seen in the original house. The roof form is more complex and the two-storey bulk does not relate to the ground as successfully as the original house does. The necessity and function of providing four bedrooms on a small footprint has determined a more compact approach.

### Construction Drawings, Simmons House

The working drawings for the Simmons house were prepared in March 1968, although the house had been designed in 1964 and the concrete slab had already been laid by that time. After many disagreements and discussions between Simmons and the Manukau County Council, a compromise was reached on the construction method to be employed for the house walls. In 1964, Simmons had intended using materials from the site to form concrete in-situ walls.<sup>31</sup> The idea was to form thick mass walls, structurally continuous with

<sup>24</sup> For example, *On Adam's House in Paradise*, Joseph Rykwert MIT 1981. Austin also refers to Sylvia Lavin *Quatramere de Quincy and the Invention of a Modern Language of Architecture*, Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1992 in his 'Kiwi Architecture: Modernism Recycled.' *Fabrications* Vol 14, No 1 & 2.

<sup>25</sup> Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture without Architects*, MOMA NYC 1965

<sup>26</sup> Pers.comm. 10/5/11. Simmons considers the village layouts to be efficient urbanism within a completely sustainable setting. See Bernard Rudofsky, *Bernard Architecture Without Architects*. MOMA NYC exhibition 1965, Image No. 40. This was a book to accompany an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in NYC, therefore it is organised around the ordering of the images and the pages are not numbered.

<sup>27</sup> Bernard Rudofsky, *Bernard Architecture Without Architects*. MOMA NYC exhibition 1965, Image No. 40. The design of the letterhead was to purposefully create a fragile paper with a 'tea-stain' effect, fading the original image to the point where it is not recognisable, while retaining its qualities.

<sup>28</sup> Mike Austin 'Kiwi Architecture: Modernism Recycled.' *Fabrications* Vol 14, No 1 & 2. Added to this list is the 'boat', which Austin believes is relevant to the development of architecture in the Pacific Region. He uses Rudofsky and his exhibition and book as an example and reminds of the influence on New Zealand in the 1960s and early 1970s.

<sup>29</sup> In 1994, this bedroom addition was converted into a separate residence.

<sup>30</sup> For example, see NS049•75-G19 This pole house was built in 1975 with subsequent additions made in 2005. The new building has a glass link to the original house to avoid disturbing the scale and form of the original structure.

<sup>31</sup> The Eastern beach site has an abundance of white shell in the soil and in-situ rammed walls were designed with



Fig.185



Fig.186



Fig.187



Fig.188



Fig.189



Fig.190



Fig.191

Fig.185 NS009•64-S05, interior, towards Kitchen  
Fig.186 NS009•64-S05, interior, towards Mezzanine  
Fig.187 NS011•67-C03, Curtis House, Bucklands Beach, Auckland, 1967  
Fig.188 NS011•67-C03, eave detail  
Fig.189 NS011•67-C03, exterior, under eave  
Fig.190 NS011•67-C03, exterior, from street, 1967

Fig.191 NS011•67-C03, exterior, from street, 1967

a foundation and floor slab, onto which the timber roof structure, reminiscent of driftwood, would sit and partly hover. The Council would not accept the calculations for the cement and shell structural strength, a familiar story for those also attempting to gain Council approvals for the similar techniques used with adobe or rammed earth buildings at this time.<sup>32</sup>

For the second submission to Council, Simmons moved away from the mass wall design approach and instead pursued the driftwood idea, designing a heavy timber laminated wall system, which he had previously investigated in his 1959 competition submission.<sup>33</sup> His timber design was similar to the Lockwood housing system, which had recently established itself in New Zealand at that time.<sup>34</sup> The design used a ring beam to all three of the closed forms to enable the three base cells to act as the horizontal tie to the soaring roof form. Again the structural calculations were not accepted for obtaining a permit and Simmons returned to his original concept of using heavy base walls. Vibration filled concrete blockwork was a popular construction method at this time<sup>35</sup> The permit was obtained quickly<sup>36</sup> and the building was completed the same year. The structural approach of using a horizontal ring beam to the three closed cells survived into the blockwork version, which has a 250mm ring beam on the 200 mm blockwork walls.

The earlier drawings pertaining to the two previous construction methods cannot be located in the office storage for Neil Simmons • Architect. The construction drawings refer to existing foundations, because previous permission had been gained for the first stage of construction while the ongoing disputes continued.

### **McIndoe House, 1961<sup>37</sup>**

Simmons consciously attempted to move away from the flat roof forms of the international strand of modernism in New Zealand, as well as the horizontal spreading forms more associated with the regional approach. His interest has always been in vertical space, which was in these early years at odds with the dominant horizontal emphasis, especially in Auckland. This early design shows Simmons' first solution to achieving a vertical interior dynamic while maintaining the heavy mass walls to the base of the house, with a small gable placed centrally on a horizontally arranged home. This solution was developed further in the Simmons house, which again employs solid base walls with a roof which lifts away from the base. The gable form allows for a mezzanine bedroom to float over the Living spaces in this one-bedroom home.

The base to the McIndoe house had a continuous and curved solid mass wall, made of Huntly brick, determining the division between living and service areas. The glass wall on the seaward, private side of the home is set to a similar curve. A common planning arrangement in this era was a dog-leg plan, a building type usually avoided by Simmons, although he has said recently that this house is probably his curved version of a dog-leg arrangement.<sup>38</sup> The

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this shell as the aggregate. Pers.comm. Neil Simmons 10/5/11.

<sup>32</sup>. Rammed-earth building in New Zealand has only been an accepted building method since 1998. Building Standards 1998 NZS 4297, 4298, 4299:1998) In the Whole Earth Catalogue 1977, a book review of *Dirt Cheap. The Mud Brick Book* by John & Gerry Archer 1976, Compendium, Australia.

<sup>33</sup>. Refer Appendix E The *Auckland Star* Ideal Home Competition 1959

<sup>34</sup>. Lockwood Homes set up in New Zealand in 1953 by Dutch immigrants Jo La Grouw Senior and Johannes Van Loghem, two years after they had started importing prefabricated homes from the Netherlands.

<sup>35</sup>. Vibrapac concrete blockwork is featured on the cover of *Home and Building* magazine, September 1, 1959.

<sup>36</sup>. Single skin 200 series blocks is no longer allowable under the Building Code without framing and lining due to internal environment moisture control, however at the time this was permissible. The house was designed with 1.0m eaves to keep water off the walls, and sand was mixed into the paint to fill the holes in the porous concrete blocks.

<sup>37</sup> NS005•61-M01 McIndoe House, 587 Riddell Road, Kohimarama, Auckland.

<sup>38</sup>. Pers. Comm. Neil Simmons 22/12/11.



Fig.192



Fig.193



Fig.194



Fig.195



Fig.196



Fig.197

Fig.192 NS005•61-M01, McIndoe House, Kohimarama, Auckland, interior, 1961

Fig.193 NS005•61-M01, exterior, view towards Entry, 1961

Fig.194 NS005•61-M01, interior, view of curved brickwork wall, 1961

Fig.195 NS005•61-M01, exterior, from northern side, 1961

Fig.196 NS015•69-M05, Male House, Trig Road, Whitford, exterior, 1969

Fig.197 NS015•69-M05, exterior deck, 1969

McIndoe house was altered in the 1980s by Bossley, Cheshire and Associates and it has since been demolished.

### **Curtis House, 1967-69<sup>39</sup>**

There is a formal similarity to the house designed for Simmons' associate, Barry Curtis and his family, designed in the same year they set up an office together in Victoria Street in the Central City. Due to the elevation of the site, the main level of the building is lifted in the manner of the modernist elevated box, and again Simmons has used folded geometries in the roof form as an additional layer to the otherwise modernist main level. The materials employed show the typical palette of the era; concrete blockwork, Super 6 asbestos roofing and Super 6 asbestos pre-formed sheets to form wall panels, the balcony handrail and gutters.

### **Oldham House, c1964<sup>40</sup>**

The ring beam structure used in the design of the Simmons house was also employed in this house of a similar time, the Oldham house in St Heliers. The construction method is always part of the initial design decisions for Simmons, and for this courtyard house the ring beam allowed for the roof framing to be completed while sitting on the floor slab. The entire roof was then to be lifted into place onto columns and shear walls. In fact a conventional construction method was followed, with the ring beam still performing for all horizontal loadings.

### **Male House, 1969<sup>41</sup>**

The client for this home has produced several books on topics of kiwi cultural identity,<sup>42</sup> which are light-hearted and conversational in tone. In one of the earliest of these books,<sup>43</sup> he mentions his working relationship with Simmons in the three architectural projects they worked on together, this house at Trig Road,<sup>44</sup> the pole house at Cooks Beach,<sup>45</sup> and the Potting Shed at another property in Whitford.<sup>46</sup> On the request of the client, this house at Trig Road in Whitford had a Japanese influence in its use of heavy timber beams, long horizontal proportions and the use of a heavy tiled gabled roof.

‘Neil Simmons had been fiddling around with some ideas as to how we should build to best suit the site but most of his early proposals were too way out for my thinking at that time.’<sup>47</sup>

<sup>39.</sup> NS011•67-C03. Curtis House, 10 Takutai Avenue, Bucklands Beach, Auckland.

<sup>40.</sup> NS010•64-O04 Oldham House, 5 Kirkmay Place, St Heliers, Auckland.

<sup>41.</sup> NS015•69-M05 Male House, 94 Trig Road, Whitford, Auckland.

<sup>42.</sup> The client, Kevyn Male, has written books such as *Coast To Coast. The grass-roots of New Zealand rugby*. Penguin, Auckland, 2000, *Fish’N’Chips. The Great New Zealand Feed*. New Holland Publishers (NZ) Ltd, 2010 and *10 Commandments for Successful Retailers*. Penguin, Auckland, 1999.

<sup>43.</sup> *The Wheeler Dealer*, Kevyn Male, Auckland, 1984.

<sup>44.</sup> *The Wheeler Dealer*, Kevyn Male, Auckland, 1984, 112-113.

<sup>45.</sup> *The Wheeler Dealer*, Kevyn Male, Auckland, 1984, 67,68.

<sup>46.</sup> *The Wheeler Dealer*, Kevyn Male, Auckland, 1984, 83, 115-117.

<sup>47.</sup> *The Wheeler Dealer*, Kevyn Male, Auckland, 1984, 112.