

From Man Alone to Larrikin: The Work of Neil Simmons 1958-1984

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Abstract

The work of architect Neil Simmons is generally unpublished, and this research project attempts to place his early work, the period 1958-1984, into the context of the recorded New Zealand architectural history. The field of study is limited to the early work of Neil Simmons, who at the time of publication continues to practice architecture from his home studio in East Auckland.

In 2008, a genealogy of architectural practice in New Zealand was drawn up. The patterns of association also constructed a category of those not included in the chart, a category of minor architecture in Deleuzian terms. Neil Simmons is an example of a number of New Zealand architects who do not appear on the chart and who have elected to stand apart from the mainstream profession.

The research is presented in two separate sections, with differing research methods. The first section is in the form of written analysis, and discusses mainly the two selected nationalist identity themes of Man Alone and Larrikin to frame Simmons's work of the 1960s and 1970s. The second section takes the form of a survey, where all works produced by Neil Simmons • Architect are listed chronologically. This database includes all projects, both built and unbuilt, and is intended as an archival source.

There is a personal connection between the subject and the researcher as I am the daughter of Neil Simmons. This has an obvious influence on the nature of the analysis and the research process undertaken, and the decision has been made to include some personal recollections, as they may offer insight into the work not available to other researchers. To acknowledge this familial connection, a reading of the design of the Simmons family home, using the idea of shadow to frame the subjective architectural viewpoint, has been included in the written analysis section.

The research is limited to the early work, spanning from 1958 to 1984, which is the period between the end of Neil Simmons's architectural education and the beginning of my own. It is also the work least known to me from an architectural viewpoint, and this study attempts to bring together the childhood memories of site visits and clients with the buildings themselves, placed within the context of an overall New Zealand architectural history of mid twentieth century architecture. This thesis has been written at a time of life when there is an awareness of being an inter-generational link between Neil Simmons and his grandchildren, and this research is a method to record his work for the next generation, as well as providing material for future researchers on a significant New Zealand architect previously unstudied.

For all the grandchildren of Neil and Sonia

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SECTION A

Introduction

In May 2008, the *Block: New Zealand Architecture Family Tree* (NZAFT)¹ was produced by the *Block* publication, providing a visual diagram, or a map of a New Zealand architectural genealogy. The chart spans from the early colonial era until 2008, the time of publication.² This addition to the canon of accepted history of architecture in New Zealand has established a list of architects of importance and influence and generated debate on inclusions and omission. The authors clearly established their criteria for selection and have acknowledged that it is intended as an 'open source'³ project that can be modified and extended by anyone with interest over time. This call for additional research is indicated with the inclusion of Version 1.0 in the title and it may become the first of many in a series of charts. This chart has initiated a personal and academic journey to investigate the architectural history of my father, Neil Simmons (b.1934). The scope of this study is to examine his early work, from 1958 to 1984, and to place this work within the context of architecture in New Zealand. Perhaps in doing so, it may be possible to locate a place on the NZAFT where he might be situated. To place architectural work in context is critical to its ability to have influence on further generations, and this study attempts to find this context for the early work of Neil Simmons within the Auckland scene.

Neil Simmons is an example of a number of New Zealand architects who do not appear on the chart and who have elected to stand apart from the mainstream profession. This is not always a negative thing, often buildings and their architects exist in the frequently lively and interesting 'minor'⁴ categories of our history. The reasons an architect may remain unpublished are many and varied and can include gender, cultural, personal and socio-political issues. All are of interest to me as both a participant and an observer of the constantly re-written architectural history of New Zealand.

This research began as an archival study, to survey and document the work produced by Neil Simmons, an architect at the time of writing running his architectural practice out of a studio mezzanine loft in his own home in Eastern Beach, Auckland. The intention was to create a database of works to provide a basis for others to begin research, and to photograph selected buildings from his early work, which are still standing and have not been altered substantially, before any more are lost to demolition.⁵ Any archival or historical research needs to address the problem of being a survey or a manifesto, as identified by Clark and Walker in their introduction to *Looking for the Local*.⁶ They discuss this dilemma in relation

¹ The *Block: New Zealand Architecture Family Tree* May 2008 Version 1.0. Often referred to as the Block chart. *Block* produces *The Broadsheet of the Auckland Branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects* on a monthly basis, and is based in the offices of Cheshire Architects. The issues include reviews and commentary, with regular contributors such as Sean Flanagan, Pip Cheshire and Nat Cheshire, as well as invited contributors. The broadsheet also covers regular NZIA news and events information. Included in the monthly issues are Itinerary Guides of specialized topic areas, produced by the research arm of *Block*, headed by Julia Gatley and Andrew Barrie with regular contributors such as Bill McKay.

² The chart is arranged by the decade of birth of the architects, with the earliest entry being Thomas Telford 1757-1834, and the last generation being born in the 1970s.

³ Barrie, A, *The Block New Zealand Architecture Family Tree* Version 1.0, 2008, text.

⁴ The terms 'minor' and 'major' are used by Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus*. 1987, 105. A major history sets a 'standard' and "assumes a state of power and domination" which he believes stagnates change or flow in historical revision.

⁵ During the course of the research, one residential project was demolished before photographs were taken. (NS026*72-W14. Williamson / Alexander House, 10A First Avenue, Devonport, demolished April, 2011.) Note also earlier comments regarding the decision not to re-photograph existing buildings, but to instead use photographs taken at the time of construction.

⁶ Clark, J. and Walker, P. *Looking for the Local. Architecture and the New Zealand Modern*. Victoria University

to the original editorial differences within the team putting together a book on New Zealand architecture between the late 1930s and the 1950s.⁷ It was on this conflict of position, the choice between survey or manifesto, that Clark and Walker began their own discussion of whether any history of New Zealand architecture gathers material and then analyses it, or whether it should begin with stating a position which is subsequently illustrated. Clark has elsewhere referred to the desire for a comprehensive survey and a canon of architecture that has a sense of fixity, when considering the book reviews received for *Looking for the Local*;

‘A number of reviews betrayed a wish for a more explicit, immediately recognizable, easily navigable canon, and for texts that would help to construct this. Some saw our book as too whimsical as it was not a survey.’⁸

She considers the nature of the canon in New Zealand, and sees it less as ‘a series of key buildings documented through a series of key texts’⁹ but as something ephemeral, which can be contributed to by locating myths and re-investigating them, although recognizing that they are both linked;

‘Both canons and myths exist only in their retelling—in their collective iterations.’¹⁰

This research study has attempted to provide both versions of information presentation, and is separated into Section A (manifesto) and Section B (survey). The structure of the study attempts to provide a co-existence of both the survey and the manifesto – of bringing a database of works alongside, but not connected to, a discussion of some of those works in relation to myths and themes which exist around it. In this study, the selected themes of ‘man alone’ and ‘larrikin’, in relation to the development of New Zealand’s national identity, are addressed and discussed while reviewing the early work of Neil Simmons.

Every study of the work of any architect inherently has a subjective value within it, which is the editorial control of the archivist or historian. While an attempt is usually made to be neutral in compiling and discussing the work, the ‘subject’ of the author is always embedded into the discussion. There is an added layer of complexity in this case, due to the fact that Neil Simmons is my father. This close personal relationship has an effect on the process and outcome of this study. Firstly, it has become apparent that the analysis of Simmons’ work has been affected by the focus of interest in my own work. This overlap is addressed through the inclusion, in Chapter Four, of a reading of the Simmons family home through a framework often applied in my own architectural work, that of contained shadow and interior darkness.¹¹ For this discussion, Tanizaki’s *In Praise of Shadows*¹² is referenced and it is suggested that interior darkness forms part of an overlooked tradition in New Zealand architectural history.

Press. 2000, 7.

⁷ Clark, J. and Walker, P, *Looking for the Local. Architecture and the New Zealand Modern*. Victoria University Press. 2000, 8. The book project began in the late 1950s by The Architecture Centre in Wellington, and was to be called ‘New Building in New Zealand’ This editorial difference is also discussed in Clark, Justine and Walker, Peter ‘Book, House, Home’ At Home in *New Zealand. House History People*. E(d) Brookes, Barbara. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2000. 195-209. Clark and Walker identify the editorial conflict as being centered around a manifesto which proposed using the house to represent ‘New Zealand architecture’ or whether a survey of wider building types should be used.

⁸ Clark, J. ‘Ephemera: The Elusive Canon of New Zealand Architecture.’ *Fabrications* Volume 14, No 1 & 2, 2004, 53.

⁹ Clark, J. ‘Ephemera: The Elusive Canon of New Zealand Architecture.’ *Fabrications* Volume 14, No 1 & 2, 2004, 47.

¹⁰ Clark, J. ‘Ephemera: The Elusive Canon of New Zealand Architecture.’ *Fabrications* Volume 14, No 1 & 2, 2004, 55.

¹¹ The author has a BArch (Hons) from The University of Auckland, awarded in 1987, and at the time of writing has been a practitioner for 23 years, 4 years of which have been spent overseas. The last 12 years have been as a sole-practitioner in a part-time capacity while raising children. The study of Shadow and its relationship to architecture in the Pacific has been a focus of both practice and teaching for over 15 years at the time of writing. ‘Shadow: Architecture of the Box’ was also the topic of my undergraduate sub-thesis 1986. It is also acknowledged that it is no accident that this study has been undertaken in my ‘mid-life’ stage, where enough time has lapsed to enable separation of my own architectural identity from that of my father, Neil Simmons. When your life stage is a literal link between your parents and your children, the desire to celebrate the genealogical legacy for future generations becomes stronger. The ability to see a little clearer is also, hopefully, as strong.

¹² Tanizaki, Jun’ichiro *In Praise of Shadows* trans. Thomas J Harper and Edward G Seidensticker Jonathon Cape, London, 1991.

Secondly, it is not common for the personal life of an architect to be included in a review of their work. Where the personal life of an architect does come into view, the separation of family from professional life seems exaggerated.¹³ In this study, some inclusion of Simmons' personal characteristics and lifestyle has been made in order to more fully form the image of the decisions behind the architectural work. The reader is to keep this family relationship in mind, and it is hoped that it will add to the review of the work by bringing personal insights often closed to outside observers. The viewpoint offered in Chapter Four attempts to address a call made by Peter Wood, for complex social and cultural effects to be discussed in relation to our architecture, rather than only using the usual formal and technological discussions which dominate architectural discourse;

‘My concern regarding contemporary discussions on the architecture of the New Zealand bach is that they exclude versions of history that cannot be accounted for by notions of typology, style, or chronological development. Such interpretations risk forgetting that architecture, in its resonances (meaning), are as much the product of complex social and cultural arrangements as they are comparative formal descriptions.’¹⁴

The interrogation of the archive, and the understanding that the way one chooses to look has an influence of what then gets seen, was addressed in the keynote lecture delivered by Randall C Jimerson at the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand (ARANZ) Conference 2010. J. Newman has written of this paper that Jimerson ‘...challenged archivists to consider the fact that they may, in their decision-making about what to collect or not collect, influence the remembering or forgetting of our past.’¹⁵

This awareness that the collective social memory is influenced by the archive is also discussed in Kate Linzey's M.Arch thesis submission of 2001, which uses the University of Auckland School of Architecture Archive as its subject.¹⁶ Linzey identifies that, like history, the archive is constantly in a state of flux, and that the view taken at any particular time will affect the way the materials stored in the archive are seen.

There are strict rules applied to an archive and its ordering and selection, and an analysis of these rules reveals the method of viewing. Jimerson brings to attention the relationship between the profession of archiving and the implication on social justice, where he argues that archives inevitably support existing power structures already in place, and tend to ignore the obscure, unseen or ‘minor’.¹⁷ John Walsh has also noted that the architectural history of any society is further established through the selective archiving of the architectural projects already published.¹⁸ There exists a power relationship between the three main roles of the archive, identified by Jimerson as ‘selection, preservation and access’.¹⁹ Postmodern thinking has challenged the long-held Enlightenment view of scientific neutrality, and has allowed for several versions of the same archived material to exist. For example, an item may have

¹³. An example of this is the documentary film ‘My Architect. A Son's Journey’ on the life of Louis Kahn by Nathaniel Kahn 2003, one of Louis Kahn's illegitimate sons. The architect maintained this personal / professional separation to the point that he actually had three families whose lives did not cross paths. Another recent film on Norman Foster presents the architect as an isolated individual (although a ‘civilised’ one) in the manner of the genius architect. There is one short segment where Foster plays with his young son, yet the focus of the scene is on the model boat built by Foster, and it is him who plays with the boat rather than his son, the child is then an appendage in this scene.

¹⁴. Wood, Peter, ‘The Bach. The Cultural History of a Local Typology’ *Fabrications* Volume 11, No 1, 2000, 54

¹⁵. Randall C Jimerson ‘The Archive is Politics: Neutrality is Not an Option’ ARANZ Librarian conference, Wellington, August 2010 Keynote speaker. Joanna M A Newman, Vice President, Archives and Records Association of NZ, Press Release 29/8/10.

¹⁶. Linzey, Kate *Architectural Archive 246* M.Arch Thesis, The University of Auckland, 2001.

¹⁷. R.C.Jimerson, ‘Archives for all: The Importance of Archives in Society’, 2

¹⁸. Walsh, J. *Architecture Matters. The Inaugural Lecture*, 14 July 2011. *Block 07*, 2011.

¹⁹. R.C.Jimerson, ‘Archives for all: The Importance of Archives in Society’, 4.

several forms of creation or be recorded in several languages or versions of the same language, reflecting various cultural or social values.²⁰ There is a consolidation of existing power structures, and Jimerson states that, 'The archivist's role unavoidably engages in politics.'²¹

Section A of this study is separated into four chapters, the first of which introduces the main themes of 'man alone' and 'Larrikin' through an overview of the personal history of Neil Simmons, covering early home life, his architectural education and early work experience.

Chapter Two is titled 'Man Alone' and investigates the mythology which has been at the core of New Zealand's developing nationalist identity in the arts and architecture during the 20th Century.²² This discussion is illustrated through the buildings Neil Simmons produced in the 1960s, focussing mainly on the 1964 design of the Simmons House in Eastern Beach, Auckland. Main reference sources include Francis Pound²³ and Robin Skinner.²⁴ In *The Invention of New Zealand. Art and Literature in New Zealand 1930-1970*, Pound refers to the developing Nationalist identity, which is emergent from a pioneer or colonial position and therefore Pakeha-centered, with landscape at its core. Ideas of solitude, the sublime in nature, were interwoven into the mythology of the man alone, of the pragmatic and stoic pioneer. The dismantling of the man alone myth is discussed, referencing a published paper by Robin Skinner, *Whare in the Bush. Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition*, where he reveals how the myth of the image has relied on its anonymity, and that by bringing identification to the image, the complexities of reality begin to break the myth down.

This juxtaposition, of the anonymous figure in the myth with the reality of an individual character, is important when reviewing Simmons' work, because in his life the two become very close. The stoic, contemplative introvert, at his best alone in a wild and remote setting, is both the description of the anonymous man alone and of Neil Simmons as a person and as an architect. Simmons went hunting and fishing, the family went camping in remote areas, he remained apart from group organizations, and he found it difficult to work for a company structure²⁵. The single departure from the myth in the real life of Neil Simmons is that he had a family, and his domestic life was also of great importance to him. Complexities arise when reviewing his work at this interface of the rugged individualist and the family man, and these complexities are investigated in chapter 2.2, with the discussion of the design of the family home in 1964.

Chapter Three looks at how in the 1970s, nationalist identity changed form completely, with the man alone mythology having been dismantled as part of the Nationalist constructed identity, which as Pound has shown, had ended by 1970. The new decade saw the rise of

²⁰. From Terry Cook 'Remembering the Future' in *Archives, Documentation and Institutions of Social Memory*, 174

²¹. R.C.Jimerson, 'Archives for all: The Importance of Archives in Society', 4. Interactive archives are one way to change power relationships in archives and open-sourced software collections of knowledge, such as Wikipedia, are based around this ideal.

²². The term 'man alone' has come to represent the solitary, stoic figure who is able to survive in a rugged environment and who stands up to authority. The term has become shorthand for these characteristics celebrated in the New Zealand male of the early 20th century, and comes initially from a book written by John Mulgan (1911-45) in 1939, titled *Man Alone*. (Selwyn and Blount, England.) Mulgan was a New Zealander who left for Merton College, Oxford on a Rhodes Scholarship. He joined the army in 1939 but committed suicide April 25, 1945. Refer to Phillips, Jock (1996) 'A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male – A History.' Penguin, Auckland, for a discussion of contributing factors for the emergence of the 'man alone' typology of the Pakeha Male.

²³. Pound, F, *The Invention of New Zealand Art and Literature in New Zealand 1930-1970*, Auckland University Press, Auckland 2009.

²⁴. Skinner, R. The Whare in the Bush. Unpacking a Twentieth Century Tradition. *Fabrications* 18:1, 2008.

²⁵. As evidenced in his early working pattern, where he elected to leave some excellent practices for fear of being 'buried' in the practice. See Chapter 1.2 Work Experience for further details.

the spirit of the non-conformist, anti-authoritarian character, personified by the title Larrikin. I suggest that this is a version of the nationalist figure, which is closer to a re-emerged aspect of the earlier pioneering male, the drifter. As a contextual setting, this section looks at the 1970s counter-cultural ideologies and their effect on these themes in New Zealand. Again Skinner is referenced, here for his paper on New Zealand's Larrikin profile in the international press,²⁶ and historical texts such as by Shaw²⁷ and Lloyd Jenkins,²⁸ for the overview they provide of this era. John Dickson's essay in *Connections: The House in the Auckland Scene*²⁹ provides a context for the humanist approach of some work in this decade, and his essay is particularly relevant as one of Simmons' houses was part of the Connections exhibition.³⁰ Dickson's approach to architectural analysis is rather unique in that he uses a poetic and experiential basis from which to frame his arguments. His earlier unpublished papers³¹ that provide an analytical framework for understanding spatial qualities have also been used as reference in this study, and Dickson's work has growing contemporary relevance as phenomenological and haptic readings of architecture become more common again. The second part to this chapter specifically uses the pole house designs of Neil Simmons to illustrate his work of this period and how the Larrikin era suited his personal as well as his professional life.

Section B of this study is the Database, which is a collection of as many project numbers and information on those projects as possible at this time. This is the 'survey' aspect to the study, in terms of Clark and Walker's definition, albeit in small parts incomplete³². There are two sections to this Database, the first being an Illustrated Database, providing more information on selected projects between 1958-1984, the selected dates which limit the scope of this study. The second section of the database is a complete list of every entry, covering the full period of all works to date, 1958-2011. Due to the scope of research of this study being limited to the years 1958-1984, the database has been arranged chronologically.

All projects that have acquired a job number in the Simmons office Project Books are included in the database.³³ Due to the first record book dating from 1972 onwards, at least a decade's worth of his earliest works has been difficult to locate and date, and in some cases, the information is incomplete or unverified. Any date estimates have been noted as such in the database by appearing in italic font. In some cases the building no longer stands, in others, the project may not have proceeded beyond sketch design stage, however they are all still included.

In the course of assembling this database, it has been interesting to note several habits, which reveal some of Simmons' characteristics; for example his preference for the potential

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ Shaw, Peter, *A History of New Zealand Architecture*, Hodder Moa Beckett, Auckland, 2003.

²⁸ Lloyd Jenkins, Douglas *At Home. A Century of New Zealand Design* Godwit, Random House, Auckland 2004,

²⁹ Dickson, J., 'Architectural Modernism in New Zealand 1960-1990' in Nordeck, M., and Twose, S., ed., *Connections: The House in the Auckland Scene*, G4 Exhibiting Unit, Auckland, 1998.

³⁰ NS020•71-B11. Berman House, 16 Asbury Crescent, Campbells Bay, 1971. The Connections: The House in the Auckland Scene Exhibition was held in Whanganui in 1998, for which the book was produced.

³¹ Dickson, J., 'The Mastery of Space' Parts One, Two and Three, *Study Papers* 66, 67, 68, unpublished papers, The University of Auckland School of Architecture, Auckland, 1982.

³² The first decade of projects, between 1958 and 1971, are not recorded in any job books and not all projects are included. Those entries into the database have been retrieved mainly from the drawings held in storage by Neil Simmons, Local Council records, and discussions with Neil Simmons.

³³ The system used in the offices of Neil Simmons • Architect is that each project would be given a job number as it came into the office. This number would use the first letter of the client's name and a two-digit consecutive number to follow, forming a job number of a letter and two numbers. Projects are therefore recalled through the client's name, rather than location, type or date.

in the unbuilt project, as opposed to having an interest in recording the past, is seen in the management of the job books. Each project is recorded as it enters the office, but the completion date of the project is never entered.³⁴ Also, all photographs taken by Neil Simmons, which are then stored in the project files rather than in an archive system, are of works in progress, with almost none taken at completion.³⁵ No photographer has ever been engaged by Neil Simmons to record finished projects,³⁶ and no archival system has ever been set up by him, apart from the project books. Simmons is absolutely not nostalgic in character, which perhaps explains why he has little interest in finding his own historical influences, and no great desire to place his work in historical context.

The lack of professional photography during the course of Simmons' career has also set the tone for the image selection in this study. The majority of images used are those from the project files, informal insights into earlier decades, providing a focus on the work in progress as opposed to the completed building. The decision has been made not to re-photograph buildings still in existence in order to maintain the sense of the era the works were produced in. The photographs themselves provide their own information about the era, through the technology used and clarity of image.

The research method has been focused mainly on retrieving drawings and photographs from the storage at Neil Simmons • Architects,³⁷ as well as site visits to selected buildings. Research has been undertaken into the wider context of New Zealand architecture for the period between the 1950s until the early 1980s. This has concentrated on the Auckland region, and has included an examination of publications of the era. Several interviews have been carried out during 2011, with professional and academic colleagues, with his wife Sonia Simmons and with Neil Simmons himself.

Clark and Walker have shown that throughout the 1940s, numerous architectural publications endorsed the idea that a sought-after nationalist character of New Zealand was to be found in the single house for a family.³⁸ 'For in these various writings the term 'New Zealand architecture' was frequently collapsed onto the modern, timber, single-family house.'³⁹ The NZIA awards are a useful historical measure of the role played by residential architecture in the context of our wider architectural identity. The structure of the awards system, and how it has changed over the course of the 20th century, is an indicator of the status of house design. The awards structure for the annual NZIA awards has been in place since 1926, as Gold, Silver and Bronze medals, but it is since 1940 that residential architecture gained a category of its own, the Bronze Medal. This shows that residential work had, by 1940, achieved a status where it started to represent architecture in New Zealand through the early to mid 20th century. From 1940, the debate around the house as being the very site where New Zealand architecture is located continued, which coincided with the developing nationalist discourse of the era.⁴⁰ 'The housing situation and the desire for strong national

³⁴ All dates provided in the database indicate the date for the job being secured in the office, which was usually on acceptance of the concept design by the client. The dates therefore represent the design stage of each project.

³⁵ Any photographs on file of completed works have usually been provided by the client for that project.

³⁶ There has been one occasion where a professional photographer has been engaged, when Haru Sameshima was contracted in 1990 to record the Webber House, Takapuna. Sameshima was engaged by the author of this study, Lynda Simmons, as involvement in this project was being recorded for an overseas portfolio.

³⁷ This is now held in a mezzanine in the garage building at the family home at 8 Rogers Avenue, Eastern Beach, Auckland.

³⁸ Clark, Justine and Walker, Peter 'Book, House, Home.' *At Home in New Zealand. Houses History People*. Ed Brookes, Barbara. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2000. 195-209

³⁹ Clark, Justine and Walker, Peter 'Book, House, Home.' *At Home in New Zealand. Houses History People*. Ed Brookes, Barbara. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2000. 195

⁴⁰ Remembering, of course, that 'the house' refers to a detached, single unit dwelling for a family, and that it did not

identity were both common topics in the architectural publications that would flourish from 1940.⁴¹

Clark and Walker use the Architecture Centre's proposed book⁴² to illustrate the growing debate around the house, and the idea that it was representative of the 'New Building in New Zealand'.⁴³ Through this discussion, Clark and Walker propose that the late 1950s became a defining point at which the house became 'New Zealand architecture', a date coinciding with Simmons' graduation from the Architecture School at the University of Auckland. Christine McCarthy, in her overview of the Bronze Medals winners through the decade of the 1960s, reminds us that residential work had had its own category since 1940, and that by 1965, the "domestic work" of the Bronze Medal category was defined as specifically a "single unit house."⁴⁴ This again reinforces the idea that the detached family home had by then become the building form identified as 'architecture' in this country, 'The house became, and remains, the mythologised object of New Zealand architectural discourse.'⁴⁵

McCarthy also noted that by 1970, the status of the residential award had been shifted to the Local Branch Award, perhaps reflecting the beginnings of a shift away from this mythologised status of the house, and it reinforces the link made by Clark and Walker between the house and the nationalist argument in New Zealand.⁴⁶ This shift occurred in the middle of the time period of this study, from 1958-1984. The work of Neil Simmons continues this New Zealand focus on the house, as the list of projects in the database is dominated by residential work. Like the majority of sole practitioners in this country, the main part of his architectural output has been residential. For this reason the discussion is also mainly illustrated through his domestic projects, however other building types, such as community sporting facilities, car yards and some factories are included.

The scope of this study is limited to the earliest work produced by Neil Simmons, the work of his first 25 years after graduation from the Architecture School at The University of Auckland, in 1959. The study begins near the end of Simmons' education at the University of Auckland School of Architecture, and ends near the date of the beginning of my own. These date limits have been set for several reasons; firstly, no conflict of interest occurs by avoiding the inclusion of projects to which I contributed as part of the office team for several years from 1987 onward⁴⁷ Secondly, the study does not intend to be a complete analysis of works but rather a discussion on selected themes which relate to these early decades, and thirdly, the amount of work produced by Neil Simmons throughout a period of over 50 years has meant

refer to other housing types such as communal or higher density models.

⁴¹ Clark, Justine and Walker, Peter 'Book, House, Home.' *At Home in New Zealand. Houses History People*. Ed Brookes, Barbara. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2000. 199

⁴² 'New Building in New Zealand', the working title for the book project which is the subject of *Looking for the Local. Architecture and the New Zealand Modern*. Clark, J. and Walker, P. (2000) Victoria University Press, as well as the published paper 'Book, House, Home.' *At Home in New Zealand. Houses History People*. Ed Brookes, Barbara. Clark, Justine and Walker, Peter. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2000. 195-209

⁴³ Clark, Justine and Walker, Peter 'Book, House, Home.' *At Home in New Zealand. Houses History People*. Ed Brookes, Barbara. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2000. 198

⁴⁴ McCarthy, Christine. 'Going for Gold: New Zealand houses in the 60s through the veil of the N.Z.I.A Bronze Medals: Proceedings of "...about as austere as a Dior gown..." New Zealand Architecture in the 1960s: a one day symposium. 8 Dec 2005 ed McCarthy, Christine, Centre For Building Performance research, Victoria, Wellington.

⁴⁵ Clark, Justine and Walker, Peter 'Book, House, Home.' *At Home in New Zealand. House History People*. Ed Brookes, Barbara. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2000. pg209

⁴⁶ This also aligns with Pound's recognition of a shift by 1970 away from the nationalist argument in painting and literature. Pound describes how after 1970, nationalist ideas changed, despite appearing to continue, as the arts shifted into areas of Post-Nationalist and Post-Modern thought. Pound, F. *The Invention of New Zealand. Art & National Identity 1930-1970*. Auckland University Press, 2000, 361-363.

⁴⁷ The author, Lynda Simmons, worked at Neil Simmons Architects 1987-1990 and again 1993-1997.

the field is too wide to cover in this study.⁴⁸ The mid to late 1980s is also a convenient era to end this study, as the mid 1980s has been defined as being a defining point of change in New Zealand's cultural position and identity. Mike Austin points to Mitchell's *Elegant Shed* television series and book in 1984 as an example of marking the shift from being a country which was protected politically, financially and physically from the rest of the world, to an unregulated environment, which connected New Zealand to an International free-market platform and quite possibly into a post-modern condition. He notes however, that the shift was more toward another form of modernism;

'The moment of this shift to modernism in New Zealand might be traced to 1984, when the country radically reversed from an egalitarian welfare state, to a supply side privatised economy. The Gibbs house by David Mitchell, of that date was, I suggest, significant in shifting architects towards North American modernism as the Gibbs were significant agents in shifting the economic and aesthetic life of the country.'⁴⁹

⁴⁸. The project records show almost 1000 projects to date. This figure includes all projects where the client engaged Neil Simmons, whether the project was constructed or not.(Refer to the Full Database, Section B.)

⁴⁹. Austin, M. 'Kiwi Architecture: Modernism Recycled.' *Fabrications* Vol 14, No 1 & 2,2004, iv.