

the everyday collective laboratory.



Varieties of us.

A case study in boundaries.

Kennedy Park, Castor Bay, Auckland.

Introduction.

Landscape boundaries have played a potent, persistent and defining role in Aotearoa/New Zealand society since the early days of colonization, and continue to do so.

Ideas of landscape perform a role in the colonizing process in a pragmatic way, converting the landscape to reflect those ideas, to suit the colonizing powers and establish ownership (Byrnes, 2000). Early colonists arrived in NZ in the mid nineteenth century with certain culturally defined expectations of the landscape, a landscape presumed to be empty, without the marks of civilized society, in need even of 'salvation from a state of wilderness' as Byrnes describes it. To be able to set about the necessary "improvements" to this landscape, the first requirement was surveying. Note the film *Illustrious Energy*, dir. Leon Narby (1988), the narrative of the film played out against a distant background activity of surveying, ubiquitous and at the same time apparently innocuous. In nineteenth century NZ, an apparent lack of a landscape organized for both cultural and economic purposes was replaced with a landscape of rigid and prescribed demarcations.

In parallel with the enormous, pressing and thorough task of surveying, was an industrious group of landscape painters. Their paintings tended to reveal a gentle sylvan idyll, often empty of people or evidence of settlement, but full of potential (for European rural productive enterprises). A number of paintings (e.g. *The town and part of the harbour of Nelson in 1842*, about a year after its first foundation, John Saxton, 1845: Illustration at left) even proudly foreground the surveyor, his activities and the surveyed landscape.

Out of an unbounded and undifferentiated landscape was forged a colonized landscape of divisions, containment and difference. It was also a landscape that excluded the indigenous people.

From a Maori perspective the land was occupied and the landscape was neither undifferentiated nor unbounded, though these were all expressed in ways different from and 'unreadable' to the surveying colonists. Ahi ka, keeping the home fires burning, or in other words maintaining settlement presence, was the primary claim to a site, supported by a complex system of guardianship or husbandry, kai-tiaki. Maori as a people, their social and political organisations of tribes and sub-tribes, iwi and hapu, and these forms of occupation played little or no part in the new colonizing surveys, except where they obstructed its path.

The practice of surveying and establishing rigid legal demarcations everywhere reconstructed the landscape in accordance with European expectations of personal, social and productive space. This delineated landscape set aside public and private space, reflecting the colonizing organization of personal and social space.

The signs, symbols and cues of territorial claim.



The town and part of the harbour of Nelson in 1842, about a year after its first foundation, John Saxton, 1845

Pakeha.



Boundary, surveyed and marked by map making ensuring ownership without necessarily maintaining settlement presence, the primary claim to a site, supported by a complex system of **Legal ownership**.

Maori.



Ahi ka, keeping the home fires burning, or in other words maintaining settlement presence, the primary claim to a site, supported by a complex system of guardianship or husbandry; **kaitiaki**.

A technique to reveal.

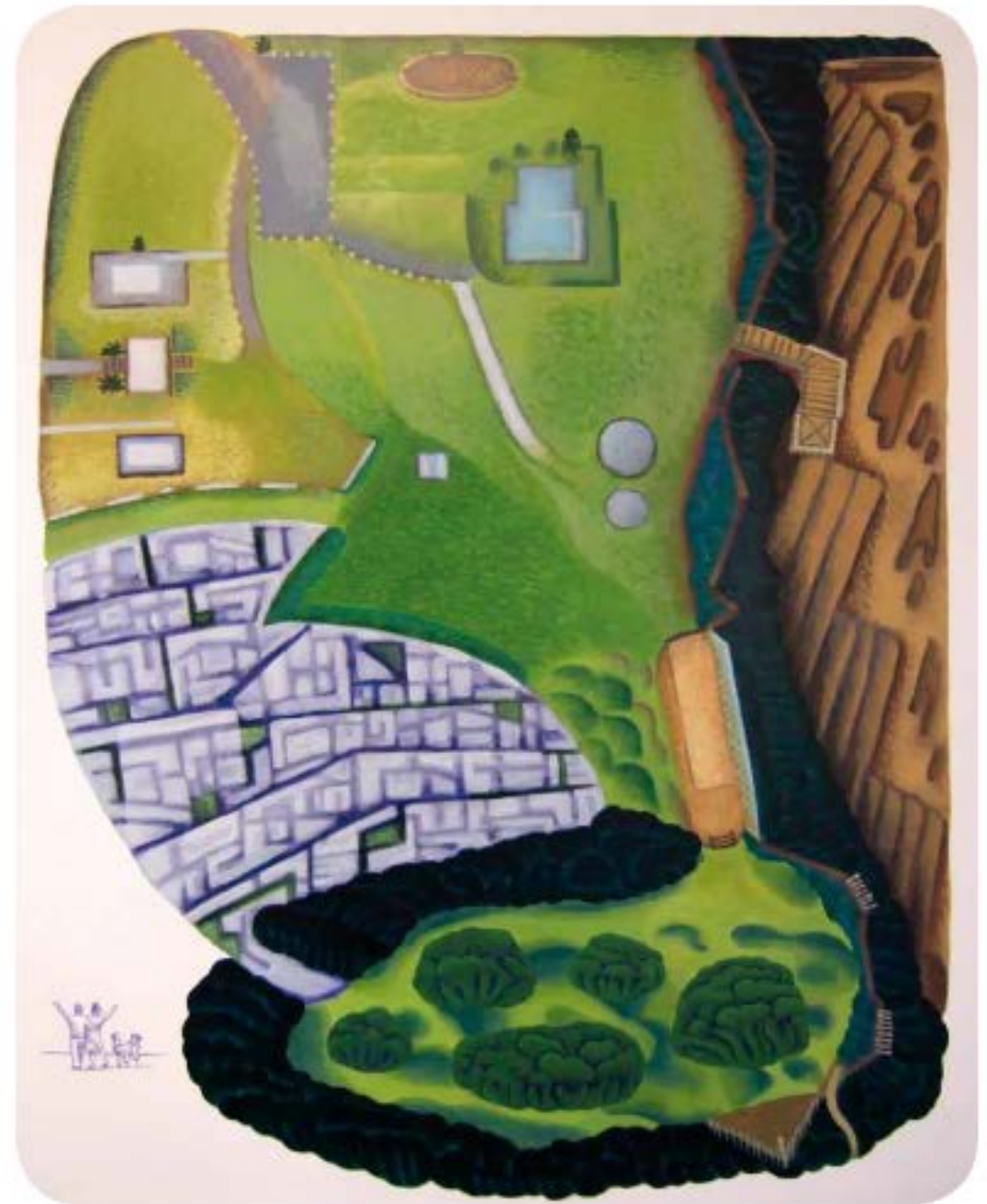
The resultant spaces of NZ's colonizing project may have only the appearance of unity or even homogeneity; that in reality they constitute a multiplicity of fragmented spaces (Byrnes, 2000). Allen has suggested that while a landscape might have a level of commonality, what he calls "field condition", it is nevertheless constituted of a variety of elements:

"Field configurations are loosely bounded aggregates characterized by porosity and local interconnectivity. The internal regulations of the parts are decisive; overall shape and extent are highly fluid. Field conditions are bottom-up phenomena." (Allen, 1997).

A technique, involving painting, drawing and social memory, explores particular landscapes through artistic representation. Such a technique can engage from bottom up by being in the landscape, and be open to interpretations of both variety and specificity, through artistic expression. As Leavy (2009) has observed "Visual art challenges viewers in an immediate and visceral way while remaining open to a multiplicity of meanings" (p. 227).

In his book *How to look at painting* Justin Paton (2005) named one chapter "How to be looked at by a painting". Like art, landscape is an active participant in our experience of it. Hunt (2004) has described a garden as haptic, even palpable. We could extend this to include other landscapes as well, given that our experience of them is similarly haptic and both close at hand and interior (within and of the landscape). Ross (1998) has asserted that an invitation lies within this physicality, an invite that we respond to, not only through our bodies and senses, but also by exercising our imagination. So the appreciation of landscapes is integral with experience of it, even within it, not able to be had from afar. Kemp (1998, as cited in Holly, 2002) also described the appreciation of works of art dependent on the information inherently possessed by that object. So too, landscapes hold information, the kind that we can stub our toe on, envelopes us in intimate spaces, or that triggers memory or even imagination.

Right: Rahopara Pa to Kennedy Park.



Kennedy Park/NZ Walkway/Rahopara Pa

The chosen site is on Auckland's North Shore. It is composed of a narrow strip of cliff-top land overlooking the Hauraki Gulf with a memorial park, J.F. Kennedy Park, historic WW2 defensive artefacts, a pa (historical fortified Maori position) site, Rahopara Pa, and a section of the NZ Walkway (Te Araroa). It is also edged in a variety of ways by both historic public housing and private residences.

The whole site, as described above, is shown in the illustration below. The image describes the journey backwards and forwards across the site and memories of the site from another era. These are captured as slices across the site to demonstrate relationships, and as moments depicting fragments of artefacts, which invest character in the landscape. Historical activities, especially seafood gathering by Maori along the foreshore, are also depicted, emerging as an enriching layer from the artist's memory.

The remaining research concentrates on four examples found at the site where park boundary meets residential housing, and examines how these work in terms of public/private experience and social history. Different parts of the site have produced distinct names to emphasise the particularity of differing boundary treatments and/or occupancy cues above and beyond the simplistic category of public or private. The different characteristics identified in the four examples have been named: inconsistent, explicit, implied, and assimilated. These illustrated categorizations of edge and boundary condition are the result of observation and experience within and particular to the site.

Below: Four perspectives of Kennedy Park and Rahopara Pa.



Architecture and Landscape on the Castor Bay coastline.



Kennedy Park and Rahopara Pa are located in Castor Bay, North Shore City.

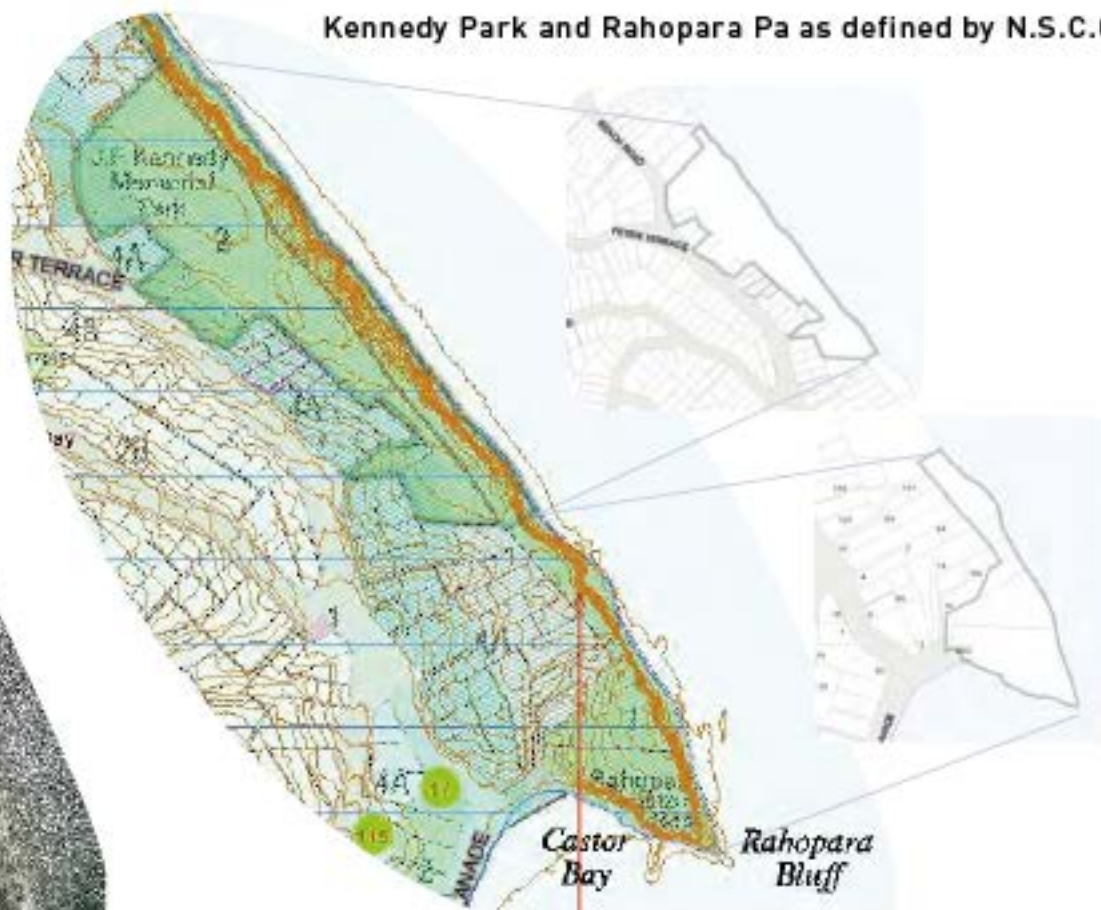
It is a landscape that contains a variety of Historic Architectural and Landscape Sites including a variety of boundaries that exist between the public and private.



Kennedy Park and Rahopara Pa, North Shore City.



Kennedy Park and Rahopara Pa as defined by N.S.C.C GIS.



Kennedy Park and Rahopara Pa are listed as separate entities,
but are connected by a section of the New Zealand Walkway.

Kennedy Park and Rahopara Pa as entities.

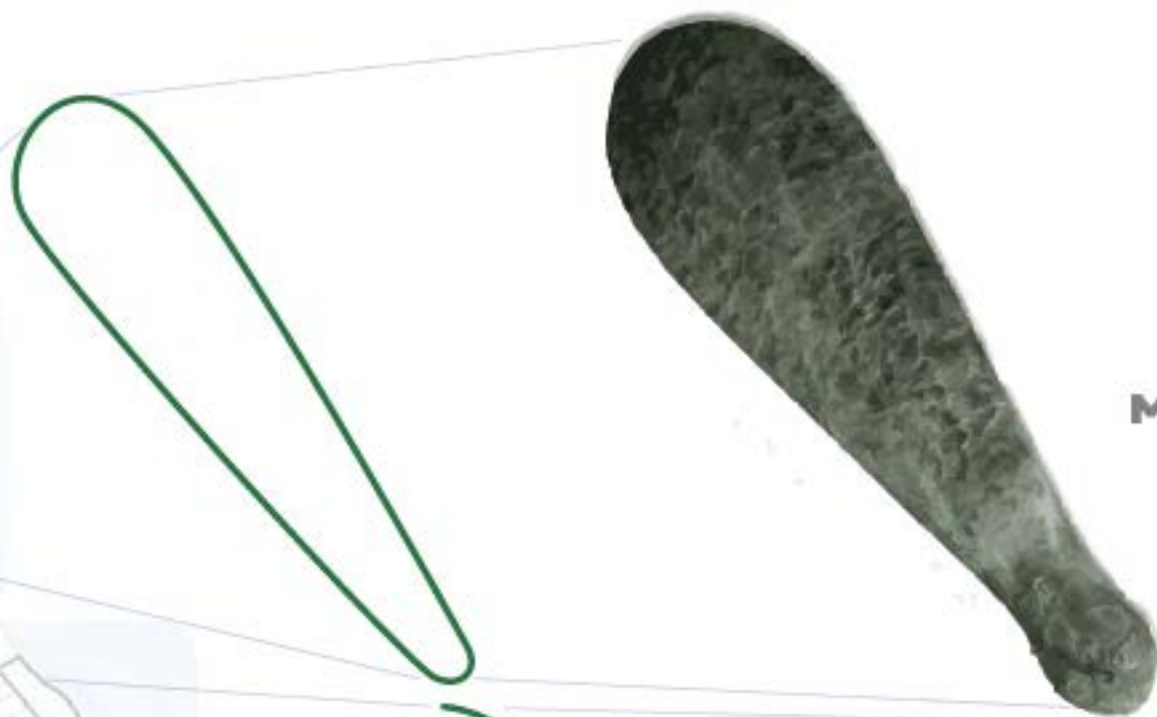
Kennedy Park

WW2 Military Buildings and
Gun Emplacements.



Rahopara Pa

Site of historic
Maori occupation.



Mere



Koru

The NZ Walkway connecting Kennedy Park and Rahopara Pa.

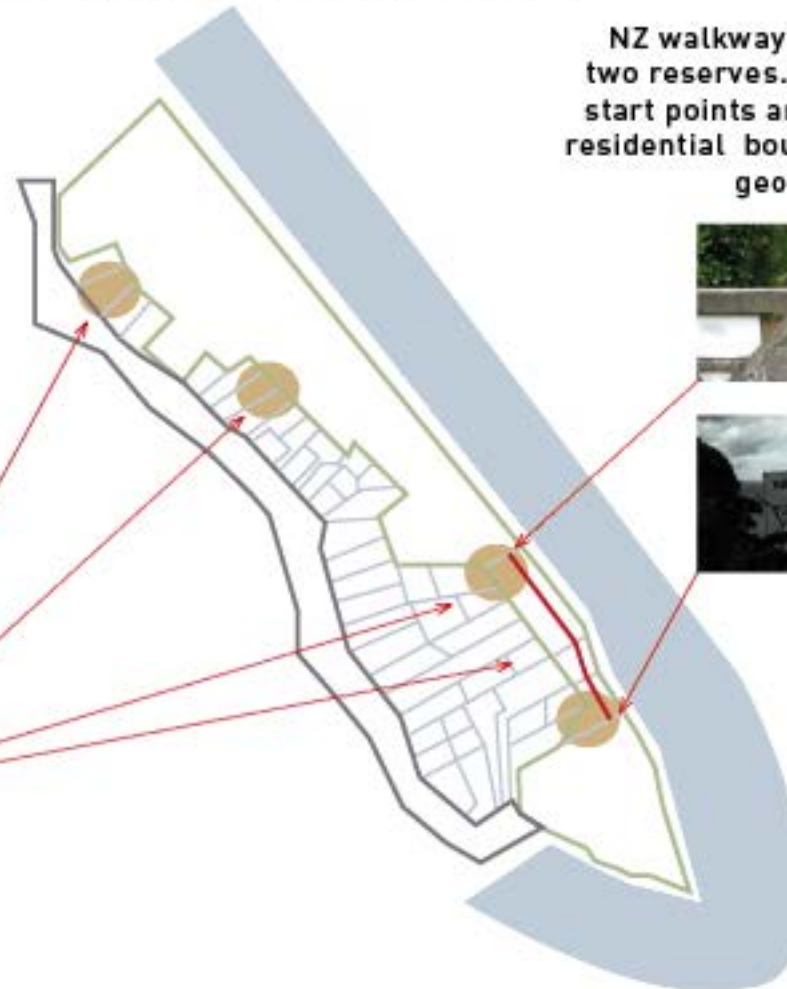
Kennedy Park boundary.



Rahopara Pa boundary.



Boundaries combined as experienced on site.



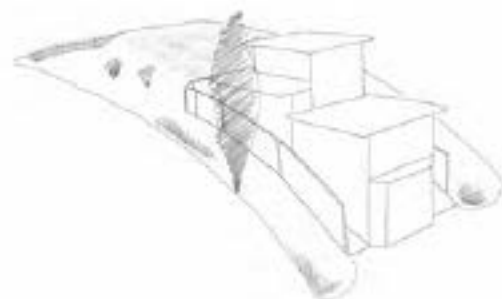
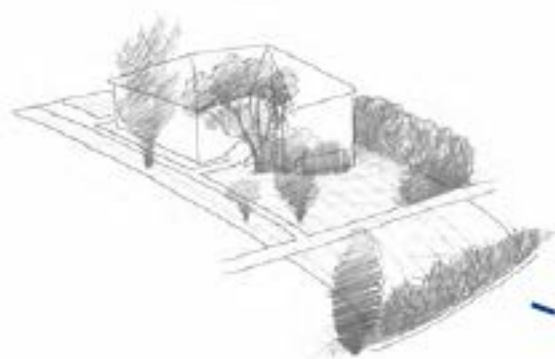
NZ walkway between the two reserves. The two end start points are defined by residential boundaries, not geological ones.



Areas of interest that display edge conditions representative of historic and contemporary residential constructions bordering the site.

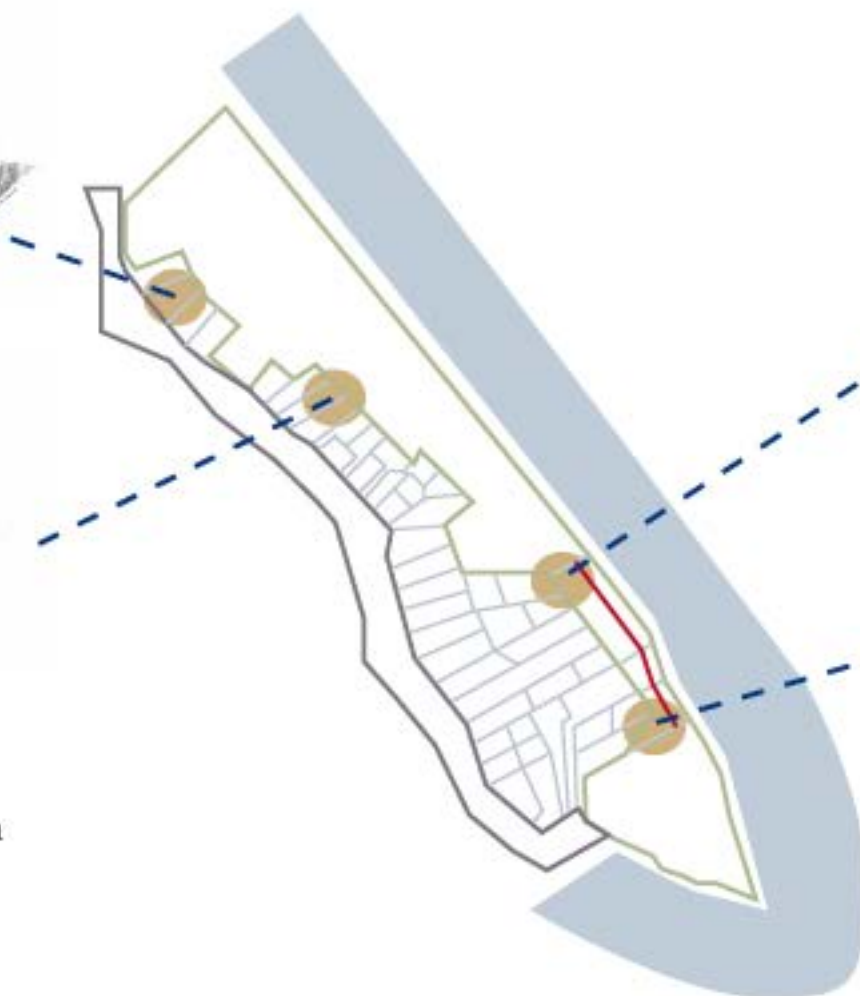
Kennedy Park contains on its boundaries, two diametrically opposite examples of how the public/private boundary can operate. Rahopara Pa is more clearly defined in its boundaries but contains enigmatic symbols of ownership. These two sites are linked by a walking track where public and private boundaries, gardening activities and civic landscaping intersect and in some places cross over and become matters of perception and culture. Four sites where these issues of boundary and border occur in differing ways are shown in the graphic above, and explored in detail in the following pages.

Houses identified with typical boundaries to the site.



Top: The State House circa 1939. Totally original in construction, and the gardens have been left as they originally existed when tenanted, complete with shell midden and original fencing.

Bottom: A contemporary house circa 2009. This house sits between undeveloped sites on the Park boundary and on either side.



Top: Mid century house that sits on the walkway boundary.

Bottom: Contemporary house circa 1980's. This house sits within the main defense ditch of the pa site, and borders the walkway.

Varieties of us.

Inconsistent. The old State House.

The artwork reveals several key elements that suggest occupation as well as conditions that suggest the site might be unoccupied and that ownership is in question. The latter proved on closer inspection to be stronger: the elements that suggest occupation are either archaic, degraded or at complete odds with the surrounding occupied housing; the site has few implied and no explicit landscape features that reinforce a sense of occupation, such that the visitor might feel as though trespassing or unwelcome. This site was found to have a permeable edge, so that it is almost assimilated into the surrounding park landscape. This is due to planting type and minimal maintenance evident in the garden. Inconsistencies encountered such as the washing line and letterbox prevented a complete assimilation however. Visual cues on approach tend to discourage entry, and these cues may have been successful in preventing any unwanted occupation or vandalism. The ambiguous sense of public openness and private occupation seems to reflect mid 20th century State tenantry. The State residential style minimised boundary barriers, a style supported by a strong sense of community. The unmodified site still imparts a sense of this era, with its archaic architecture and landscape.

Explicit. The new house.

An approach to this site from any one of the three sides that border the park provides a similar boundary condition. The soft and fluid landscape elements that surround the site give way to a concretised boundary, the demarcation explicit. The impenetrable boundary seems fortress-like, safely containing domestic privacy. The design of the boundary appears to reflect a contemporary desire for security and privacy, and a prevailing sense of ambivalence towards neighbours. When contrasted with the old state house, it reflects differences in the use and effects of boundary design between mid 20th century and sixty years on. Due to its isolation from other housing developments, and its close proximity to the old state house and open space, this boundary is visually at odds with the surrounding landscape.

Implied. A house on the New Zealand Walkway.

A sense of presence is employed to great effect in the third site to imply use and occupation. A method of strategic artefact placement, using objects easily associated with personal space, declares occupation, but in a quiet way. Reinforcing the occupation is stated by the use of two chairs rather than a single one. Objects placed at or near what might be assumed to be the property edge link to the domestic chairs on the veranda, connecting the intimate space of house with the outer reaches of the property. In addition, two large pohutukawa trees just outside the legal boundary of the property act as a perceived common natural barrier between public and private. This combination of factors, both contrived and possibly accidental, has enabled the site to appear more expansive than the legal survey. This site has a boundary that is implied through a shared cultural understanding of artefacts that reflect use and occupation. Its symbolism is consistent determining a message of occupation (unlike the State house). The strategy that this site employs to effect edge and boundary is one commonly found at baches, cribs and beach houses throughout coastal New Zealand, built and occupied by communities that engaged in shared social events such as barbeques and beach cricket, the success of social interaction relying on shared private landscapes. This site has the New Zealand Walkway immediately in front of it.

Assimilated. A pa site house.

This site is closely connected to the land in both visual and topographical terms, sitting within what was the main defensive trench for the Rahopara Pa site. Obviously the surveyed lines cut through the former pa site, with no regard to its prior occupants, claimants or use, or to its archaeological value, parts of it having been occupied by Maori sporadically for several hundred years. The house sits in the entrenched fold of the land, which provide natural boundaries on both sides, the building height being below the pa site and Walkway entrance. The scale, colour method of construction, and placement below and within significant landscape features permit it to be well assimilated with its surroundings. The fence height and glass panels enable the visitor to briefly experience the private world of the occupier and in turn be observed. This in itself is effective in discouraging people from doing anything other than passing quickly through the trench going to or from the pa site. In a similar manner to the open trench the site/house acts as a landscape feature monitoring entry and exit to the pa site, and acting in a way that seems neither public nor private, but perhaps a little of each. This type of property edge design is commonly found in sites that were built during the 1960's, 70's and 80's, where a careful mix of separation and integration of private and public space can be observed.

This image also reveals apparent Maori artefacts in the palisading and carvings, signalling Rahopara Pa as a Maori site, but divested of any singular identity. Maori carvings are most often personified: more than a representation, they are the ancestor whose face is carved. These carvings are in the form of a head, but faceless. So the acknowledgement is distinctly token, the ownership claim kept firmly within the public realm, by the local council..

All the residential housing that borders the park and the walkway can be categorized within varying degrees into these types. It was observed that the period of construction played a large part in which boundary and edge category they belonged to, the newer the construction the more explicit and less subtle the demarcation of private and public became. The four examples shown give a brief history in the way residential edge and boundary in this area have been designed over the last seven decades, and to some extent how the sense of community has varied within that time. Experience within the site discovered that explicit boundaries were no more likely to show occupation than the assimilated and implied ones, and those properties completely isolated from the surrounding parkland by explicit boundary had greatly diminished influence on their adjacent landscape in terms of activity and fauna.

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Boundary categories as experienced.

Inconsistent

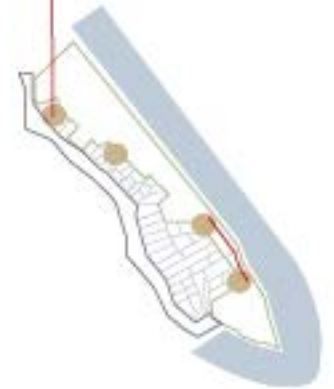
Explicit

Implied

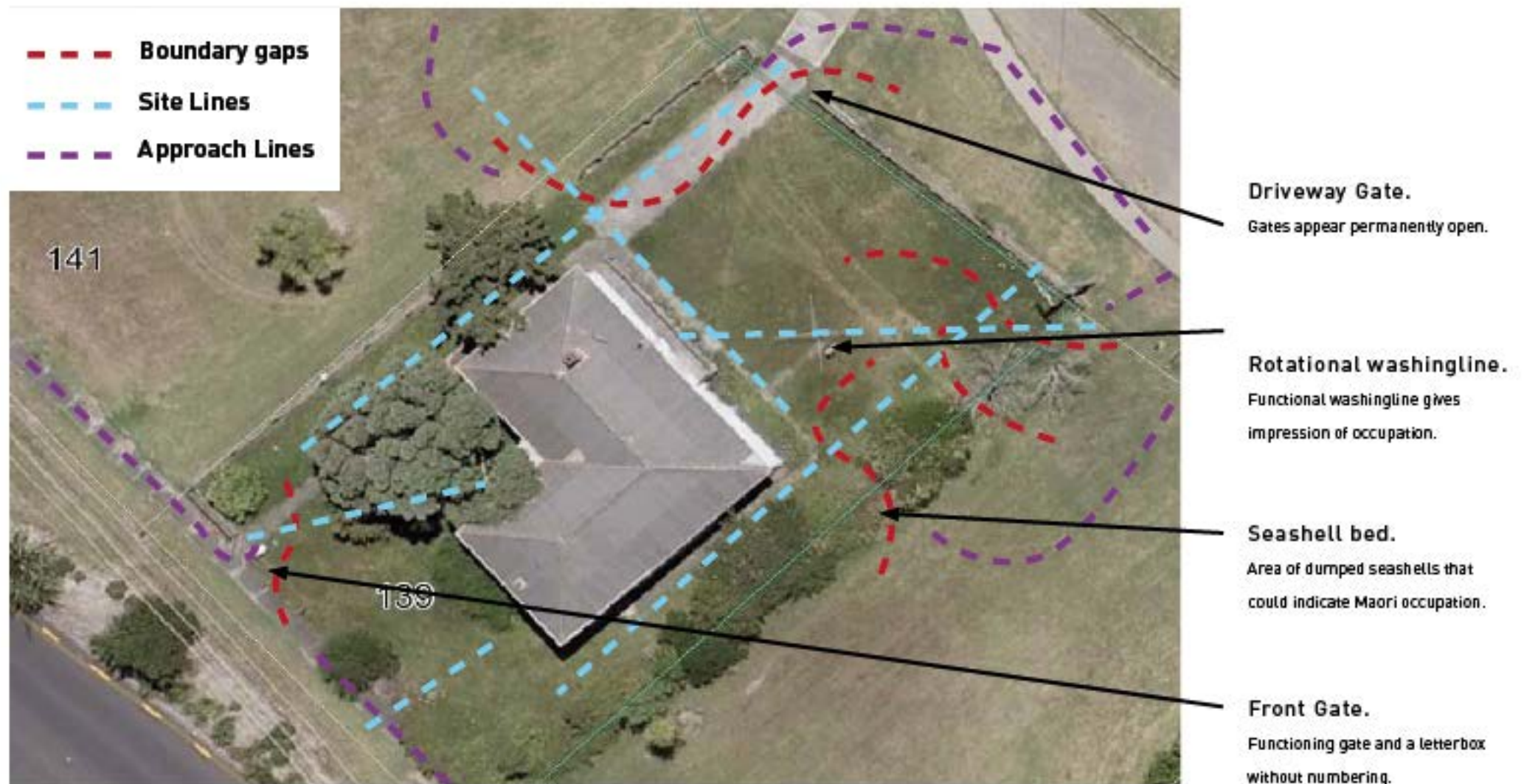
Assimilated



The old state house, Kennedy Park.



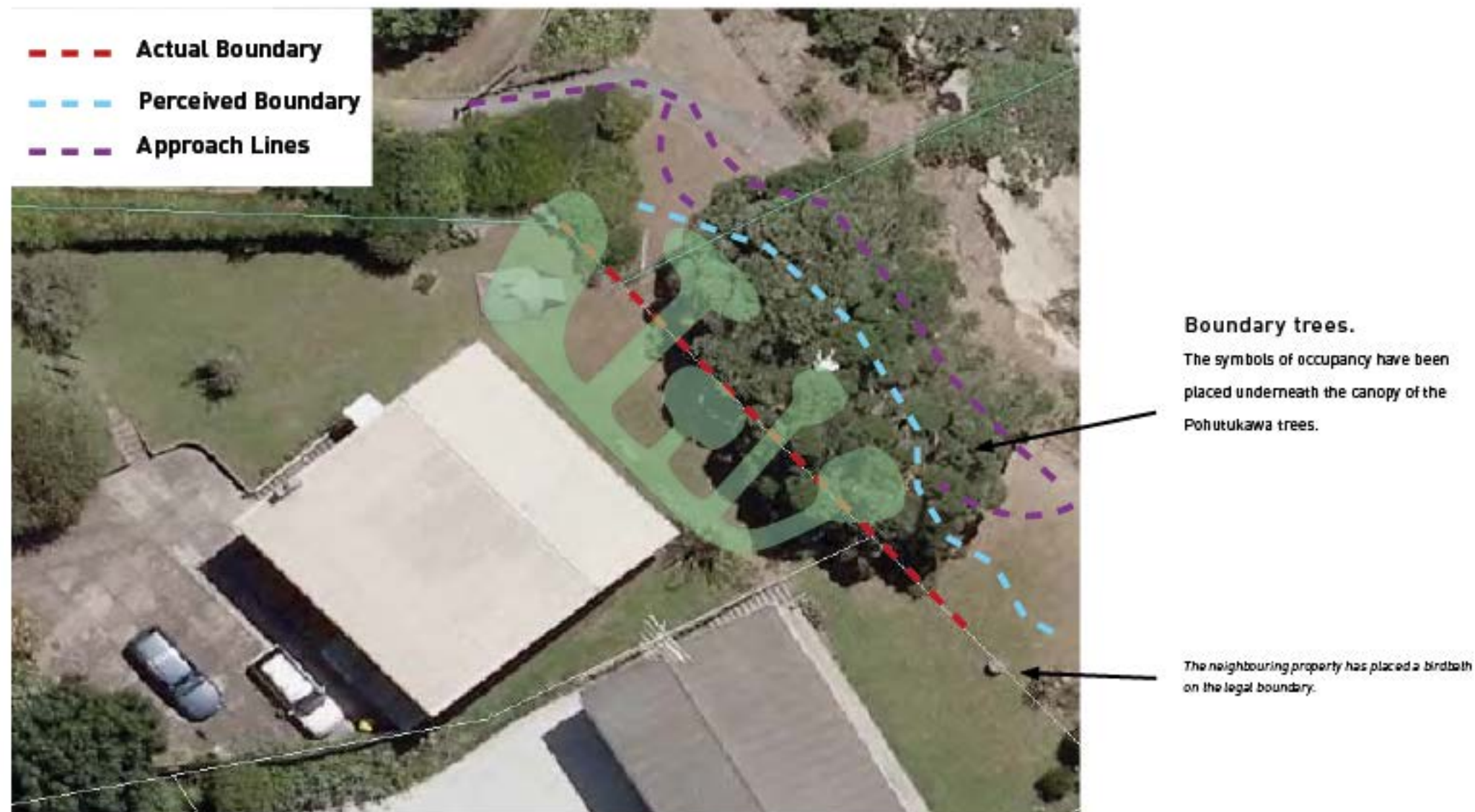
The last state house, Kennedy Park.



A house on the NZ Walkway.



The garden with the symbolic boundary, NZ Walkway.



The house that lays in Rahopara Pa's outer defense ditch.



The house that lays in Rahopara Pa's outer defense ditch.

This house has been built in what was and to some extent still is the outer defense ditch for the adjacent Pa. The garden wall facing the walkway has been built on the legal boundary in a contemporary design, but at either end of this boundary, which also complies with the original ditch edges now has gates that have been installed by the council. These have been constructed to establish the conditions of access to the walkway and Pa site. This essentially re-asserts the original design intent of the ditch to control access to and from the Pa. The house contributes to the ditch remaining a barrier to the Pa by forcing an approach to the site through the walkway without any possible deviation.



Gates onto staircases.

Pa ditch edges and current legal boundaries of the property.
This area is what once was private property that ran to the cliff edge, as this became part of the NZ Walkway access is now controlled by gates and signs.

Current property boundary with garden wall.

16A

Conclusion.

While it has generally been assumed that the surveyed boundary conditions determine edge, there are many variations to the realisation or demonstration of occupation, ownership or possession, including differences between internal and external landscape conditions, cues of external activity or occupation, gestures of gardening, or privacy or of domesticity.

It appears that this study of a landscape through art has the capacity to reach beyond the traditional public/private divide and ideas of edge common to our post-colonial landscape framework, providing a more subtle, ambiguous and potential hybrid of spaces.

These can be described by new names, increasing the ways of seeing and experiencing these landscape conditions.

Perhaps painting has a role after all both in making apparent the boundary or any permutations of it and in challenging the normative expectations of boundaries, possession or occupancy, rather than legitimising these as painting once did in the nineteenth century in NZ.

Produced by Paul Woodruffe and Ian Henderson for the everyday collective laboratory 2010.

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the everyday collective laboratory.

Kennedy Park / Rahopara Pa

A collaboration between the Department of Design and Visual Arts
and the Department of Landscape Architecture.



collectivelab@wordpress.com

pwoodruffe@unitec.ac.nz

ihenderson@unitec.ac.nz