

New Canaan in New Zealand

Alington House as Honest Architecture?

Peter Wood

Victoria University of Wellington

Abstract

Alington House is a modest family home in suburban Wellington that is celebrated in New Zealand's architectural community for its synthesis of modernist doctrine and New Zealand landscape. It was designed and built in 1962 by architect William Alington for his own family soon after he returned from undertaking his Masters in Architecture degree at the Illinois Institute of Technology whose culture, at that time, reflected the leadership of Mies van der Rohe. Consequentially Alington House has been cast as a far flung Miesian quotation that lends disciplinary legitimacy to the Modernist programme in New Zealand, culminating in successful registration with New Zealand Historic Places as Category 1 for outstanding cultural significance. Frequently identified as one of New Zealand's most architectural important homes, it was very recently named as New Zealand's best house of the 1960s, being described as able to sit as comfortably in New Canaan as the bush of New Zealand. However, against the architectural status Alington House has been afforded, in this paper I will be arguing that it provides a less superior citation to antipodean modernism than it does an example of complicit influence. This in turn evokes themes of authenticity, influence and integrity the underpin New Zealand's architectural history. In developing this argument a familial relationship in plan will be demonstrated between Alington House and the second house New Canaan architect John Lee Black built for his family in 1956.

Introduction: *Ex Nihilo*

In 1977, *The Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects* printed a mirror of attitudes toward influence in architectural design at that time. Under the generally conservative editorship of Gordon Moller, in October the journal's regular cartoonist, Chris Brookewhite, produced an unusually pointed criticism of an individual architect. To one side of the double page layout is a visual comparison between the recently completed Sanders House in Queenstown, New Zealand, and a starkly similar one in Vermont, USA, completed eight years earlier. On the accompanying page two fictional figures sarcastically criticise an un-named architect as a greedy prostitute stealing his designs from magazines.¹ That there is a familiar relationship between these two distant houses is not in doubt. The architect, John Blair, is very forthright that the client approached him with published images of the Vermont house and a specific request for an antipodean reproduction.² The air of denunciation in the strip would then seem to have something more to do with the journal's coverage of the project in the previous issue where the architect's project description made no mention of external influence but claimed design influences from 'broader natural elements ... the local topography, sun, wind, colour, and so on',³ going on to say that the house was "... based on the aspects of, and those from, each site".⁴ Superficially Brookewhite's caricature might be taken as a pointed criticism of an uncited architectural quotation that led the journal into presenting New Zealand architecture as inevitably a product of local conditions, but this really only begs questions of the specificity of a mountain ranges in the Southern hemisphere against those in the northern hemisphere. As the plans show, the decks of the Sanders house align well with the dominant landform elements of Coronet Peak and the Remarkables (which may well have been forward in the clients mind). Moreover any evaluation of this design needs to consider the client, who in this case is described as finding it to their satisfaction.⁵ In light of this, Brookewhite's attack is highly provincial in its view that regional influences should produce a unique architectural outcome that can be attached to that place alone.

In something of a defense of the Sanders House David Mitchell would include it in his idiosyncratic history of New Zealand post-war architecture in 1984, describing it as a 'spectacular example' of the house as object in the landscape.⁶ In Mitchell's champion on the Sanders House influence on the design becomes less important nationalistically than the broader relationships of that design to, and with, it's surroundings. However, it might be said that for *The Journal of the New Zealand Institute of Architects*, with its formal obligation to represent the work of local architects, such a distinction was mute. In Brookewhite's parochial caricature New Zealand architects have an obligation to forge 'newness' so that, in a tautological loop, he suggests the work of local architects be different to international architects simply because they are local, and not international.

This view is constructed on a simplistic relationship between New Zealand nationalism and New Zealand landform. As such it reflects the tail end of a parallel discussion that had already occurred in other creative fields in New Zealand earlier. As Pound has written, in the 1930s New Zealand art began to self-consciously examine landscape imagery to create for themselves *ex nihilo* – out of nothing. To this end the landscape becomes what Pound considers an authenticating signature.⁷ It is this tradition that the Sanders House confronts by presenting a derivative signature as an 'authenticating and contracting act' of place.⁸

To expand the literary theme of this conference, the Sanders House can be treated as a cultural forgery in so much as it takes its design from a place other than the New Zealand landscape. It should not need to be said, but this is a fatuous criticism to make, made empty by artificial distinctions created between landscape and cityscape around issues of influence.

In *A History of New Zealand Architecture* Peter Shaw 'outs' an urban example of architectural quotation in which we have a quite different critique. In Auckland, Shaw traces Price, Adams & Dodd's wing-like *West Plaza* (1970-1974) to Gio Ponti and Pier Luigi Nervi's Pirelli Building in Milan (1955) to provide a lineage that must also include New York's Pan Am Building (1960-63). Yet, in this case,

direct derivation has not affected its status at all. Quite the reverse in fact, with the *West Plaza* having been well treated by New Zealand's architectural history. This culminated with an Enduring Architecture Award from the New Zealand Institute of Architects in 2005 where the commendation described it as standing "... as noble now as when first built in 1972".⁹ For his part Shaw calls it the practice of a firm "... whose interest in sculptural architectural forms was paramount".¹⁰

This is a curiously slippery acclaim as it draws no distinction between those architects determined to generate sculptural responses, with those who might more conveniently be interested in applying a sculptural influence they like. Could it be that the *West Plaza* has been elevated precisely for its nod to international influence? Refereeing again to Mitchell's 1984 publication, he observed that shape of *West Plaza* is "... not unlike that of Gio Ponti's famous Pirelli Building in Milan" but goes on to celebrate the vertical striped fins that elevate the building as a thrilling example of Op Art.¹¹ These fins proved to be an environmental hazard as they channeled wind down the façade to the podium, necessitating the addition of basin shaped scoops to protect pedestrians from being blown over. Nonetheless he concludes, "In the most flattering sense *West Plaza* might have been built anywhere in the world".¹²

In this *West Plaza*'s derivation can be interpreted as a positive example of New Zealand's architects overcoming any parochial insecurity and freely seeing their work in a wider context. Indeed, as Bill McKay saw it in 2008, "*West Plaza* helped turn Auckland "from big town to international city".¹³ But it seems important that *West Plaza* is located in a distinctly metropolitan context, as though urbanization by its cacophonous isolation from nature assimilates and absolves architectural influence. Which is to ask, does architectural quotation inevitably require an empty page?

Alington House (1962)

Alington House is a modest mid-century bungalow hidden from street view in a bush clad section in the comfortable Wellington suburb of Karori. Not only is it invisible to the passing eye it is all but indiscernible in New Zealand's wider cultural landscape. However, within a community of those interested in architecture, it holds a particular fame as one of the country's most significant houses. It could also be said that the essential characteristic of this buildings dedicated notoriety is that of quotation. That is, *Alington House* is acclaimed as a southern fragment of international modernism linked not only by its aesthetic prescription but also through a direct connectedness of the architect/owner, William Alington. In 1980 *Alington House* was one of fifty selected projects for Bonny and Reynolds's book cataloguing New Zealand architect's own homes. The entries in *Living with 50 Architects* are blissfully free of the florid rhetoric that can characterise self-consciously populace writing on architecture. Descriptions here generally provide factual information the size, materials, construction and orientation of each house. It is perhaps precisely because the cracks for anchoring mythologies that are so slim that what does get through resonates with authority. In the case of *Alington House*, Bonny and Reynolds observe the bush setting, convoluted pedestrian access and post & beam assembly, but they proceed to suggest that these add to a "visual and rational similarity to late nineteenth-century New Zealand bungalows".¹⁴ To see a visual relationship between *Alington House* and the Victorian bay villa that typified that period of housing requires a great deal of squinting. Beyond a passing familiarity between the bay villa's verandah, and the extended eave elevated on posts in the former, the two types are starkly distinct.

Appreciating this assessment requires an understanding of the discourse toward an indigenous architecture that emerged in New Zealand following 1945, and particularly the thinking of James Garrett. Writing on influences on house design in 1958 Garrett itemised his four concepts of 'modern design' as consisting of: modern principles, American influences, Japanese influences and "Our own historical building background".¹⁵ In Garrett's view these elements, combined with the binding agent of 'truth', would produce inspiring work in the manner of Pier Nervi.

The significance of regional building practices is found in his earlier catalogue accompanying an exhibition in 1954 on New Zealand's home building tradition in which he asks that we examine the past in order to make "critical insights which are necessary both to the understanding of the existing situation and the realization of the values we hold".¹⁶

For Garrett the Victoria age in New Zealand was a period ". . . FOUNDED ON FAITH IN THE SANCITY OF THE FAMILY HOME" and feature the integration of house and garden with design and living.¹⁷ That much seems applicable to the intrusion of regenerating native bush on Alington House, but it is to Garrett's categorisation of the early Victoria period that I want to dwell. The pioneers, he writes, had little time or money for refinements; "They used material and structure logically and honestly to build simple homes".¹⁸ Garrett even provided an image for his moral imperative in the model of a pioneer figure reading on the verendah of a simple hut surrounded by second growth bush. To the erroneous title *Bach in the King Country* he added the caption 'Simplicity, honesty, realism'.¹⁹ These three criteria are a *leitmotif* for Bonny and Reynolds selection of the houses in *Living with 50 Architects* with their emphases on displayed timber construction, modest scales, raw materiality and a common environmental and social responsiveness. There are, across the breadth of architects selected, some notably divergent examples, but a general pattern of modest homes using expressed timber construction and open planning prevails. Moreover, differences, were they exist, can be loosely attributed to regional distinctions. With this in mind three wellington representatives stand out. They consist of the houses of Jim Beard (1962), Derek Wilson (1966-1967) and Bill Alington (1962). Although by no means identical the features common between them suggests a familial relationship. That this should be the case is not coincidental as the small architectural fraternity in Wellington meant not only close social contact between architects but also many professional affiliations, particularly through the Ministry of Works but also in private practice. At various stages of their careers Beard, Wilson and Alington worked collectively, along with architect Bill Toomath with whom Wilson undertook the McKay House, Silverstream (1958-59).

Post & Beam Modernity

When compared these four houses show a surprisingly degree of commonality in their treatment of timber construction and detailing. It is beyond this paper to go into this argument at this time, but it seems to me that these similarities suggest, on the one side, a significant degree of interpersonal communication of the architects involved, perhaps even collaboration, and certainly inspiration of some kind.²⁰ However, on the other side, they also display specific commonality with Scandanavian projects at that time, and especially Erik Christian Sorensen's Tholstrup House (1953-1955) and his own house which he began just as the Tholstrup House neared completion (1954-55). The extent to which the similarities between these houses are consciously or unconsciously related is difficult to gauge. The interest of the New Zealander's to international movements in architecture is to be taken as a given. Beard, Alington and Toomath all sought postgraduate degrees in the U.S.A., while Wilson left New Zealand soon after his architecture studies and worked for Connell Ward & Lucas, and then under Hugh Casson in the London County Council. And while compositional and constructional aspects of Sorensen's houses seem to be lifted very directly in a project like Alington House it is necessary to remember that architects in New Zealand and Scandinavia were looking to the same modernist sources at work in the U.S.A., and also to traditional Japanese housing. We must also add to this uncertainty that architects working to address the same material problems are quite able of formulating the same solutions independently. It is for such reasons I wish to concentrate on the floor plan of the Alington house as it provides, in my view, a far specific figure to consider.

To begin, it is important to note the commonalities between the Beard House, the McKay House and Alington House. Each takes an uncompromising regular form into which the workings of the house are divided. The Baird House was a beach retreat for the family and as such is more informal than the other two. Nonetheless the square plan is symmetrically arranged around a central fireplace

inglenook. Bedrooms are positioned behind the fireplace, an open lounge in front of it, with kitchen to one side, and bathroom to the other, completing the symmetrical proportions.

This domestic model should be seen as derived, at least in part, in Toomath and Wilson's earlier McKay House. Here the rectangular plan once more shows a bi-symmetrical geometry. In this case the larger scale of the project allows for a dominant living space, around which the circulation of the house moves freely as one is taken from kitchen to dining room to bedroom to study. Indeed, the extent to which symmetry is insisted upon the plan, is shown by the parallel front doors that flank the on-axis wet area to the front.

Of the three, Alington House, completed two years after the McKay house, is the purest example of symmetrical planning, due in no small part to Alington's assertion that the proportional ordering resulted from the application of the golden ratio [figure 1]. To begin descriptively, the footprint of the house is a wide square (perhaps truncated rectangle) which in turn is segregated into three components. The centre component contains the public spaces of the home with a formal living volume to the southern entrance and a dining/second living area to the northern courtyard. These areas are separated by a two metre brick partition that incorporates a fireplace to the formal aspect, and a galley kitchen to the informal aspect. On either side are the private spaces featuring a bedroom in each corner of the house, separated by functional requirements (bathroom to the east, utility to the west). Movement between the domestic components is via two compressed but efficient distribution passages.

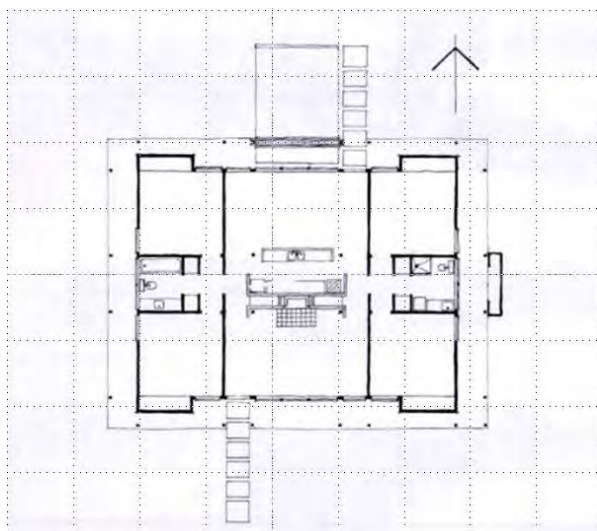


Figure 1. Alington House Plan. (Bonny and Reynolds, 1980).

Dudding has identified expressed structural form as a defining characteristic of Alington's work throughout his career. This commitment begins with Alington House – the architect's first realised independent project – and can be found in the alignment of the exposed post and beam structural system with the proportional modulations of the plan. However this only goes so far in explaining the symmetry as similar modular structural arrangements can be found in the work of other Wellington architects at this time which display a common commitment to expressed post & beam construction rationalism but without the need for symmetrical arrangements.²¹

It has been suggested by Dudding that these houses have a conceptual association to Mies van der Rohe's German pavilion for the 1929 International Exhibition, the now canonic Barcelona Pavilion.²² The significance of this holds a particular resonance for the narrative of the Alington House as during his time as a post-graduate student at Illinois Institute of Technology Alington had met van der Rohe, conducting a short interview with him if not ever receiving direct educational instruction.²³ Such an

interpersonal connection lends to Alington House a modernist pedigree that sets it somewhat apart from its peers. That said, Alington House also displays a conviction a broad modernist typology while still owing much to the 'shack modern' movement of the USA, and particularly the Case-Study Houses of California.²⁴

But the plan threatens this privileging. The ruthless symmetry of Alington House bears little resemblance to the asymmetry dissolution of space in the Barcelona Pavilion. Where the latter blurs thresholds and opens itself to its environment the former retreats into closed cells, made more remote by the bush setting. It is not in dispute that Alington drew influence from Mies van der Rohe, nor that he was fully versed in current international movements and trends in mid-century architecture. But something more is needed to account for the glaring differences between the plan of Alington House and its modernist associations.

Meteorologically Determined Architecture

Of the plans Alington has stated that they took a long time to finish: "It demands a great deal of discipline on one's part and on the part of one's wife, who has to tolerate these crazy things".²⁵ It would be unfair to deny these plans an uncompromising commitment to regular geometry that is almost unique in New Zealand outside a neo-classic canon.²⁶ And yet it also contradicts certain tenets of modernistic practice. For example, the highly formal figuration of the plan would seem to challenge any view that the house is environmental responsive. Certainly the informal living area is roughly aligned to the north but the combination of heavily foliated site, deep eave and fixed pane fenestration all deny an open relationship to the outdoors that Garrett seeks. However the oddity here is that this removal has been heralded as a feature of the design. In one of the more recent examples of Alington Houses' growing acclaim Jeremy Hansen, then editor of the magazine *HOME New Zealand*, featured it a monograph on the modern home in New Zealand. He writes:

The double-glazed windows mean the interior has an almost unearthly hush, and the dim lighting – the result of shade from the trees and the homes wide eaves – enhances the slightly surreal feeling.²⁷

The refusal of Alington House to accept natural daylight as a requirement of a certain New Zealand-ness in building identifies it as a willfully aberrant model in a culture that privileges natural light.²⁸

To deny natural light a place in the home could then be taken as a rejection of domestic convention in New Zealand. With this in mind the symmetrical plan, with its cavalier attitude toward orientating spaces to light, might be interpreted as a stand against a New Zealand style.

Alington House and the Golden Ratio

The authorised account for the plan - popularised by the architect - is that the proportional system of the plan is derived from the golden ratio. This does not in itself explain the symmetry but it does serve to complicate simple claims that Alington House is the product of pure modernist rationality only concerned with construction logic or spatial efficiency. In an analysis conducted by Dudding proportional consistencies are identified but these do not support a sufficient claim for the use of the golden section.²⁹ In another example Alington has said that the rectangular paved court to the north is derived from the same proportional system as the homes floor plans.³⁰ This is correct but this proportion it is not a ratio consistent with the golden section. My analysis suggests a compelling consistency between the dimensions of the public aspect of the house – the central living and kitchen areas – and the golden section ratio of 1.6180 [figure 2].

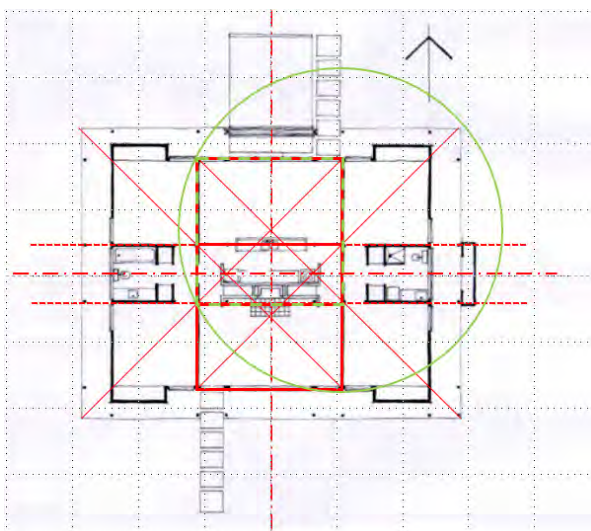


Figure 2. In the first instance the footprint of Alington House can be understood as the product of two overlapping squares. Crossing the diagonals of each square produces a number of secondary intersections which, in turn, identify primary grid datum's such as the extent of the hearth, width of the patio paving, width of the wet areas, and width of the external shed. The ration of the over lapping squares is 1.6180.

Developing this reveals the plan of Alington House as the outcome of interlocking squares used to form golden rectangle derivations which in turn provide secondary geometries that locate room divisions, post locations, and other architectural elements such as the exterior shed. The effect of this, in conceptual if not physical ways, is to extend the organisational concept of the house beyond the building envelope and into the surrounding bush [Figure 3].

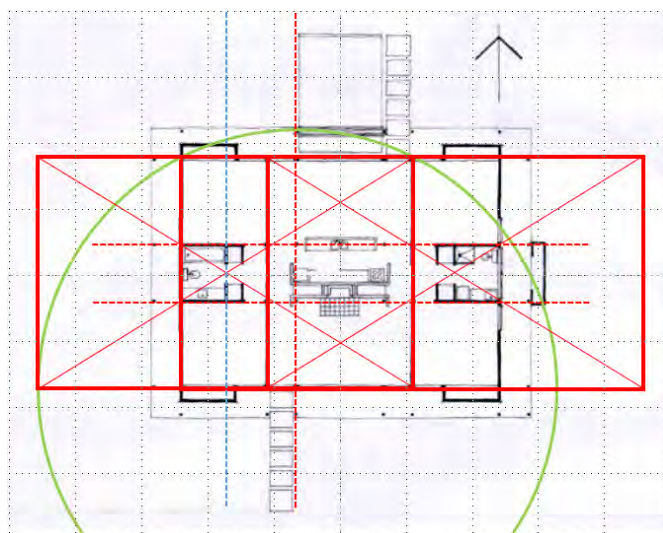


Figure 3. The golden rectangle of the living public areas is used to identify to greater golden ratios, one to the east and another to the west of the plan. If a golden ration circumference is constructed off the original western square the arc can be seen to locate the depth of the external shed, and the extent of the eave.

With this reading it could be suggested that, despite its apparent removal from its context environmentally, Alington House engages geometrically with an idealised bush setting in a manner

analogous to the *Bach in the King Country* photograph that so fascinated Garrett and a subsequent generation of architects. And that would probably have been the right place to conclude were it not for the theme of 'quotation' that insists I look closer at the nature of architectural influence. I have suggested an aesthetic and formal similarity between specific houses by Beard, Toomath and Wilson, and Alington, and those of Erik Christian Sorensen. While acknowledging once more the difficulty in attributing architectural influence directly, I still wish to go too far and state with some certainty two sources for the Alington House plan.

The first is the Warner (Bridge) House by John M. Johansen and completed in 1957, to immediate acclaim. *Architectural Record* named it one of the best houses of 1958.³¹ The feature of the plan I wish to emphasise here is the linear symmetry of the plan. The Warner (Bridge) House is a significantly more substantial and expressive house than Alington House but it warrants consideration as the arrangement of four bedroom wings off a central living core shares the same uncompromising rigour. This house is generally thought of as a highpoint in Johansen's experimentation with neo-classical modernism and the geometry of the plan shows the influence of Palladian proportioning, which was an interest the architect had written about for the *Architectural Record* in 1955.³² Moreover, given Johansen's prominence, it seems plausible that Alington would have at least been aware of his work while he was a student at the Illinois Institute of Technology. The obvious discrepancy between the two houses is the Rippowan River that passes centrally beneath the living room of Johansen's creation (although it might be said that the way in which the Alington House retreats into its bush setting shows a similar embracing of an ecological context).

Black Lee House II (1956)

However I wish to shift greater attention to another New Canaan house. It is possible, if not probable, that when designing the Warner (Bridge) House Johansen was influenced in turn by the home John Lee Black, which he built for his family in 1956. It too received widespread recognition, including a feature in *Better Homes and Gardens* where it was praised for its simplicity and organization: ". . . no halls, no stairways, no extra ups, downs, or sideways about it".³³ The way Lee Black achieved such efficient economy was by utilising a symmetrical plan that featured a divided central living bracket between two wings, each of which is composed of corner bedrooms separated by wet spaces. A similar clarity is found in the construction which features post and beam structural framing, flat roof and pronounced eave [Figure 4].

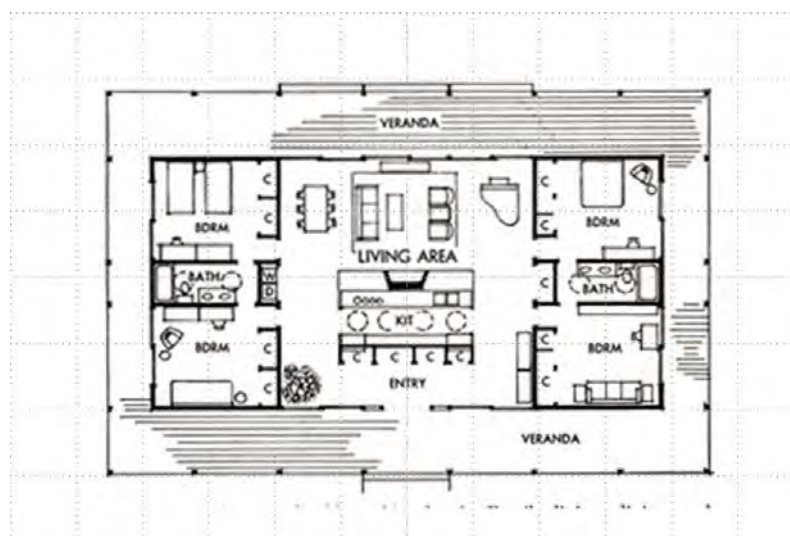


Figure 4 John Black Lee House II Plan (Kuehnl, 1958)

The resemblances between the Black Lee House and Alington House, particularly in plan, are startling. For example, the Black Lee House offers a centralised entry point that is moderated by a low

storage wall out of which the symbolic aspect of the chimney rises. In the smaller Alington House an asymmetrical approach is established that avoids compromising the formal living area yet still features the chimney rising to the ceiling. The bedrooms in the Black Lee House have internal wardrobes where the Alington House uses cantilevered external wardrobes, but it needs to be known that the wardrobes of the latter were an addition, and thus the 'pop-out' quality the wardrobes in Alington House give to the perimeter of the plan was not an original intention (similarly the formal bathroom was extended at a later date beyond the first envelope line). The two houses do use different approaches to establishing the threshold between the public and private realms, with the Black Lee House using a short passage for each bedroom and Alington House finding a shared arrangement for each wing. Yet the practical spatial solution achieves the same result in both cases by providing a compressed but distinct spatial boundary. Obscure skylights are used above the wet areas and the galley kitchens are, for the greater part, identical. Indeed, these two houses are so comparable is it more practical to identify the differences than the commonalities, and many of these can be attributed to differences in scale and budget (such as the clerestory lighting in the Lee Black House).

If this were a literary issue it could probably be argued that there are sufficient similarities between these two 'texts' to prove derivation of the latter. Whether that relationship was one of theft would in turn depend on the presence, or not, of an authorial citation in order to distinguish between plagiarism and unsophisticated paraphrasing. At this point I am close to suggesting that Alington very literally stole the plan for his family home in New Zealand from an example in New Canaan. In procedural terms, he can be said to have had the means, motive and opportunity. But the question is not one of why one architect would copy another's work so literally. The real question concerns why an architect would pretend otherwise? To partly explain this I want to explore the geometry of the Black Lee House on the understanding that the architect in this case never, to my knowledge at least, made any claim for the presence of the golden ratio in the plan.

Proportions of the Black Lee House

Superficially the main features in the plan of the Black Lee House can be seen to approximate a proportional grid determined by the golden ratio. In this reading the drip-line of the eave provides a golden section into which broad divisions between the public and private realms. The most compelling alignment is the determination of the bedroom entries and the bracketing of the kitchen.

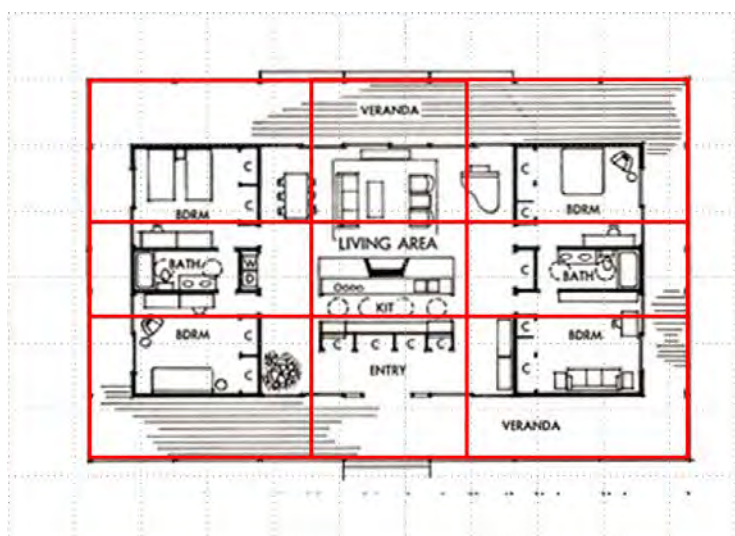


Figure 5. Approximation of a golden ration grid over the plan of the Black Lee II House.

Unfortunately this interpretation cannot be maintained for two important reasons. Firstly the alignment of a golden ratio derived grid, and the plan of the house, is only an approximation. When executed

accurately the margin of error across the plan is simply too large to sustain the geometric specificity required to produce proportional accuracy. The second problem relates to the eave alignment. Or, more pointedly, why a drip-line alignment and not one to the main living area? The fallacy in taking the drip-line as the geometric origin is immediate apparent when examining the plan, and in this case the most obvious solution would seem to be the best one. Proportionally the plan is composed of two squares whose adjoining edges compose the centreline through the living public spaces – living and entry. The significance of this as the primary geometric organisation is apparent as the halving of each square individually identifies the divisions between public and private domains.

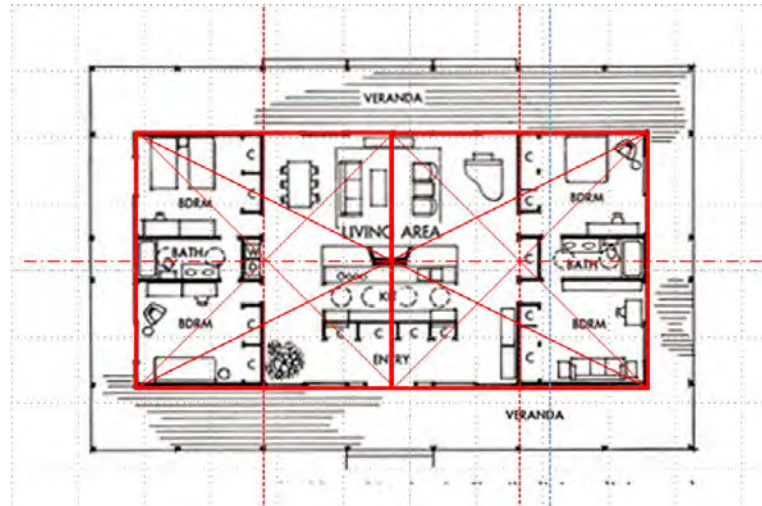


Figure 6. Primary proportions of the Black Lee II house comprising a paired square.

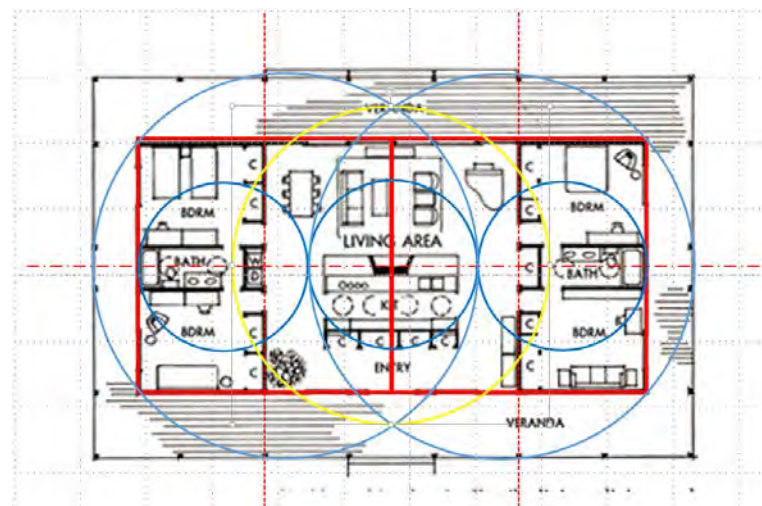


Figure 7. The yellow circle is calculated from the intersection of the two veranda arcs and locates centre-lines for both the veranda and the bedroom wing circulations.

The underlying geometry then is a simple 1:4 ratio rectangle from which further diagonally dissections produce convenient alignments to interior elements such as the entry divider, closet extension and bedroom desk divisions. Developing this proportional division further, circles can be constructed off the outer edges of the primary planimetric squares to locate the veranda eave. A subsequent trisection of the plan using secondary circles can be found to align to the primary circles. One final

circle taken directly from the intersection of the primary circles can then be seen to locate the centrelines of both the bedroom wing passageways and the veranda [figure 7].

So, despite the convenient approximation of the proportions of the Black Lee II plan to a golden ratio grid, the proportional organisation of the house would appear to owe far more to a similar Palladian geometry to the one that Johansen advocated for. This suggests that the golden ration was not an important proportional device for Black Lee at this moment.

Conclusion: History vs Truth?

Alington House and the Black Lee House are, as plans, near identical houses. However underneath the floorplan in each are two different methodological approaches to utilising proportional geometry. Of the two projects the Black Lee House is the more sophisticated design, but it is the modest Alington House that offers the more sophisticated geometric methodology. This, inescapably, leads to an anxiety concerning quotation: with a full understanding of their methodological origins should we see these two houses more or less alike? The academic distinction between quotation and plagiarism is citation. Without correct reference to sources we understand that scholarly writing tumbles from authority to treachery. With the Alington House we must wonder that it has been so casually lauded for its modernist sensibility simply because the architect remained resolutely silent on any other possible sources? But applying a principle of literary plagiarism to buildings destructively demands that an architects be, first and foremost, artists able to defend their creative license uniquely. This, as it happens, underlines the view taken by James Garrett, that the architect is an artist driven to realise truth through building.³⁴ In this Alington House would appear to be a victim of its own referential success. Despite its exotic modernist derivation, the bush setting and constructional language have easily aligned it with an architectural discourse that has emphasised internationally informed regionalism as its privileged model. In this way we cannot really criticise the architect for remaining quiet on the issue of influence, or even that of methodology. In a country that sees a house in the bush as appearing *ex nihilo* – out of nothing – to do otherwise would have been to confront New Zealand's architectural history as one of innocent innovation rather than knowledgeable quotation.

Endnotes

- ¹ Chris Brookewhite. 'Cartoon', *New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal*, 5, (1977), 62-63.
- ² Pers. Com. 1999.
- ³ John Blair 'Two Houses, Wakatipu: John Blair Architect' *New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal*, 4, (1977), 4-9.
- ⁴ Blair, *Two Houses*, 6.
- ⁵ Blair, *Two Houses*, 6.
- ⁶ David Mitchell and Gillian Chaplin *The Elegant Shed: New Zealand Architecture since 1945*. (Auckland, Oxford University Press, 1984), 85-86.
- ⁷ Francis Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand: Art & Identity, 1930-1970*. (Auckland, Auckland University Press, 2009), 73.
- ⁸ Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand*, 73.
- ⁹ <http://www.nevilleprice.com/west-plaza-enduring-award-2005/> accessed 28/02/2017
- ¹⁰ Peter Shaw *A History of New Zealand Architecture*, (Auckland, Hodder Moa Beckett, 2003), 176.
- ¹¹ Mitchell and Chaplan *The Elegant Shed*, 40.
- ¹² Mitchell and Chaplan *The Elegant Shed*, 40.
- ¹³ Bill McKay *Urbis Magazine*, 46, (2008) 35
- ¹⁴ Stephanie Bonny and Marilyn Reynolds (1980). *Living with 50 Architects: A New Zealand Perspective*, (Northcote, Auckland, Cassell Limited., 1980), 24
- ¹⁵ James Garrett, 'Influences on House Design', *Home & Building*, September, (1958), 15.
- ¹⁶ James Garrett, (1954). *Home Building 1814-1954: Catalogue of the Exhibition Group*, (Auckland, School of Architecture, Auckland University College, 1954). 5.
- ¹⁷ Garrett *Home Building*, 12.
- ¹⁸ Garrett *Home Building*, 8.
- ¹⁹ *Bach in King Country*. 'Simplicity, honesty, realism.' Item 45 in the exhibition catalogue. The pictorial provenance of this photograph was correct by Clark and Walker as being by 'The Whare in the Bush' by A. P. Godber. See their discussion in Justine Clark Paul Walker *Looking for the Local: Architecture and the New Zealand Modern*, (Wellington, Victoria University Press, 2000), 31.
- ²⁰ In the example of Alington, Beard is described as an important mentor. Moreover the plot for Alington House was bought off the Beard family who subdivided a substantial property. Alington House and the Beard House are close neighbours although not by sign-line. See Stephen Stratford, Ed. *4 Architects: Alington, Beard, Toomath and Wilson, 1950-108*, (Auckland, New Zealand Architectural Publications Trust, 2010).
- ²¹ I am thinking in particular of the near-by Beard House that immediately predates the Alington House. Architect Jim Beard and Bill Alington were then, and still are, close friends with the site for the Alington house having been bought off the Beard family. While visual distanced by the topography, road routing and foliage growth the two houses are within a few hundred meters of each other. Shortly after the Alington House was completed Bill Toomath and Derek Wilson would undertake the MacKay House in Silverstream, Upper Hutt, which bears striking similarity to the Alington House both in terms of the displayed proportional post and beam logic of the design, but also the rigorous symmetry of the plan.
- ²² Michael Dudding *A Useful Exercise: The context, content and practical application of W H Alington's 'thesis on the Theory of Architectural Design'*. M.Arch Thesis (Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, 2006), 65.
- ²³ Michael Dudding *A Useful Exercise*, 111.
- ²⁴ Douglas Lloyd Jenkins *At Home: A century of New Zealand Design* (Auckland, Penguin Books, 2004).
- ²⁵ Jeremy Hansen 'Alington House, Karori, Wellington, 1959-1962' in Jeremy Hansen (Ed.) *HOME: New Zealand Homes from 1938 to 1977*, (Auckland: Godwit Press, 2013), 209.
- ²⁶ The one contemporary example of an equally rigorous formal planning exercise is the Jenner House (Remuera, 1985) by architectural academic Ross Jenner for his own family. Otherwise the best comparable New Zealand building might well be the neo-classical Sargeant gallery of Wanganui (1919).
- ²⁷ Hansen *Alington House*, 209.
- ²⁸ Pound, referring specifically to painting but inclusive of all the creative arts, has called this bias 'meteorological determinism': the view that New Zealand light causes, or should cause, a New Zealand style. Francis Pound, 'HARSH CLARITIES: Meteorological and geographical determinism in New Zealand art Commentary refuted', *Parallax*, 1, 3, (1983), 263-269.
- ²⁹ Dudding, *A Useful Exercise*, 65.

³⁰ Hansen *Alington House*, 209.

³¹ 'House, Conn.' *Architectural Record*, October, (1958): 170-175.

³² Johansen, John MacL., 'Space – Time Palladian' *Architectural Record* (1955), 150-151.

³³ Neil R. Kuehl "Now, Space Unlimited in a New House!" *Better Homes and Gardens*, October, (1958), 62-63.

³⁴ James Garrett 'Influences on House Design' *Home & Building*, September, (1958), 10-43.