Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
I have been fortunate to have the expert and sensitive guidance of my supervisor Dorita Hannah and co-supervisor Rebecca Sinclair during the completion of this thesis, many thanks to you both for your time and thought. I would like to acknowledge colleague Stephen Bonnington for his role in the design development of the houses explored in this thesis, and recognise those who read and gave responses to the work during the development of this thesis, particularly Paul James and Julieanna Preston. Thanks are due also to Lauren Skogstad for her assistance in assembling this thesis and finally, many thanks to the owners for their role in the development of their houses.

Tokatea:
Architect: Archiscape
Project architect: Amanda Yates

Sounds House:
Architect: JDA in association with Archiscape
Project architects: Amanda Yates, Stephen Bonnington, John Daish

Keegan House:
Architect: JDA in association with Archiscape
Project architect: Amanda Yates
Project team: Stephen Bonnington
oceanic grounds
architecture, the evental and the in-between

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design

Amanda Yates
2009
Abstract
Exploring spatio-temporal flux within architecture, this thesis presents design-based research on the temporal environments of Oceania and Western evental theory. Oceanic thought and Western theories of the event share commonalities, both holding that space and time are inseparable dimensions. This spatio-temporal concept challenges Western philosophical and architectural doxa that privilege stasis over temporal flux, and offers a mode by which to introduce alterity into architectural discourse. I move over these cultural and philosophical grounds in order to explicate and further develop a personal design practice that is of this place and time for, while there is a body of writing that documents Oceanic built environments, there is less research that considers how these may be constituted and communicated through contemporary architectural design.

The thesis posits two temporalised environments apparent within Oceanic spatial thought and practice – the shifting and extensive oceanscape, and the telluric groundscape that makes space; and describes two resultant spatial typologies – an oceanspace which is characterised by openness and mobility, and a groundspace which is both surface and space. These contentions are tested and theorised through three architectural experiments developed between 1999 and 2005: the Sounds House, which operates as an open and mutable spatial field; the Ground House, which forms monumental “interiors” that emerge from and relate to the earth; and Tokatea, which blends these two spatialities, fabricating a temporalised environment in between the momentary and the monumental, between interior and exterior. In presenting and discussing these speculative spaces, this thesis moves between architecture and academia, Oceania and the West, the ephemeral and the enduring, and the inside and the outside, with the aim of destabilising architecture’s discursive ground, causing its hermetic boundaries to become temporalised and fluid.
Preface

This exegesis explores a space-making practice that, like its author, has hybrid cultural origins deriving from both Polynesian and Western ancestries. The exegesis of the built work moves between these cultural conditions, discussing Pacific spatial environments and thought and Western architectural practices and theory. The Pacific and the Western are employed together as a means to unsettle assumptions and encourage emergent cultural expressions formed in the space in-between.

Employing between-ness as a textual strategy, the exegesis models the design process and its concern with destabilising fixed conditions of interior and exterior, landscape and architecture or Western and Polynesian spatial thought and environments. This is the defining quality of the design process which otherwise employs common design development practices - modelling, sketching and drawing in order to generate a spatial language. The spatial designs thus formed are tested through an iterative developmental process which continually asks is the design active, is it in motion between spatial, cultural and discursive conditions, does it therefore practice between-ness through its resistance to fixed identifications or locations?

The exegesis aims, at another level, to articulate what the emergent field of spatial design may be through the consideration of this practice of between-ness. Spatial design is established here as a discipline that is defined by its extensiveness, ranging across the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, interior and performance design as a time-based discourse, a site of spatial and discursive exchange.
oceanic grounds: architecture, the evental and the in-between

contents:
abstract
Dawn
one introduction: in-between
Morning
two oceanscape
Noon
three groundscape
Afternoon
four oceanic grounds
Evening
five conclusion: becoming
Night
notes
102
glossary
114
bibliography
118
appendix
126
Dawn
Tokatea, Coromandel Peninsula, New Zealand

Morning mist hangs heavy on the sea, with different densities of fluid particles in suspension. The bulk of the headland to the east, with its sheltered bay, is shadowed, hazy. Liquid notes of tui sound, dampened by the weighty atmosphere. The sun, haloed, focuses as the mist burns off, delineating sea and land. Diurnal rhythms begin; runners’ footsteps echo from the road beneath; a speedboat sounds in the tight bay below, tracking its way out from its mooring, then tracing a flow-line into the smooth surface of the sea. The low eastern sun patterns light onto shell-covered ground and rock and, inside, onto the angling concrete slab. The light spills slowly in the still quiet house.