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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

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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 groundspace 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

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