

(Mis)appropriation in New Zealand Architecture: An Incriminating Cite.

Vanya Steiner

it would be necessary, before speaking of appropriation, to know if the system that seems to appropriate something is or is not modified by that which it believes it is appropriating. Even though I do not believe appropriation to be possible in general ... it is inevitable that something resembling appropriation take place ... Otherwise, the only hope for deconstruction's remaining happily intact and pure would be for it to be utterly ignored, radically excluded or definitively rejected

Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.* ed. Gerald Graff,
(Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1988), p. 141-142.

Derrida asks - couldn't these citations or references be interpreted otherwise rather than viewed simply as a sign of appropriation? (*fig 1*)¹

In New Zealand over the last few years the use of Maori figures,² particularly by non-Maori, has become a much debated issue. Various described as culturally insensitive, a symbol abusing colonialist exploitation, a promiscuous plundering or trivial debasement, to many the use of these figures associated with an 'other' is an unacceptable use of what is presumed to have no value other than within its traditional context. Seen as the corruption of 'the Proper' (the Maori) such usage is considered a sacrilegious impropriety; a stealing, violation and misuse of that regarded as sacred; a site of criminal activity, stolen property and illegitimate access. The argument is that these figures naturally belong to Maori and that when non-Maori use them they rob or steal. Thus outsiders seen as thieves and criminals are ascribed to a position of illegitimacy; outside the law of the proper, the other becomes seen as an outlaw.³ Involving territorial disputes and contestations of authority, ownership, propriety and property, these become sites of conflict, resentment and defensiveness. The issue is that of 'appropriation.' Ironically, it is a subject of contention which has been intensely debated in the fine arts⁴ and of which little has been said in architecture. Although continually described as 'appropriation' I will, for reasons I shall explain, refer to these transgressive shifts in use and interpretation as (mis)appropriation.

The term appropriation is not a simple one and much as it would seem reasonable to provide clear definitions, this term continues to confuse. Appropriation is on the one hand described as to use

properly, to make or use as one's own, to possess or authorize for a particular use in exclusion to other's. Yet on the other hand, in contemporary use this word takes on negative connotations, such as to take without permission or consent, to improperly use as one's own, to wrongly or illegitimately apply to an-other use. In this way a concern with overpowering, possession and containment is implicit to appropriation's making of a thing private property, whether another's or one's own.⁵ 'Misappropriation,' on the other hand, presumed the opposite of appropriation, is found to be defined in strangely similar terms to appropriation to the extent that no unambiguous distinction can be drawn between them. In this way 'appropriation' takes on connotations of 'misappropriation,' yet in doing so it redefines 'misappropriation' which is now also given connotations of the proper. That is, 'the proper [one's own]' is confused, but without simply reversing or negating as happened in appropriation. Although no longer restricted to the closure of an initial opposition misappropriation cannot however flee from what in a sense it contains. I will therefore bracket the (*mis-*) in this paper.

(Mis)appropriation indicates that aspects of both 'appropriation' and 'misappropriation' are involved without being reducible to either.⁶ Enmeshed in a struggle for power (mis)appropriations indicate a certain complexity inviting a reconsideration of any conventional sense of propriety. Issues of propriety, possession, property, provenance, authority and power are also implicated in this confusion. In shifting the proper, (mis)appropriation proposes the possibility of interpreting or using in a 'different' way, neither as own nor other, neither as proper nor improper. The own and other are radically disturbed, questioning the signifying practices that

construct them. By complicating attempts to define and divide, language and interpretation are confused. Thus (mis)appropriation recognises a differential rather than simple interpretation. Its ability to, in a sense, contain different and seemingly contradictory readings or positions terrorises the ground between these poles. Consistently finding itself being inconsistently defined by that which is mistaken as its opposite, it is not restricted to any pre-established philosophical stance. There is a complexity here which continues to puzzle. This work will call this *(mis)appropriation*.

In interpreting such an undecidable we must recognise an irreducible uncertainty confounding distinction, containment or mastery. Thus any privileging of a part or position over another will be provisional as “the shadow presence of the other meaning is always there to undermine the distinction.”⁷ This position I will translate from language to the use and interpretation of figures. Meaghan Morris writes of the “metonymic flipping over of an image ... from one context to another in which its first meaning is not ‘negated’ but transformed in such a way that all the relationships resulting are *questioned*.”⁸ I am therefore not suggesting reading these complex figures as an appropriative mixing where the two become *one*, (whole, proper, complete and settled), but as a site of struggle and contestation where differences are unresolved; where ownership is not reversed or negated but confused and complexly entangled.

The (mis)appropriation of Maori figures, as with a (mis)quote, violates the premise that figures remain the self-same, bound to a proper place, interpretation or authority. Controversies arise where assumptions of a fixed interpretation or placement are contested by complicated genealogies of interpretation and use. Figures are not dismissed as homeless, insignificant or valueless, but their place, interpretation and value shifts as political interests contest and dispute property claims. Open to unexpected and uninvited uses and interpretations authorial authority with its ideology of power, is threatened by contestation and ambiguity, becoming provisional. Displacements are however never easy; the violent wrenching from one context to another creates tensions between the interests of different ideologies, traditions and assumptions, creating sites of resentment and antagonism. What is at stake is not accuracy but authority. Legitimations and biases become a struggle for the power to define a normality that illegitimizes all other positions; a struggle for territorial dominance, containment and control. However, the proper (one’s own), the very

condition by which we judge, prove, legitimate and divide, is also that which confuses or complicates the very attempt to divide. Thus (mis)appropriation draws attention to a violence in proprietorial and provenance claims and the desire to contain, conceal and control by means of defining, categorizing, naming and identifying.

The (mis)appropriation of Maori figures can be read as a response to ‘Maori art and architecture’ and an attempt to deal with the complexities of an entangled relationship with an ‘other.’ These mutual (mis)appropriations have become our history; a story of the contestation and negotiation of conflicting assumptions and pretensions. In this work mutual (mis)appropriations are seen as inevitable when dealing with ‘other’ cultural forms, values and beliefs. With its prefix ‘*mis-*’ (mis)appropriation doubts clear and precise definitions, recognising a lack of resolution or completeness. This fault or failure to meet, attain or contain by implication undermines attempts to control or enforce domestic order. Both ‘the proper’ and ‘the other’ become suspect. The (mis)appropriate/d ‘other’ is no longer restricted to the position of ‘other’ (or own) as it violates the security of any position or placement.

In this way (mis)appropriation becomes entangled with the law of ‘the proper,’ and as ‘the proper’ it becomes implicated as an accessory to crime. There is, in a sense, a legitimization of crime; an incrimination of the ‘proper.’ Conformity and transgression become insidiously entangled. The proper that assigns to, or claims, a proper place or position, becomes problematised and is no longer understood as a site of stability. The sacred ‘proper’ is both contested and shifted. Architecture as “the scene of the proper”⁹ is immediately implicated. Further, “building understood as housing, is repeatedly described as appropriation”¹⁰ with connotations of containment, domestication and closure. However understood as (mis)appropriation architecture and the house become an incriminated site; a site that extends or shifts the proper and cannot be simply contained.

Interesting to consider in this regard is the *Maori Battalion Memorial Building* in Palmerston North designed by John Scott and opened in 1964 (*fig 2*). Commissioned by a Maori trust the brief was to design a building “that would be a harmonious combination of the Maori and European cultures.”¹¹ Scott responded to this brief with a design that draws upon both the language of the *whare whakairo* and that of the modernist tradition at a time when New Brutalism, from England, was a

stylistic influence. The specific use of these paradigms to convey a sense of power, strength, authority, and even intimidation to the work, may be read not only as the use of a style popular at the time, but presumably as a means of marking the mana of the building to both Maori and Pakeha.

The 'references' to both Maori and European paradigms can, rather than should, be considered within the context of the 1950s. In New Zealand this was a time marked by a desire to invent New Zealand, to define an essential New Zealandness, a certain specificity of place. The 1950s also brought a shift in official government policy from assimilation to that of integration. The hope was for an intermingling of Maori and Pakeha, a harmonious blending to which each might contribute, and in which the two might finally become *one*; as if a utopian space might be achieved, where nothing but the overlap would remain (*fig 3*).¹²

In the fine arts the Tovey Scheme of the 1950s also advocated the bringing together of these two backgrounds in a fertile overlap. Initiated by Gordon Tovey and authorized by Maori leaders throughout New Zealand, Maori teachers were sent out to schools to teach Maori arts to all school children. Francis Pound writes "The hope was, that by combining elements of Maori culture with the most *avant-garde* educational and artistic ideas of the West, a new kind of New Zealand might be invented, and a new kind of New Zealander."¹³ Similarly *Te Ao Hou (The New World): the Maori Magazine* was at this time advocating that Maori and Pakeha work together and frequently published the works of contemporary Maori artists, such as Arnold Wilson, Ralph Hotere, Muru Walters, Para Matchitt and Cliff Whiting, who explored the use of both Maori and Modernist stylistic references within a single work. In the fine arts the work of these artists still continues to have a decisive effect on the work of artists of both Maori and Pakeha descent.

In contrast to the fine arts, the *avant garde* of New Zealand architecture in the desire to assert an architecture that was seen as progressive, modern and of this land - closed down architectural discourse by repressing any acknowledgement of overseas sources and advocating that architects need look only to New Zealand farm buildings, sheds and baches for inspiration. This was further reinforced by a public distaste for the modern or abstract - a resistance to what was seen to come from outside, threatening a certain view of architecture. Whilst these nationalist desires attracted some attention to Maori architectural forms, these forms remained

relegated to the past by an institution that saw them as having little contemporary value.

By contrast the Battalion building associates Maori architectural elements with that well established as architecture. Responding to the philosophies and convictions advocated by Scott's peers "this building also demonstrates an engagement with an overseas 'New Brutalist' discourse; both of which held in common an ideological emphasis on honesty and essentialism. The building draws authority and mana from the authoritative sources of Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius, 'heroes of the Modern movement.' In associating the marginalised with 'architecture proper' the value of 'one' was seen by some to enrich and elevate the value of the 'other.' In the words of Francis Pound - Scott "endeavoured to place something of Maori discourse centrally and powerfully into a European 20th century context, and this in a time when the voice of the Maori was being largely silenced by the dominant monoculture."¹⁴ This travesty of 'the proper' opens up the discourse of both, transgressing the restrictive closure that threatens permanent containment or incarceration. This disturbing, whilst making visible the closure of the proper, proposes the recognition of another layer to architectural discourse in New Zealand; disturbing a long standing presumption that Maori and Modern forms are incompatible and must be kept at a distance.¹⁶

The Battalion building also makes strong references to the contemporary work of Kenzo Tange in Japan; in particular his well publicised community centre of 1956 (*fig 4*). At this time, when much of his work was described as Brutalist, Tange was concerned with creating an architectural image for modern Japan that drew on the traditional but did not appear traditional. Further Tange attempted to work with commonalities in both Japanese and Modernist architecture (i.e. the stripping back to essential elements and honest use of materials).¹⁷ Presumably this struck a chord with what Scott was trying to produce in New Zealand. Scott finds a way to situate his work in relation to both such that both Modernist and Maori discourses become significant elements.¹⁸ Perhaps Scott considered this a necessary juxtaposition for Maori architectural forms to be appreciated (*fig 5*).

Responding to the use of raw concrete block in New Brutalist buildings, such as those by Tange and the Smithsons, the use of concrete block in New Zealand was at this time largely considered an unsuitable material for proper architecture.¹⁹ In the public mind this material was despised as lowly and

cheap, reinforced by its associations with public toilets, prisons, basements and foundations. It may therefore have seemed a particularly deviant, even sacrilegious move at this time to use concrete block for a war memorial. The economy of concrete block to provide both interior and exterior surfaces with a single element, along with associations as a basic or essential element may have further endeared this material to Scott.

In response to the brief, fourteen carvings from the building (*fig 6*). The 'bodies' stand as if commemorative statuary within the space of the frame, forming a line of defence across the facade announcing a certain 'New Zealandness' to New Zealand; a distinctness that is reliant on a certain defensiveness. Although perhaps read as a cultural badge, the carvings are no longer simply restricted to previous associations and interpretations but become implicated in the political interests and ideologies of the time; they become more than ornament or ancestor (*fig 7*). Whilst the building's symmetrical facade in many ways aestheticises the carvings it also calls attention to the public power of their function; the placement and scale of these carvings demands attention (*fig 8*). In a political move these carvings are not hidden away, cowering in the face of Modernist strength, but turned to the exterior in a brutalist display of the building's guts. As with the meeting house the carvings on the exterior mark the entry to this 'house' that no longer contains. Modernism's continuous wall of glass is broken by carvings weaving through its length. The equivalently sized windows and carvings become, in many ways, a reversal or negative of each other (*fig 9*).

The building, in some articles described as a meeting hall, draws on the architectural forms of pataka (store houses) and whare whakairo (meeting houses). The whare whakairo, claimed to be an architectural ordering of relationships legitimating a claim to land, property, authority and identity is however now widely regarded as a post-European structure; a (mis)appropriation of the chief's house, large guest houses and the churches of the European missionaries.

Similarly the carved panels were apparently intended to allude to the ancestral waka or 'Fleet.'²⁰ Popular belief has it that seven canoes, collectively known as the 'Fleet,' brought the ancestors of the Maori to New Zealand. These carvings as a reference to the Fleet may have served as a connection to source, to the empowering authority of origin. However the very idea of the 'Fleet,' of course, is one that has been (mis)appropriated by Maori from European

thinking. Attributed to Percy Smith, amongst others, the idea of the 'Fleet' was refined to the level of dogma and adopted by Maori and non-Maori alike. David Simmons has described the 'Fleet' as 'the great New Zealand myth.' In this way, on one hand set aside as distinctly non-European, the carved panels, in drawing upon the myth of the Great Fleet, are already inscribed with a certain 'European-ness.' Where the structure is to be frankly uncovered Scott 'exposes' a myth.

Within the 1950s ideology of integration it may well have appeared that these two discourses could harmoniously co-exist. In the romantic idealism of a 'one people, one nation' ideology an unproblematic and compliant reconciliation was possible. However Scott's design, whether a critical or uncritical response to the brief's advocacy of a happy blending, is not the simple bringing together it may first appear. To read the Maori Battalion Building as a harmonious bringing together of two discourses, is to repress the many complexities and entanglements that problematise such a reading. The harmonious mixing becomes an unconvincing argument that would have us believe that both architectural elements remain undisturbed, that their interpretation, value and status are unaffected by this unconventional relationship. These (mis)appropriated figures, according to Nicholas Thomas, "cannot be seen as unproblematic equivalents of whatever we take them to be" as they can be variously reinscribed and politically relocated.²¹ To continue to read these elements as simply Maori or Brutalist is to ignore the shifts which have occurred, to maintain a certain essentialist interpretation that presupposes no interpenetration is possible.

The considerable asymmetries of colonisation are not overlooked - a colonial aspect is inscribed on the building - 'the Maori,' reframed by Modernism, is in a sense domesticated. To read the building as a whole, a 'oneness,' is to contain or appropriate. The privileging of this reading over any other not only presupposes repression but also presumes a distinctively polarised relationship. Read as appropriation there is a colonial emphasis on civilising this untamed savage. The paternalistic British frame gives shelter and protection, controlling and confining the 'other' within certain limits. In this reading the carvings become a superficial, denigrating and subordinate use of 'the Maori' as ornament and crime. Scott becomes seen as the modern primitivist. As ornament the carvings are read as supplement, excess and improper accessory placed within the structuring of another frame; located where they should not properly be. This position however

maintains modernism's privileging of the structure in opposition to the carvings, which if read as ornament are always seen as subsidiary and therefore of inferior value. Read in this way the carvings are contained within their proper place and pose no threat to the privileging of the frame as the structuring and defining mechanism. There is a shift from the carvings' associations of mana and authority to ornament, where the structural aspect of the carving is repressed.

The interpretation of these carvings as ornament however becomes extremely problematic. Can these so-called 'decorative' panels not also be seen to structure or define the building? Can they not be argued to be as structural as the structural elements are ornamental or aesthetic? Read as subversive elements they threaten and transgress that which structures or defines the frame and therefore disturb the distance which is so carefully maintained by such oppositions. The presumption that a shift in one does not also produce a shift in the other, ignores the way the carvings clash with Modernism's admiration of purity and contempt for ornamentation; contesting that which would attempt to house them. The carvings violate and are violated by the modernist ideals of purity and the ordered whole; the universal modern is exoticised and restructured. We have then a Brutalist modern building, the most prominent part of which appears ornamental. The impropriety of carved panels on the clean modernist surface marks a site of resistance. Repelled to the exterior, the carvings sit like tattoos on modernism's purified body. The carvings here become improper accessories not seen as subservient to or contained by a proper place (*fig 10*).

The carvings permeate the wall, the surface of Modernism, that divides, separates and excludes. Occupying a problematic position in relation to both the inside and outside, the carvings located on the boundary become implicated in defining and structuring the building. The boundary line as a mark of separation becomes a contested site. The issue of power and authority, of who defines and where the boundary is drawn, is confused. The building threatens a fundamental property of architecture - that of enclosure and containment. As the building is structurally ambivalent, on what grounds or basis is the work to be judged? 'The proper,' that by which we judge, is problematised; architecture as the site of stability is disturbed.

It initially seems strange that this building is so unrecognised, by the architectural profession. In the many retrospective articles in *Architecture New Zealand*

dedicated to Scott's work there is no mention of this building. In comparison, *Te Ao Hou: The Maori Magazine* dedicated a front cover and article to this work, showering the building with praise. It describes the building as:

*one of the most handsome ever to be erected in New Zealand and would be well able to stand comparison with the best contemporary work being done by architects overseas. Yet at the same time the Maori Battalion Memorial Centre unmistakably belongs to our own country, and it owes much of its power and beauty to the fact that it draws its strength from both of the cultural traditions of New Zealand. For this reason, it may well prove to be something of a landmark in the history of the development of New Zealand architecture.*²²

Here again we find the need to look overseas for legitimisation of a design which on the other hand is thought to be locally authorised as it "belongs to our own country." The writers of *Te Ao Hou* clearly convey their approval of the design which was, it seems, seen as serving Maori interests of the time; however this magazine was published by the Department of Maori affairs so it becomes difficult to say whose views and interests are conveyed. Similarly a 1968 paper by Katarina Mataira published in a book called *The Maori People in the Nineteen-Sixties* says "Here, at last, is a building incorporating both Maori and European elements of architecture which are not only happily and harmoniously wedded, but which show conclusively that it is possible for New Zealand to develop unique architectural forms."²³

The Battalion building has however been almost totally repressed within New Zealand's architectural discourse. It seems this building was for many too disturbing or offensive in its violation of conventional separations supporting a certain view of architecture. Due to the Battalion Building's diverse references or residual associations it seems that many were unsure of how to respond to it. Many probably felt they lacked the authority to interpret or comment on it; whether to praise its ingenuity or to interpret it as an offensive insult. In this way the building might function as an exemplar of bi-culturalism.

In the many retrospective articles dedicated to John Scott's work, Scott is commonly defined by the domestic, the house. Russell Walden, the most prominent commentator on Scott's work, in his many writings advocates Scott as a bi-cultural architect with emphasis firmly placed on the creation of a unified, coherent and expressively harmonious synthesis. Where in other buildings by Scott the

Maori references are blended away, subtly integrated, or reduced to a blur of indistinguishableness, the Battalion building by contrast is for Walden perhaps too much, too obvious, too strong, and too resistant to a reading of a synthesised unification.

Walden also expressly denies the involvement of any political, self-motivated interests or fashion in Scott's work. Walden writes that Scott "felt alienated by a profession which ripped its integrity apart by wholesale cribbing from foreign magazines."²⁴ The possibility that Scott critically or uncritically used whatever he wanted from wherever he wanted, adapting it to fit his purposes and interests, irrespective of what it had meant in previous contexts, is never postulated. That Scott uses elements from Brutalist architecture without permission, without restricting himself to the way in which they are used in other contexts, or to a strict following of the ideologies associated with them, is never questioned.

The building redefines or complicates definition, mocking the cultural projection of elements as essential, pure or incompatible. The design is indebted to its sources and these sources are indebted to this extension of boundaries, form and definition; to this projection outwards that exceeds defined limits. The Battalion building ruptures the closure of 'one' with the 'other.' Each is placed in relation to the 'other' and yet is also complicit with this 'other.' The familiarity of each is rendered strange. Neither remains safely removed from the other in this realm of mutual encroachment, creating a certain ambiguity as to which elements are figured and which are grounded, as the properties of each are both reinforced and violated by this unusual conjunction. This undecidability has more to do with shifting dominances and realignments than any agreement or confirmation of equality. In 'deterritorializing' properties the building highlights the complications implicit in issues of identity and the assigning of certain properties or traits as belonging to a specific place or people.

Derrida writes

*There would thus be two speech acts in a single utterance. How is this possible? ... And what if everything that is given to please or in response to a desire, as well as everything that one promises to give, were structurally ambivalent? What if the gift were always poisoned ... in a manner so as to prevent any simple logic ... from being able to decide, i.e. to distinguish between the two or to determine their meaning univocally?*²⁵

The impropriety of this conjunction may well have offended modernist devotees. The Battalion building may have been interpreted as denigrating and trivialising New Brutalism and European Modernism in its association with a presumably lowly and primitive non-architecture; transgressing the essentialist and puritanical space of modernist architecture and its repression of all that threatens to contaminate its white surfaces. The building does not presume a clean slate, a vacant or passive site for European conquest - but exposes the potential for resistance with the subversive use of a Brutalist aesthetic. The building is caught between the modernist suppression of any entanglement with other discourses, its repression of regionalism and ornamentation and the apparent specificity of the Maori elements; the wall is clearly not universal or neutral (*fig 11*).

Scott's unconventional use of both Modern and Maori elements may also be read as an act of resistance to the categorisation and placement of himself as an architect. The utter competence with which the Modern reference is constructed would seem to be a resistance to others' expectations of him as a Maori architect producing Maori architecture. Neither a predictable conformist nor a radical rebel, what is expected from John Scott is not necessarily what he is, nor wants to be. Of both Maori and European descent Scott held an ambiguous relationship to both, and is portrayed as the perfect bi-cultural model, an architectural bi-linguist. To again use Pounds words, Scott is a person of fissured identity who knows and lives with an "incommensurable doubleness of voice."²⁶ The majority of articles that discuss Scott's work are quick to emphasise his 'Maoriness' and to describe his work as 'unique to New Zealand' or 'of this land.' His buildings are almost always placed within a closed and domestic New Zealand architectural discourse; his *houses* are emphatically derived from the whare and the woolshed, references to overseas sources and discourses are largely ignored or repressed. In many articles it seems the references to Maori traditions are largely forced onto his work which in most cases contain little to provoke such readings. The fact that all Scott's buildings could be interpreted or understood without any reference to Maori traditions is not, as it may seem, an outrageous suggestion.

Although we might define the Battalion building as Maori (or non-Maori) we remain unsure of this classification as it also contains that which we would not dream of considering as Maori (or non-Maori).

There is a complexity to this design which cultivates confusion and paradox, disturbing attempts to define, control or domesticate, which would inevitably mask the unresolvable contradictions I wish to draw attention to. To describe this building as simply Maori or modern architecture is to set aside the indeterminacy, to decide what remains uncertain. The building's ability to, in a sense, contain different and seemingly contradictory readings resists appropriation. There is difficulty in placing this building which, on the one hand, appears to respond to a local discourse commonly relegated to the past and on the other to an overseas modernist and contemporary discourse.

Problematically located between, inscribed by two systems and intruding on both, this building is not proposed as proper, as one's own, but provokes a reassessment of its interpretation as either. Impinging upon the security and stability of the absolute, the essential and the homogenous, the building shifts away from polarised oppositions and is no longer easily placed or contained but is multiply inscribed. The boundaries, the limits, the walls or skin of what is one's own, although difficult to delineate, are not reduced to an assimilative blur. The body of architecture and the status of that body are at stake. Trading in the body parts of architecture Scott flouts authority, threatening to subvert the interests of both as the building is open to politically significant misinterpretations. The impropriety and illegitimacy of the body he constructs is a violation of the body proper; the body of Modernism is carved up.

To use Brutalist and Maori architectural parts in this way is to threaten the 'integrity' each is grounded upon. However to see the (mis)appropriation of the other as a sacrilegious impropriety is to perpetuate European myths of authenticity and purity. It could be said that architecture in New Zealand is a condition of the critical or uncritical (mis)appropriation of 'other' models. The innocent Eden is corrupted, as it always was. (Mis)appropriation has always already insinuated itself into New Zealand's very tradition, framing architecture in New Zealand.

The Maori Battalion building may therefore be seen as existing in and responding to a contested space of bi-cultural entanglement, where neither is finally able to dominate, contain or house the 'other.' In this way the Maori Battalion building can be read as (mis)appropriation rather than simply a reversal, juxtaposition or appropriation. The building's indeterminacy is due to a complexity to which simple binary oppositions are not sufficient. A tension

occurs at the moments of contraflexure between opposing or contradictory views; the turning points and shifts in accentuation. In this way Scott produces an infuriatingly ambiguous building, which is both and not simply Maori or non-Maori. The parts, as if clues, are directed towards interpreting the architecture in a traditional way and yet the building contests this traditional view by being structured in a different way. The building, unsettled by complexities and an ambiguity that dislocates comprehension, resists the subordination of the parts to a whole; an ideal, coherent and unified totality. Full of unresolved conflict the building parts invite provisional readings that resist wholeness. The work can be read as a building of complex definition or boundary, in a sense containing an irreducible uncertainty that resists capture and evades containment. In this way it poses a threat to the modernist ideals of a unified whole. (The whole carries with it the premise of a unified subject where edges are defined).

War Memorials may be proposed as the epitome of a memorialising tradition - a means of remembering or recording heroic ideals in lasting form. The recording of that deemed worthy of remembrance, of that not to be forgotten or changed. The memorial acting as an immortalising medium places emphasis on permanence, its materials are those of enduring strength rather than temporality. The memorial is the product of a vain hope - that of an unchanging permanence and immortality.

This brutalist-Maori building that *memorialises* war and strength has itself undergone dramatic if not brutal changes (*fig 12*). Not content to celebrate violence, it partakes, and is also violated. The raw concrete frame of European Modernism is now decorated, painted over by another skin. Painted a healthy green or a green of sickness, envy or greed, its strong, clear lines are now cluttered by advertising (*fig 13*). The painting over of the paternal frame marks changing attitudes to the British empire and its colonial associations. The carvings, like billboards, are now threatened by the encroachment of subsequent layers. The memorial's surfaces do not escape reinscription. Recently used as a nightclub, each year on Anzac Day the Battalion survivors would move aside "the revellers' tables and hold a memorial service."²⁷ Debased and corrupted, as it always already was, by economic and political manoeuvres, there is now food in the 'sacred' building. There is a certain amount of irony in the situation whereby a 'Maori War Memorial' becomes a nightclub, a 'drug den' and then a restaurant, and not just any restaurant, but *The Wild Horse Saloon* (*fig*

14). This dangerous and volatile realm of inexact identities transgresses the 'proper,' one's own, conjuring up wildly sacrilegious visions of impurity and criminality. There is an undermining of domestic order - women and children encroach upon this boisterous exhibitionism of male bravado - the measure of a man. Today's specials are propped up against the roll of honour (*fig 15*). What was an open space with mezzanine, and therefore involved an overlapping of spaces, is now separated and contained. The interior tukutuku panels and kowhaiwhai beams are now removed - the Maori has been expelled from the confines of the interior. This building is no longer set apart exclusively for a particular or proper use but (mis)appropriated.

NOTES

- 1 J. Derrida, *Limited Inc.* ed. Gerald Graff, (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1988) p. 142.
- 2 The terms Maori and Pakeha will be used to describe that which is provisionally interpreted as Maori or Pakeha. The term figure is used for its connotations as a form, shape, person or perceptual concept.
- 3 Mark Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), p. 150.
- 4 Notably by Francis Pound *The Space Between* (Auckland: Workshop Press, 1994).
- 5 The proper becomes complicated by the improper, the other. Entangling notions of rightful use with those of proper(ly) crime, 'appropriation' becomes problematised by the ambivalence of an unresolvable contradiction. That is, it recognises other, even contradictory claims to property and propriety. From here it follows that 'appropriation' does not deny recognition of the other, but is in fact acknowledgment of the other. It becomes other-wise.

In a debate where it is argued that so much has been taken and so little returned, this work proposes the possibility of a differential give and take. As that 'taken' or 'returned' never remains the same any affiliation or acknowledgement may be contested and therefore not be mutually accepted as acknowledgement, compensation or homage.
- 6 If appropriation is to freely take as own or to steal, (mis)appropriation is the possibility of a 'different' propriety, neither stealing nor freely taking as own. No longer seen as an overpowering territorial

exclusiveness there is the possibility of some sort of differential 'exchange.' I would like to thank Mike Austin for drawing my attention to this and for his support and obvious assistance with many aspects of this paper.

- 7 B. Johnson, "Translators introduction," J. Derrida, *Dissemination* trans. B. Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. xiii.
- 8 Meaghan Morris, "On the Beach," *Cultural Studies* ed. Grossberg, et al, (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 462.
- 9 J. Kipnis, "Twisting the Separatrix," *Assemblage* (1991), n. 14, p. 32. Kipnis describes architecture as "the scene of the proper, a scene of stability." In Derrida's writing the proper is also seen to be bound to that of the house. "Derrida draws on the Greek association between the household (*oikas*) and the proper (*oikeios*)." Mark Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction* p. 101-102.

A relationship between the house, law, economy, and family is an important theme throughout Derrida's work. Derrida writes "Economy: the law of the family, of the family home, of possession. The economic act makes familiar, proper, one's own, intimate, private. The sense of property, of propriety, in general is collected in the *oikeios*." J. Derrida, "Glas," P. Kamuf, *A Derrida Reader - between the blinds* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 345.
- 10 M. Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction* p. 102.
- 11 Chris Maclean, "Legacy of War: Race Relations and Memorials," *NZ Historic Places* (September 1990), n. 30, p. 34.
- 12 Pound, *The Space Between* p. 149.
- 13 Pound, *The Space Between* p. 155.
- 14 In particular Vernon Brown, *The Group and Miles Warren*.
- 15 Pound, *The Space Between* p. 122.
- 16 There are of course difficulties in talking of 'Maori architecture' for this is also an unusual and 'improper' conjunction as 'architecture' is founded and located within a Western discourse and metaphysics.
- 17 Robyn Boyd, *Kenzo Tange* (New York: George Braziller Inc., 1962), p. 12, 15.
- 18 The open plan as an element of both Modern and Maori architecture potentially indicates more than one governing formal idea.

- 19 One of the earliest uses of concrete block as an architectural element in New Zealand was in Miles Warren's Dorset St flats (1956-57) which responded to the New Brutalism Warren had recently seen in England.
- 20 Mike Austin, personal communication.
- 21 N. Thomas, *Entangled Objects* (London: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 108.
- 22 *Te Ao Hou (The New World): the Maori Magazine* (June 1964), n. 47, p. 32-33.
- 23 Katarina Mataira, "Modern Trends in Maori Art Forms," *The Maori People in the Nineteen - Sixties* ed. Erik Schwimmer, (Auckland: Blackwood and Janet Paul Ltd, 1968), p. 205-206.
- 24 R. Walden, *Voices of Silence: New Zealand's Chapel of Futuna* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1987), p. 53.
- 25 Derrida, *Limited Inc.* p. 75.
- 26 Pound, *The Space Between* p. 147.
- 27 Maclean, "Legacy of War: Race Relations and Memorials," p. 34.