On Adam's House in the Pacific

Symposium in Honour of Joseph Rykwert

The University of Auckland

Friday 14th & Saturday 15th November 2008

Friday 14 November
Design Theatre, Conference Centre
University of Auckland

4.00 pm — 4.30 pm
Opening address
Professor Sharman Pretty, Dean NICAI
Richard Harris, President NZIA

4.30 pm — 6.00 pm
Alive and Relevant Today

1.   David Mitchell & Julie Stout

2.   Andrew Patterson

3.   Patrick Clifford

6.00 pm — 6.45 pm
Drinks

6.45 pm — 7.00 pm
Introduction to Professor Joseph Rykwert
Ross Jenner

7.00 pm — 8.00 pm
Rykwert lecture

Saturday 15 November
Conference Centre
University of Auckland

9.00 am — 9.30 am
Tea/Coffee

9.30 am — 11.00 am
What is this Pacific?

1.   **Fale Tonga beget Fale 'Amelika**
Charmaine 'Ilaiu

2.   **Building the Pacific Hut**
Jeremy Treadwell & Mike Austin

3.   **Whiteness, Smoothing and the Origin of Samoan Architecture**
        Albert Refiti

11.00 am — 11.30 am
        Morning Tea

11.30 am — 1.00 pm
        Perpetual Reconstructions

1.   **The Contracted Joint**
        Carl Douglas

2.   **On the Nature of Security**
        Mark Jackson

3.   **Material Origins of New Zealand Modern Architecture**
        Emina Petrović

1.00 pm — 2.00 pm
        Lunch

2.00 pm — 3.30 pm
        Cultural Accumulations

1.   **Conflictual Signs: Finding Ambivalence to a Natural Architecture**
        Robin Skinner & Paul James

2.   **Windows to the Wonder Country: A Challenge to Romantic Dwelling**
        Paul Hogben

3.   **Nature and Minimalism**
        Sam Kebbell

3.30 pm — 4.00 pm
        Afternoon Tea

4.00 pm — 5.30 pm
        Sheds, Cabins and Villas

1.   **Benoît Goetz: A French Reader of Rykwert's *Adam's House in Paradise***
        Tim Adams

2.   **A Big House in the Pacific: The New Zealand Pavilion at Expo 70, Osaka**
        Julia Gatley

3.   **THINKING AND DOING: Situating the Houses of Feron Hay Architects in the Writing of Joseph Rykwert and the Paradise of New Zealand**
        Peter Wood

5.30 pm — 6.00 pm
        Concluding Comments
        Ross Jenner

7.00 pm — 10.00 pm
        Conference Dinner
        GPK Ponsonby Road, Ponsonby

ABSTRACTS & BIOS

Fale Tonga beget Fale 'Amelika
Charmaine 'Ilaiu

Although, the fale 'Amelika departs from the structural origins of its predecessor the eighteenth century fale Tonga; the contemporary fale archetype remains a legitimate progeny of the fale Tonga. The fale 'Amelika—an appropriated western suburban house constructed in many modern Tongan villages—embodies many indigenous ideas of the fale Tonga. Certainly, one particular inherent idea stems from what Joseph Rykwert calls 'primitive notions' or what I interpret as the Tongan paradigm that motivates what is built and how it is constructed. Simply, the notion recognises that one elevates their status in order to survive culturally in Tonga's hierarchical society and often architecture is the medium to achieve this. Architecturally, the importance of social status was first articulated, literally, when the fale arose from the ground and the rested its oval roof structure on posts.

The Tongan architect Tomui Kaloni interprets these changes as the alleviation of societal burdens and corresponding with the reformations in Tonga's political hierarchy during that time (Kaloni1990). Furthermore, the highly crafted lashings and neatly woven walls of the fale Tonga exceed the simplicity of earlier structures. This concern for good architectural appearance again reinforces the social concern of displaying status. Likewise the fale 'Amelika articulates the primitive notion of cultural survival through modes of architectural appropriation, exaggeration and over-embellishment. Essentially the fale 'Amelika embodies the appropriated western idea of a dream house. Similar to its predecessor, the ideologies of the suburban home signify a socio-political change, particularly with the emergent of the middle class in Tonga. Often scale is exaggerated beyond the original plan; amplifying a four-bedroom suburban home into a large mansion.

Fale 'Amelika are also over-embellished with an unnecessary quantity of architectural elements. Indeed the embellishment of the home also enhances the status of the residents. In overlooking the fale 'Amelika's departure from an indigenous fale form one can begin to understand that it can trace its lineage back to architectural origins through inherent notions, such as cultural survival.

Charmaine 'Ilaiu is a trained architect, avid researcher, creative entrepreneur and developing artist. Her work contributes to the discourse of Pacific Architecture and art in New Zealand and the Pacific islands. She has presented her research at various international and national art and architectural symposiums including Pacific Arts Association hosted in Musée du quai Branly in Paris, 2007. As an architectural designer, she has worked on residential projects in Tonga and recently designed the concept for Manukau Institute of Technology's Pasifika Centre. Recently selected by Manukau City Council's ART source creative entrepreneurial programme, Charmaine is establishing a consultancy for Pacific architecture, which she hopes to advance more research-informed architecture that is responsive to our Oceanic region. Whilst practicing architecture with the Auckland firm design TRIBE, Charmaine continues to teach part-time in architectural design at Unitec Institute of Technology and University of Auckland Schools of Architecture.

Building The Pacific Hut
Jeremy Treadwell & Mike Austin

The search for a history and theory of architectural origins is characterised by propositions of foundational acts and technological moments. Common to these moments are the ideas of the unsheltered human, the necessity for enclosure and the notion of a technical and creative genesis. Nineteenth century theorists propose that the act of creating shelter is a germination of technological and aesthetic thinking, an architectural ground zero, and that shelter is essential for providing the stasis of settlement. In the Pacific, as Rwkwert's discussion of the Japanese Ise temple seems to suggest, other circumstances might apply. Here, where the need for shelter as the Western world understands it is not inevitable, an architecture might have other contexts than the enclosing wall, the cliff and the cave or the reproduction of nature itself.

This paper argues that instead of the stasis and enclosure that is embedded in ideas about western architectural origins, in the Pacific an architecture that emerged from mobility and sought openness might be found. It is proposed that rather than being an origin of technical practice, in the Pacific, architecture might itself be the result of transformation from other technologies.

Specifically this paper seeks to connect the tectonics of the Pacific building to the technology of the canoe and the openness of the ocean. With detailed reference to the construction of the Fale Samoa and the Haus Tambaran of the Sepik district of Papua New Guinea, this paper proposes a architecture from the Pacific that is technically and conceptually distinct from the grounded architecture of the west.

Whiteness, Smoothing and the Origin of Samoan Architecture
Albert Refiti

Samoans believed that the first craftsmen or *tufuga* were sent from heaven by the god Tagaloa to build a canoe for his daughter Mataiteite. These men had no axes or tools to smooth and remove the roughness in the wood therefore they gnawed the timber with their teeth (Kramer, p.239). In Upolu and Savaii, it is generally believed that the first house to be built was called *Faleolo* meaning, "house made of smooth timber". This house was build with driftwood found by the maiden Lemalama by the seashore who suggested that they be used by the craftsmen to construct her fathers house and thereby the builders guild or tufuga-fai-fale became known as the "family of Lemalama" or Salemalama.

This paper will explore the origin of Samoan architecture by looking at the attempt in Samoan craft at dressing and the smoothing of materials in the construction and raising of architecture. The paper suggests that in Samoa, what is considered architecture (which has recourse to the first house), must be dressed and be smoothed out. This is not because of a fascination with the "return to origins" and the "renewal of human activity" that Joseph Rykwert suggested as the impulse of human development and architecture in *On Adams House in Paradise* (Rykwert, 192), but has to do with what Samoans considered "proper" or *teu* which allows things to be put in order so that they turn towards the ancestors. Space-making in Samoan is inclined towards the production of things that are of whiteness, smoothness and openness because these are to be placed before the ancestor and the community therefore things-towards-the-ancestors must have a directionality, a smoothing out, that binds together the past and present.
References:
Kramer, A (1905/1995) *The Samoa Islands, Vol. 2,* trans., Theodore Verhaaren. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press.

Rykwert, J (1997) *On Adam's House in Paradise: The Idea of the Primitive Hut in Architectural History.* MIT Press.

Albert Refiti is a PhD candidate at AUT University and has worked in architecture and design in Auckland and London. He has lectured at the University of Auckland School of Architecture, Unitec School of Architecture and Manukau School of Art and Design. He is currently the Head of Department in Spatial Design at AUT University. Albert has published articles and papers on design, architecture and art in a number of publications.

The Contracted Joint

Carl Douglas

Rykwert argues a correlation between Jean-Jacques Rousseau's account of the origin of civil society and Marc-Antoine Laugier's account of originary architecture. This paper will speculate on the architectural construction of collective identities with reference to the material practice of jointing; and apply this speculation in a New Zealand context. In his drawing for the 1755 edition of the *Essay on Architecture,* Laugier's hut is conspicuous for its structural self-sufficiency. The individual elements: the still-living columns, the cross-beams and the rafters, all rest together naturally, without pins or bonds. Simplicity of structure is a lack of ties.

These joints express the same tension between natural unconstrained freedom and the desire to institute co-dependence which we see at the beginning of Rousseau's *Social Contract* (1762): a text that begins with chains, and remains entangled in questions of binding. In place of bondage, Rousseau seeks a relationship of free dependence which inaugurates collective identity and motives. This elemental social relation begins in the family hut, when familial bonds are replaced by the maintenance of a joint contract. The joint Rousseau seeks is held, but not constrained - a freely chosen dependence which could be withdrawn at any time. We might describe this kind of connection as a structural logic of the 'contracted joint'.

In *Looking for the Local* (2000) Clarke and Walker discuss the idea that 'straightforwardness' is a specific characteristic of architecture in New Zealand. Conspicuously, this argument turns on the condition of the joint, which is seen once again in primitivist terms, and recalls the mythical status accorded to isolation in New Zealand. This paper explores the correlation between the proper jointing of architecture and proper social relations, and concludes by raising the question of the crowd (understood in some accounts as an improperly-jointed social construction) and collective space in New Zealand.

Carl Douglas is a Lecturer in Spatial Design at the School of Art + Design, AUT University, where he teaches Spatial Theory and leads Unit 2, a speculative studio concerned with the intersections of architecture, interior, landscape, infrastructure, and urbanism. Recent research has addressed the Parisian barricades of the nineneenth century; theorised lateness; and explored the spatiality of archaeological sites. He is also a member of the Emergent Geometries experimental practice group, and co-edited *Interstices 09*.

On the Nature of Security
Mark Jackson

In his *On Adam's House in Paradise*, Joseph Rykwert traces successive engagements in the question of the origin of architecture as this question opens to the more primordial one of the origin of being human. Being human and the primitive hut, whether articulated by Vitruvius or Le Corbusier, have a complex and essential relation and one that opens a space for articulating an understanding of the meaning of 'nature' in whatever epoch or era.

With this paper I aim to address Rykwert's reference to Laugier's *Essay on Architecture* and his understanding of the primitive hut. While Rykwert mentions that Laugier described himself as a *philosophe*, that is to say, associated with what we term the Physiocrats, the paper aims to amplify the significance of the French Physiocrats, particularly in the writings of François Quesnay, on the first systematic understanding of what we now call economics. It is not simply that this invention of economics held that all wealth derived from nature, from cultivation and the land, to the extreme exclusion of manufacture as a source of wealth. Nor is it simply that this economics held the fundamental productive unit to be the family. In both of these we would simply see Laugier's quaint image of the primitive hut as an all too literal manifestation of physiocratic economy.

Rather, with Quesnay, a new horizon of an understanding of the human emerges, one that displaces the rule of Mercantilism that had dominated the 17th century, and that relocates the essential nature of the human. There develops, in the 18th century, a new term for understanding precisely what seems to escape the sovereign exercise of power. That term is 'population.' This paper will critically assay the extent to which a bifurcation in an understanding of territory, power and sovereignty, that revolves around the human as subject and as population, opens a radical engagement with Laugier's understanding of 'origins,' impacting on the discourse of origins in architecture that unfolds in modernity. Particular reference will be made to Michel Foucault's 1977-78 lectures at the College de France, *Security, Territory, Population*.

Mark Jackson is currently Associate Professor of Design in the School of Art and Design and Associate Dean (Research & Postgraduate) for the Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies at AUT University. Prior to this he has held lecturing positions at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Adelaide and at the Sydney College of the Arts, the University of Sydney. He gained his PhD in Architecture at the University of Sydney in 1994 and was a Visiting Scholar in the Faculty of Architecture at MIT in Boston in 1996, and a Visiting Professor in the Faculty of Architecture, University of Karlsruhe, Germany in 2003-04. He has published in the fields of design history and theory, the visual arts, film and media as well as architecture and landscape architecture. He has had a number of film and video works exhibited internationally. His current research focus is on ethics and design cultures.

Conflictual Signs: Finding Ambivalence to a Natural Architecture
Robin Skinner & Paul James

In his posthumous text, *An Historical Essay on Architecture* (1835), where he discussed and appraised architectural development from antiquity to the Greek Revival, Thomas Hope began:

"The savage, on the shores of New Zealand, possessed of no goods; indifferent to wife and children; with no care beyond that for his own hideous person, and for that person merely requiring, during the hours of repose, shelter against the fury of the blast or of the bird of prey, digs in the sand, for his living body, a hole little larger than that which he might require for his grave."

Rousseauesque terms, which were often used to describe the ideal of a natural architecture within the Pacific, are used here to condemn both Pacific people and their architectural traditions. Despite references to a paradisal origin, an examination of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century aesthetic theory relating to the architecture of the Pacific reveals ambivalence towards the notion of a natural architecture. Citing pre-1840s architectural texts and accounts of discovery (including the often published images of the pa on the natural arch at Mercury Bay), this paper considers how and why this shift from a positive to an ambivalent relationship occurred.

Benoît Goetz: A French Reader of Rykwert's *Adam's House in Paradise*
Tim Adams

Joseph Rykwert brought to our attention the primitive hut as a perennial theme in the theory and practice of architecture in *On Adam's House in Paradise*. Benoît Goetz, senior lecturer in philosophy at the Paul Verlaine University in Metz, picks up and expands this theme in his recent book *La Dislocation: Architecture et Philosophie*. Goetz observes that there could not have been a house in the Garden of Eden (Rykwert himself admits that the Bible never mentions it) because prior to the expulsion from paradise there could not have been any division of places nor any inside or outside. Paradise lacks nothing so every space in it, Goetz concludes, is equivalent to all other spaces. Paradise is in other words an indivisible field of immanence without otherness and without limit.

This explains precisely why the primitive hut or first dwelling is so endlessly fascinating, it conveys the fundamental truth that human beings have acquired the sin of knowledge and have thus become increasingly alienated from the continuum of unknowing nature. The primitive hut seems to hold out the promise of some kind of direct access to nature but it is in fact the very product of our own sophistication. Little wonder then the attraction of the Japanese teahouse in the mountains or the New Zealand bach by the sea, they combine in a singular architectural type both the promise of a therapeutic return to an

unknowing and unquestioning nature and are the very product of our sophisticated knowledge about the architectural nature intrinsic to all space. Goetz's updating and expanding of Rykwert's original thesis can shed new light on the New Zealand bach and give it the philosophical underpinning that it currently lacks. A twenty-minute talk illustrated by Stephan Sinclair's play *The Bach* and various baches around New Zealand.

Tim Adams teaches history and theory in the School of Architecture and Planning at the University of Auckland where he is also a PhD candidate. His specialist areas include theories of architecture from Vitruvius up until Mark Goulthorpe, the writings of Western philosophers concerning architecture, 20th and early 21st century architecture and urbanism, Japanese architecture, California architecture, and French philosophy after 1968. His essays and translations have appeared in *Interstices* and the German magazine *Der Architekt*. His PhD is on the writings of Daniel Payot, a French philosopher who specialises in the history of philosophical discussions about architecture.

A Big House in the Pacific: The New Zealand Pavilion at Expo 70, Osaka
Julia Gatley

Expo 70, held in Osaka in 1970, is remembered for the mainstreaming of Metabolist-influenced architecture and the concurrent combustion and demise of the Metabolist Group. In contrast to many of the Expo 70 pavilions, the New Zealand Pavilion was understated. Comparatively small, comparatively simple and comparatively low cost, it was designed by the comparatively little known Ministry of Works architect, John Newnham.

While national pavilions at international expositions tend to celebrate and promote the culture, identity and design traditions and innovations of the subject nation, the New Zealand Pavilion was interpreted as having an Asian character, a Japanese character even, its points of reference being seen to lie not with the subject nation, but with the host nation. Twenty years earlier, Japan-ness had informed a self-consciously locally-inflected New Zealand modernism, of which the Group were the best known protagonists. Their New Zealand modernism combined references to whare, huts and baches with homage to overseas architectures with mature timber building traditions – not only that of Japan, but also Scandinavia and California. Newnham was not associated with the Group. His Japan-ness was not a continuation of theirs.

This paper proposes a New Zealandness in the New Zealand Pavilion – but again, a New Zealandness that was not a continuation of that for which the Group were known. Rather, the paper proposes that the New Zealand Pavilion can be read as a house – a big house – or at closer inspection, five houses, for it in fact comprises five smaller buildings or huts. This is consistent with an ongoing fascination with the house in New Zealand architecture, yet ironically the building met with a lukewarm response from New Zealand's architectural and design community, who celebrated the New Zealand exhibits but cringed about their island nation being represented on this international stage by a small, simple, low-cost and seemingly Japanese-inflected building.

This paper teases out these ironies, analysing the design of the New Zealand Pavilion with reference to period reviews of the building, comments by members of the design team, and recent scholarship on national identity, Japan-ness and New Zealand-ness in architecture. The paper reveals that the apparent simplicity of the New Zealand Pavilion belies a range of complexities and contradictions.

Dr Julia Gatley lectures in the School of Architecture & Planning at The University of Auckland. She has degrees from Victoria University of Wellington and the University of Melbourne, and previously worked at the University of Tasmania. Julia is DOCOMOMO New Zealand's secretary and registers coordinator. Her edited book, *Long Live the Modern: New Zealand's New Architecture, 1904-1984*, was published by Auckland University Press in 2008. She is also a co-editor of *Interstices 08 ('Disagreement')* and *09 ('Expat: Places/Spaces/Baggage)*.

THINKING AND DOING: Situating the Houses of Feron Hay Architects in the Writing of Joseph Rykwert and the Paradise of New Zealand.
Peter Wood

Joseph Rykwert begins *On Adam's House in Paradise* with the hypothesis that the original house resided inside the garden paradise of Eden. Identified by Rykwert in the biblical references to 'dressing' and 'keeping,' this theory is at best (by his own admission) substantive only as a 'shadow' or 'outline.' Rykwert presents an unarguably erudite and highly compelling case for the epistemological role of the primitive hut that recurs throughout architectural discourse, but his is an argument that hinges on the first house, and therefore architecture, originating from within paradise. But what if it were the case that the 'shadow' of a house in Eden is nothing more than that; just a trick of light and dark? Moreover that Adam neither required, nor desired, a house in paradise at all?

I offer two positions on this matter, neither of which is particularly flattering to architecture.

Firstly, that paradise (Eden) is the First House; that the garden is the proper place of original dwelling, and that architecture did not emerged against a natural state but that it is a natural state, for which buildings stands as proxies. Secondly, we must also be prepared to entertain the possibility that paradise does not require architecture; that there was no house in Eden, and

indeed that the First House was a function of exclusion from paradise. That is, the house originated because the sanctity of Eden was violated, and it continues to be defined by its desire for a return to paradisiacal state.

I would note that neither of these positions undermines the significance of Rykwert's thinking in On Adam's House, but they do suggest alternate ways to interpret the significance of the motif of the Primitive Hut in architectural discourse. It is beyond the scope of this forum to develop such an argument here, but I would like to enter into this debate by way of an argument in two parts. In part one I make a close reading of chapter one of *On Adam's House in Paradise* in order to show how Rykwert's hypothesis of the Hut in Eden creates a set of values that create a stable - if contested - alliance between building and nature. In part two I compare some well publicized New Zealand houses by Feron Hay Architects to this position. Despite their celebrated International Style mannerisms and woodland settings I argue that these projects frequently display a particularly parochial insecurity toward building and nature. I find in the houses of Feron Hay examples of a counter origin for architecture in the New Zealand where Nature dominates architecture's validation, and the houses cited genuflect to a view that architecture has been denied a place in paradise.