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Taking a drive up Marmion Avenue:

*imagining the city at Alkimos Beach**

Richard Weller's *Boomtown 2050* paints a visually potent picture of Perth's ever expanding suburban 'accretion'. In one section a photo essay highlights what he calls the 'cutting edge'[1]- the chopping block on which a knife of ecological devastation falls one limestone retaining wall at a time. This edge is continually perceived as a line, a tide that has been rising across Australia since European settlement. As prominent suburban historian Graeme Davison wrote "Australia was born urban and quickly grew suburban."[2] Davison's remark implies an 'accretion' that originates and evolves from a central core. Perth however, is a city anomalous to the rest of Australian capitals; unlike the convict settled capitals, the colonial foundations of free enterprise defined its suburban character from day one – this is a city that was born suburban.[3] In this way Perth is an exemplary model that shows how speculative investment drives the dynamics of capitalist spatialisation.[4] The housing subdivision at Alkimos Beach represents the current limit of this 'accretive' speculation, providing an opportunity to reflect upon the historical forces and cultural values that contribute the emergence of these consumption oriented landscapes. Beyond the politics of nature and the notion of the 'cutting edge', this article will attempt to investigate contemporary subdivisions like Alkimos as new form of culturally and regionally specific suburban settlement. It is hoped that by doing so we may begin to reveal some potential points of departure for architects to begin a more productive dialogue with the values intrinsic in the mainstream private housing sector that compose the majority of Perth's metropolis.

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[1] Richard Weller, *Boomtown 2050: Scenarios for a Rapidly Growing City* (Crawley: UWA Publishing, 2009), 201.
[2] Graeme Davison, "The Past and Future of The Australian Suburb," *Australian Planner* 31, no.2 (1993): 63.
[3] Katherine Jane Hislop, "Sketches in the sand: speculative thought and the aesthetic foundations of the Swan River Colony 1826-1839," (PhD thesis, University of Western Australia, 2011), 207.
[4] Karl Marx even mentions the Swan River Colony in *Das Kapital* (chapter 33), albeit to illuminate the ruin of one speculative capitalist; "Unhappy Mr. Peel."[4]

* This article extends and elaborates the investigation initiated by the video art *Cottesloe Beach at Alkimos Beach*. Although not intended as a supplement, it will help illustrate to the reader the imagery and architectural languages of the contemporary suburban subdivision. The video can be viewed at https://vimeo.com/162232034

Understanding how subdivisions like Alkimos, and others on Perth's 'outer' fringes, could be conceptualised outside of the 'business as usual' labelling of suburban accretion, requires consideration across multiple scales. Identifying some historical conditions since Perth's European foundation will establish regional idiosyncrasies, of which help to give us a nuanced understanding when considering the theories that now shape much discourse surrounding the nature of suburbanisation across the globe. In particular I will show that whilst the physical shape of Perth's urban 'sprawl' may not exhibit a 'radical break'[5] from a historical continuum, or from the modernist modes of urbanisation as characterised by the L.A School of urbanism, there does exist a transformation of capital that allows us a lens to view places like Alkimos as a new form of suburb.

Whilst this article is not directed at an audience expert in political economy or planning, I do believe it is of crucial importance to begin to understand how these shifts have shaped the planning and aesthetic culture that has brought about the emergence of such consumption based landscapes. Architecturally, these shifts are discernible in the model display home, which in turn can be said to reflect not only economic viability but also the consumptive and lifestyle values of a large number of people that choose to live in these houses and these suburbs. These two points – design and lifestyle, are the most explicitly criticised by architects who, on a majority, will choose to reject or ignore the values implicit in this form of mass housing.

The reader may question the usefulness of looking at these repetitious and architecturally erroneous houses as anything other than unsustainable, homogenised, dishonest or ordinary. However, as the preceding investigation unfolds I will illuminate how the aesthetic outcomes manifest in the developer catalogue, can become a platform to investigate notions of architectural authenticity within this age of unrestrained capitalism, particularly when we accept them as a dominant and proliferating reality. The faux historicism that reveals itself in these houses, albeit mainly through evocation via names and other non-physical means, has a history of debasement by Australian architects since the 1850s rejection of the ornate historicism of Victorianism, to Robin Boyd's polemic critique of suburban featurism. In Alkimos we see the evolution of this perceived opulence, going beyond the intricacies of a decorated column capital, fenestration moulding or a mass produced plastic flamingo garden ornament that is pushed into the law by a homeowner, towards a completely imagined sense of individualism governed by the false 'choice' of external style treatment – would you like faux stone or concrete render on your blade wall?

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5 Michael Dear, "The Los Angeles School of Urbanism: An Intellectual History," *Urban Geography*, 24, no.6 (2003): 504.

It's about 40 minutes on the freeway from the CBD to Alkimos Beach. A route that reveals more about the morphology of Perth's suburban metropolis however, is north on Marmion Avenue. Beginning just after Perth's original coastal entertainment district - Scarborough, the avenue is fastened by two of Alan Bond's failed business speculations, both envisaged during the binge of massive profit from two Americas Cups a decade apart. In Scarborough, Rendezvous Observation City is the hotel that sits forlornly anticipating since 1986, the imagined strip development that never happened. Anchoring it at the other end 50km's north, is "Yanchep Sun City,"- Bond's future satellite city planned in 1977. The avenue didn't always run between these two speculations, it was extended in segments each time a residential development was given the go ahead and in total it forms one of the major arterial corridors on Perth's coast. Driving up Marmion is an exercise in suburban archaeology. At a point, somewhere just after Kinross, the terracotta roofs of the suburbs of the 80s and 90s give way to the dominance of colours that a Dulux catalogue would name Dune, Deep Ocean or Shale Grey. Continuing north, these roofs come to replace entirely the curved roads and cul-de-sacs that characterise the ochre coloured mass to the south with smaller lots on compulsively uniform grids. [fig.1] This 'prospective' view from above describes a morphology that on the ground we recognise isn't as effortlessly described.

Becoming apparent after a few stretches of empty road, Alkimos arrives as a suburb characterised by sale billboards, advertising banners and prospective buyers driving from display village to display village - the 'selling' of living is immediately evident. If this is a different suburb from those that make up the stretch south, then its expression is most evident in its overt visibility as a commodity, and not in its physical urban morphology. From above we can see that the emergence of new mass housing exhibits a historical continuum - a preoccupation with an 'outer' limit, what Weller pejoratively describes as "the flat featureless sandpit of the suburban frontier."[6] This preoccupation however, makes Perth suburban form anomalous to other Australian capitals (and indeed to other suburban metropolises across the world that rival such dispersion)[7] where suburban growth is harder to perceive of so linearly. This lineal characteristic is revealed by Kate Hislop as a result of not only the simultaneous emergence of the suburban ideals in Britain with settlement of the Swan River Colony, but also because the suburban sensibilities that arrived with the first settlers influenced their very "conceptualising of space in response to Western Australia's natural environment."[8]

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[6] Richard Weller, *Boomtown 2050*, 27.
[7] I refer here to Reyner Banham's novelty remark in *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (1971) that Perth is the only city in the world that could potentially rival L.A as "the greatest City-on-the-Shore in the world."
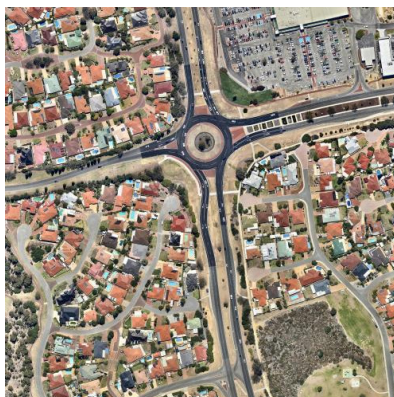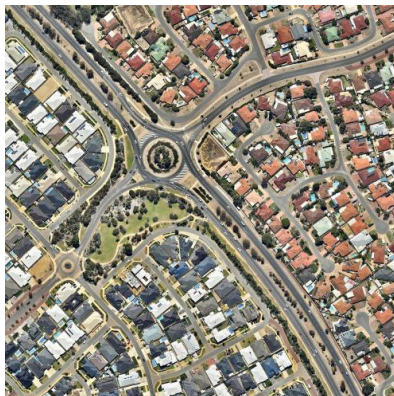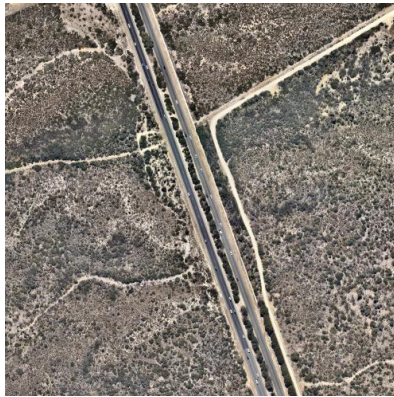[8] Hislop, "Sketches in the sand," 250.

Fig 1 – a 'prospective' view of suburban development along Marmion Avenue. Alkimos at top.

The aesthetic and picturesque sensibilities of the emerging suburban ideology – the harmonious combination of landscaping, planting and architectural form that was advocated by designers such as John Claudius Loudon in the redesign of cemeteries and public parks in Britain during the 1830s,[9] coincided with the settlement of the Swan River Colony in 1829. Unlike convict settled Sydney, where, as Graeme Davison argues, the "suburban logic of avoidance" manifest in the urban form through "the distinctive concentric-zones of middle class and working class residence that we associate with the late nineteenth century city,"[10] Perth settlers appropriated the suburban ideal not solely as a "place of escape or refuge" [11] from the crowded districts of London. For the free settlers of Perth the suburbs were an aesthetic response to the vast landscape that confronted them upon arrival, manifesting itself not in the concentric zones of the industrial city but in lineal dispersion.[12] Along with the naturally stretched topography of the Darling scarp, land speculation played a crucial role. The romantic visions of a picturesque city collided with the inherent industrialising nature of capitalist accumulation that romantic ideologies were a reaction to, as Vincent Scully has so succinctly summarised, the picturesque "is the reflex of the refugee, the art of the suburbs."[13]   This combination defined the building blocks of Perth's suburban character manifest in the large allotment sizes of the early 19th century. It wasn't until the 1890s gold-rushes that densification due to unplanned private speculation and immigration influxes caused issues but were quickly remedied by government implemented public works in 1901, which by 1930, eventually solidified the quintessential quarter-acre block as a guarantee of amenity and health.[14] The stretched nature of Perth's metropolis persists today, amplified by the various planning schemes implemented during the 20th century that sought to first account for the rise of an industrialising city, and then consolidate the shortcomings of previous growth predictions.[15] Marmion Avenue and its allied suburbs are the urban evidence of this expansion.

Architecturally speaking these aesthetic and picturesque principals came to be codified and categorised in the cottage forms and gardens of the suburbs by designers such as Loudon. [16] The early settlers, who brought with them from Britain Loudon's pattern books, adopted houses set back on the lot and surrounded by garden. A rural 'cottage *ornée'* style[17] embodied the romantic ideology that the aesthetically appealing and stylish picturesque setting of the home was also a moralising force – an urban antidote to the crime and vice of city slum living. As John Macarthur

[9] Lee Stickells, "Form and reform: affective form and the garden suburb," (Ph.D., University of Western Australia, 2004): 2.
[10] Graeme Davison, "The Past & Future of the Australian Suburb," *Australian Planner* 31, no.2 (1993): 64.
[11] Davison, "The Past & Future of the Australian Suburb," 64.
[12] Hislop, "Sketches in the sand," 250.
[13] Vincent Scully, *Modern Architecture: The Architecture of Democracy* (New York: George Braziller, 2001): 15.
[14] David Hedgecock and Tom Hibbs, "Perth's suburban traditions: from orthodoxy to innovation," in *Urban and regional Planning in Western Australia*, ed., David Hedgecock and Oren Yiftachel (Bentley: Paradigm Press, 1992): 67-68.
[15] I refer here to the 1955 Stephenson-Hepburn Plan and the 1970 Corridor Plan of which there much written concerning their evolutions. For a broad account see above source.
[16] John Macarthur, "Colonies at Home: Loudon's *Encyclopaedia,* and the architecture of forming the self," *Architectural Research Quarterly* 3, no.3 (1999): 250.
[17] D.C Markey, "Pioneer Perth," in *Western Landscapes*, ed., Joseph Gentilli (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1979): 353.

has pointed out, Loudon's *Encyclopaedias* made architecture a universally applicable and portable platform for the dissemination of a utopian vision, one that was ultimately manifest in the typically working class suburbs of the newly founded colonies.[18] The legacy of this suburban vision has persisted, and at fringe developments like Alkimos - where housing remains inexpensive when compared to gentrified 'inner' suburbs - we can recognise a mutation. Here an obvious rift emerges. Suburbs like those earlier described with the terracotta roofs still exhibit the garden suburb ideal that dominated much of Perth's suburban development during the middle 20th century.[19] In the contemporary suburb however, the stylistic encyclopaedia of the developer's housing catalogue (of which I turn my attention to in the last part of this discussion) is used to reimagine this original utopia - the suburban cottage on the frontier persists, yet the garden ideal is replaced by urban insinuations.

Imagining the city

Mere observation of Alkimos as a different mode of suburban settlement based on the visible expression of capital accumulation and corporate investment tends to obscure the bigger picture. Scrutiny of the sales brochure reveals the spectre of the garden city still provides a marketing stratagem, albeit in mutated form. Alkimos is sold on it being a hybrid of city and country, where an occupant can expect to get not "just pristine sands and aqua blue seas, but a master planned community with a *future* thriving Town Centre at its hub."[20] This promise of hybridisation highlights a certain tension evident in emerging suburbs like Alkimos; that they remain suburban emotionally in their appeal to nature, the picturesque and a closed community (all of which is made obvious by the images used in their advertising campaigns), whilst simultaneously evoking notions of centrality, connectivity and 'thriving' density.

Recognising this schizoid mind-set of the contemporary suburban experience in his article *Dispersion and the encyclopedic*, Ian McDougall has acknowledged that this gap is a result of wider political and economic shifts. The changes he refers to are those reflecting the deinstitutionalisation of the public facility and the increasing withdrawal of State commitment to deliver civic provision in the face of potential profit from maximum land sales. As eminent political geographer David Harvey states "[t]he consumption values attached to suburban living are plainly not open to choice once the location decision is made."[21] This shift and increasing processes of deinstitutionalisation, are wrapped up in the emergence of an advanced stage of capitalist economy in the 1970s, one in which the flexible production of a diverse range of varied goods replaced the mass production of standardised goods and monopolistic corporate

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[18] John Macarthur, "Colonies at Home," 255.

[19] Oren Yiftachtel and David Hedgecock, "The Planning of Perth's Changing Form – Invention or Convention?" *Australian Planner* 27, no.1 (1989): 7.

[20] Alkimos Beach project brochure, accessed April 24, 2016. http://communities.lendlease.com/alkimos-beach/-/media/communities/au/alkimos-beach/documents/alkimosbeach_projectbrochure_v5.ashx

[21] David Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989): 122.

dominance.[22] The resultant urban outcome in Australia, according to McDougall was "a series of spread experiences," where the civic is stripped of its "aesthetic signification" and the public realm is scattered across a vast terrain.[23]

This notion of a fragmented metropolis is a typically postmodern conception of the city. These urban theories of which are extensively covered elsewhere, marked a 'radical break' with modernist modes of urbanism toward one characterised by fragmentation and weakening organisational power of the major city center.[24] As we have established earlier however, the urban morphology of Perth is one of continual and expansive linearity, where the traditional 'Chicago' model of urbanism - of concentric rings evolving from a core – has no relation to foundational growth patterns.[25] This makes a physical break harder to recognise, and as Australian urbanist Robert Freestone has observed the postmodern notion of the 'dual metropolis' is less impressed into the urban landscape with the CBD still commanding the majority of the economic and cultural influence.[26]

There have however been attempts at developing peripheral centres to Perth city, namely the satellite city of Joondalup which was first proposed in the 1970 Corridor Plan to alleviate some of the concerns brought on by rapid post-war suburbanisation. One such concern, as Lee Stickells identifies in his discussion of Joondalup, is of the "post-modern horror of sprawling tracts of undifferentiated speculative housing and a subsequent loss of identity."[27] An overt and foundational attempt at an ideal city, the architecture at Joondalup attempts to exert traditional notions of 'aesthetic signification' into the civic realm. Here we see townhouses styled neo-rationalist with tilt up arches colliding with the glass balustrading and revival colonial tuck-pointed brick veneer, implemented, albeit complacently and without any historical principal, as a remedial action to the dispersed and seamless surrounding suburbia. The success of Joondalup as a viable alternative mode of urbanism in Perth's vast suburban spread was queried by the 1987 review of the Corridor Plan, commissioned by the MRA. The report concluded that failure to provide adequate service to the local population was down to loss of commercial interest due to competition from smaller more traditionally dispersed suburban forms of commerce, like the regional shopping centre and suburban shopping strip.[28]

Considering that spatial dispersion is a historical preoccupation in Perth, then could calls for consolidation, like Joondalup and the current plea for infill be, in the words of McDougall, "no

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[22] David Gartner, "Postmodernism; or, the Cultural Logic of Post-Fordism?," *The Sociological Quarterly* 39, no.1, (1998): 121.

[23] Ian McDougall, "Dispersion and the Encyclopedic," *Backlogue, Journal of the Halftime Club*, 1 (1993): 40.

[24] Robert A. Beauregard, "The radical break in late twentieth-century urbanization," *Area* 38, no.2, (2006): 218.
For a comprehensive collection of essays on the topic see Scott, Allen J. and Edward W. Soja. *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century.* Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1996.

[25] Hislop, "Sketches in the sand," 215.

[26] Robert Freestone, "New suburban centres: an Australian Perspective," *Landscape and Urban Planning* 36, (1997): 254.

[27] Lee Stickells, "Selling the city," *Transition* 59-60, (1998): 152.

[28] Stickells, "Selling the city," 153.

more than a forlorn delusion[?]"[29] Delusional because, as Davison has argued, the low density suburb represents a "remarkably adaptable, durable and popular form of city living . . . one which is deeply implanted in Australian consciousness."[30] This delusion of consolidation is evidenced in the speculative debasement of State anti 'sprawl' targets when government bodies approve developments like Alkimos, yet at the same time deinstitutionalise the civic realm, serving only to perpetuate potential locational and social disadvantages.[31] And as McDougall concedes, perhaps the best option is to accept the dispersed characteristic, especially considering its regional authenticity - and immense historical relevance here in Perth - and search for an architectural response that attempts to simultaneously undermine whilst cooperating with private interest to resurrect the civic.[32]

Architectural attempts and experimentations in retaining a dense population continue in Joondalup with architects Ashton Raggatt McDougall recently receiving the commissions to design a new performing arts and cultural center. The large piece of civic infrastructure is proposed as a remedy to limit the migration of residents from Joondalup who are attending cultural events elsewhere.[33] ARM say the eroding white form could "recall the memory of a stone ruin of an early settler or the rocky outcrop of a beach head."[34] The proposal points to a few things – namely that memory of some early historical narrative is sought as an appealing generator of form and content. The idea of the *edge*, an outcrop, a cliff - an outer limit, appears as an antidotal narrative for a strained planned center.

The catalogue

What then would be the antidotal narrative for architecture to operate authentically at the scale of the home in Alkimos? Moving to this scale immediately presents a much more difficult task because we are dealing with the intricacies of the individual where cultural memory is arguably of less importance. If we observe what the consumer is purchasing in Alkimos we *see* little of the kind of post-modern pastiche rampant in Joondalup – attempting to find a column of any order in the 'Neo-classical' will be immediately thwarted by the appearance of a square hollow section atop a rendered brick pier. The naming of the houses however, begin to evoke stylistic imaginaries and connotations of urbanity on an aesthetic level, one developer describes "a sleek city-style two-storey on a narrow block."[35] Each name relates to some imagining that makes the 'Espresso' the 'Espresso' and not the 'Seattle' or 'South Hampton.' These are the kinds of

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[29] McDougall, "Dispersion and the Encyclopedic," 40.

[30] Graeme Davison, "The great Australian sprawl," *Historic Environment* 13, no.1 (1997): 16

[31] Ian Alexander and Shane Greive, "Metropolitan Development in Perth: Strategic Planning or Strategic Spin," in *Planning Perspectives from Western Australia: a reader in theory and practice,* ed., Ian Alexander, Shane Greive and David Hedgecock (Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 2010): 64.

[32] McDougall, "Dispersion and the Encyclopedic," 40.

[33] Nathan Johnson, "Limestone Cliff Emulation by ARM Architecture Wins WA Design Competition," BPN 4, (2014).

[34] Raggatt, Mark and Maitiu Ward ed., *Mongrel Rapture: The Architecture of Ashton Raggatt McDougall* (Melbourne: Uro Publications, 2015), 1603.

[35] Plunkett Homes, "Display Homes," accessed June 4, 2016, http://www.plunketthomes.com.au/display-homes

aberrations that Davison too has recognised when contemporary suburban subdivisions attempt to "graft" languages of urban sophistication, "as though by doing so you could transplant the cappuccino culture into Kingswood Country."[36]

But Holdens are no longer manufactured in Australia and in the two car garages at Alkimos sit Mitsubishi, Skoda, Kia, Toyota, Audi or Ssanyongs. The contemporary suburb displays little continuity with the now desirable (as evidenced by land and rental value) 'Featurist' inner suburbs once caricatured by Robin Boyd in *Australia's Home* or *The Australian Ugliness*. At Alkimos there exists none of the "promiscuous plagiarism"[37] of exotic romanticism and historicist elements, rendering an analysis *à la* Venturi Scott–Brown at Levittown a fruitless course of action. That direction relies on something tangible being evident, like the personal decorative changes a homeowner makes to their façade, or the importation of pseudo-historicist architectural fragments. Such a method, of which McDougall elaborates when he proposes that "the 'abstraction' of material, extracted from the existing fabric"[38] can be used as ingredients to generate ways to authenticate the transplanted cultural element. The outcome of which is a kind of "surrealist dislocation,"[39] brought about via the aesthetic actions of collage, repetition and juxtaposition. Nor can we rely on the fortuitous occurrence of such "alien and unexpected" juxtapositions, like at Joondalup where the stability of the "orchestrated, urbanity of the city" collides with the disordered milieu of changing suburban elements.[40] At Alkimos these ingredients are far harder to 'extract.'

Where difference is reduced to no more than an imaginary or evocation, subsumed into the marketing stratagem and endless profit machine of advanced global capitalism where can architecture begin? This will require searching for a regionalism that is not merely a return to the nostalgia of old Kingswood Country or a complete negation of this difficult context, but one that begins a dialogue with the current speculative housing as philosopher Fredric Jameson urges; "dialectically, as catastrophe and progress all together."[41] Catastrophic because mass housing models like Alkimos work, as Harvey argues, at a "scale of action at which the individual loses control of the social conditions of existence in the face of forces mobilized through the capitalist production process,"[42] those forces are the interests of speculative developers and government. And progressive because at the same time the developer's catalogue provides a sought after platform of individual expression and one that is accessible to a large and diverse and range of homebuyers. McDougall has elsewhere referred to this as the "paradox of mass individualism,"[43] that basic contradiction at the heart of consumer society - what Harvey

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[36] Davison, "The great Australian sprawl," 16.
[37] Robin Boyd, *The Australian Ugliness* (Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company, 2012), 174.
[38] McDougall, "Dispersion and the Encyclopedic," 39.
[39] McDougall, "Dispersion and the Encyclopedic," 37.
[40] Stickells, "Selling the city," 153.
[41] Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." *New Left Review* 146, (1984): 86.
[42] Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, 123.
[43] Ian McDougall, "The Autistic Ogler," in *Mongrel Rapture: The Architecture of Ashton Raggatt McDougall* ed., Raggatt, Mark and Maitiu Ward (Melbourne: Uro Publications, 2015), 749.

summarises as the potential of the individual to choose what to consume from this market mechanism, but not influence its actual production.[44]

This idea of mass individualism can be found in Loudon's previously mentioned *Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture and Furniture.* With Loudon we see the historical parallels with the developer catalogue, namely a concern for economy and efficiency alongside the transplantation and application of various stylistic ideas. [fig.2] A basic model for implementation in the newly settled colonies is described: "[t]his dwelling has no pretensions to any particular style of Architecture . . . Design may be ornamented by the addition of pillars to the porch, by a vase over it, by ornamental chimneys, and by a parapet on the terrace . . . or, if an architectural parapet is considered too expensive, a low hedge . . . may be substituted."[45] This kind of language is not dissimilar to contemporary developer rhetoric of customisation, allowing the buyer to choose their own 'designer' options, elements to create "your own individual elevation by using different design features, e.g. Portico, Planter Box, Gables, Blade wall, Gate House, Rendered Sills and many more."[46]

The 'application' of these elevational variants onto primarily identical floor plans is what distinguishes not only the 'Manhattan,' with it's "New York style Front Elevation,"[47] from the 'Milano' or any other catalogue home, but the buyers themselves. And whilst appearing merely superficial this applique, or interchangeable cloaking of the façade, has interesting architectural consequences, namely how it serves emphasises contradictions between the interior and the exterior of the building.[48] Spatial continuity between the realms of the public and private, a Modernist dictum, is made ambiguous by the street facing façade. Following Robert Venturi, this wall becomes the primary "architectural event," [49] a spatial interface that records the contradictory difficulties of reconciling the public with the private. The wall as ambiguity mediator is visible upon comparing the plan and elevation of "The Newton," where we recognise from the elevation, a chimney which the plan tells us is a robe serving the two bedrooms that front the street. [fig.3] The façade generates further contradictions when it attempts to evoke a kind of Modernist stylistic language concealing behind the series of minimally adorned blade walls, strip windows and garage door, a compartmentalised and fragmented series of internal spaces, each with potentially different decorative treatment, which in some cases becomes almost labyrinthine in plan and ambiguous in spatial hierarchy. [fig.4]

This is not to say that these houses exploit these contradictions consciously or compellingly, but that some potential for exploration is latent within the established and systematic frameworks of

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[44] Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, 122.
[45] John Claudius Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture and Furniture*, (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1846): 20.
[46] Ideal Homes, accessed March 14, 2016. http://www.idealhomes.com.au/homes/elevation-options/
[47] My Homes WA, accessed June 6, 2016. http://www.myhomeswa.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Manhattan-Pearl.pdf
[48] Paul Jenkins and Fiona McLachlan, "Is there a role for architects in mainstream private sector house building?" *The Journal of Architecture* 15, no.2, 162.
[49] Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2002): 86.
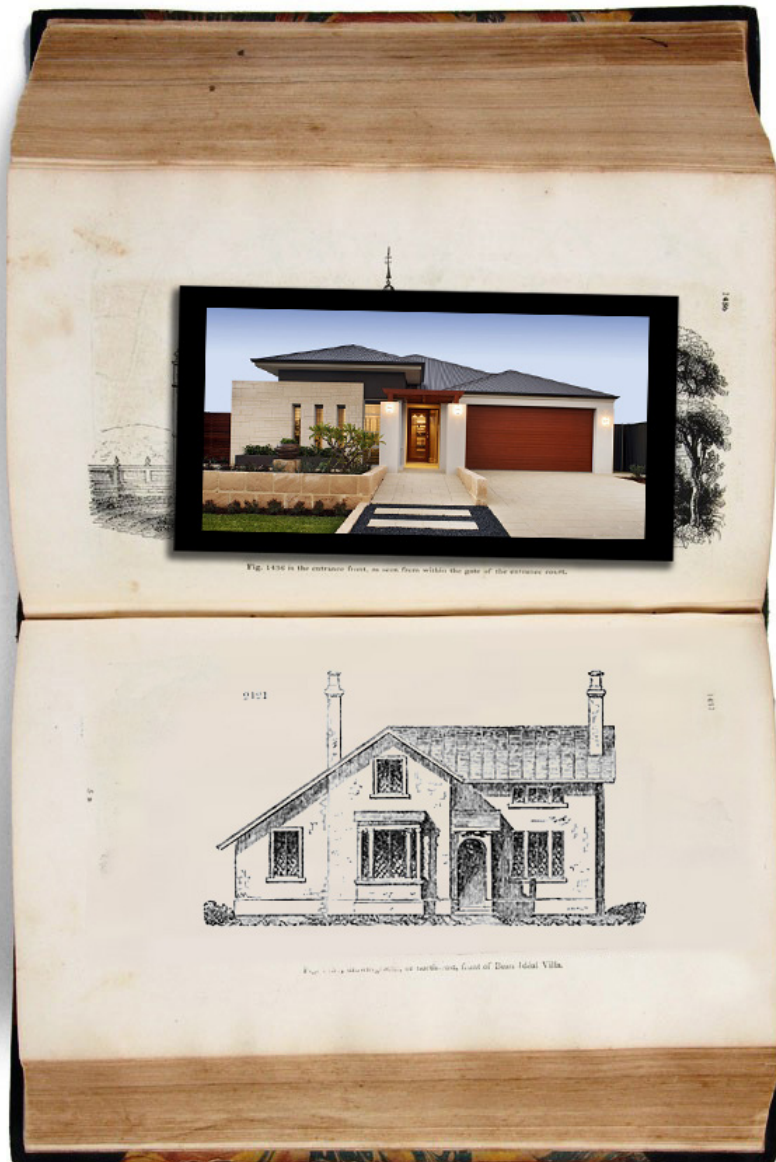
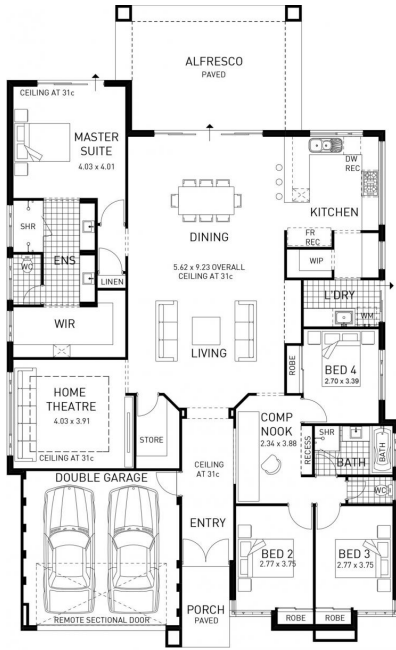*Fig 2 – 'mass individualism' has long shaped Perth's suburban landscapes.*

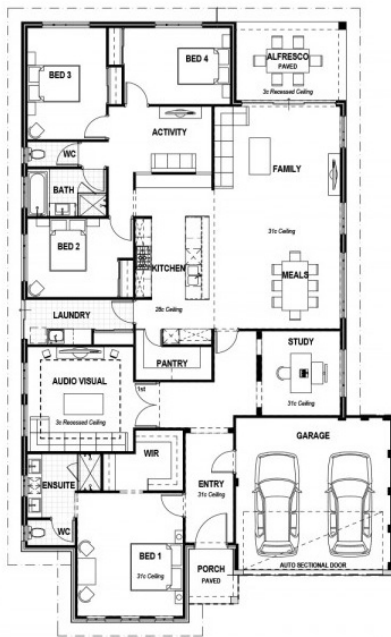*Fig 3 – 'The Newton' – ambiguities in the fasle facade*

*Fig 4 –   discontinuities: public 'modernist' stylistic applique
disguises compartmentalised private planning*

mass customisation and the developer catalogue, and that these kind of superficialities could have interesting spatial outcomes. On an wider contextual scale, the false fronted façade in new subdivisions, reinforces street and community continuity, where the standalone tailored architectural object that is radical through negation would do little but reinforce an antagonistic standoff between 'fashions'- one of which is bespoke, against the rest that both reflect and create popular lifestyle values. Perhaps Loudon resolves this standoff most succinctly in the preface to his *Encyclopaedia* when he states, ". . . Now, so far from this [encyclopaedia] having a tendency to injure Architects, it will not only enable those who wish either to build or to furnish, to express more clearly, to the architect . . . those wants which they already have; but it will elicit new ones . . ."[50] Perhaps a sustained query into the structure of the catalogue can provide us with some meaningful, and historically relevant ways to operate architecturally. Not because it provides us with a collection of 'styles' to reconstruct through juxtaposition, but because it allows architects a dialogue with the values and desires of a mass audience.

Alkimos in Cottesloe

The contemporary model home is a flexible and highly ambiguous 'stylistic' entity and it is this very ambiguity that makes places like Alkimos a bewildering environment for architects. Yet it is within this ambiguous environment of hegemonic capitalism that architecture must find a radical new way to operate, because it is in this environment that we seem, in the words of Jameson, "increasingly incapable of fashioning representations of our own current experience."[51] This may mean exploring the developer's catalogue for these ambiguities and looking not for a unifying architectural explanation, but for one that begins to understand what an authentic suburban experience has become. This remains particularly pertinent for Perth as Alkimos (supposedly) represents the limit of Perth's northern expansion with all subsequent development to be occurring through waves of infill toward the city. Paradoxically our overtly cherished 'inner' suburbs are now becoming the new suburban frontier, and the vast majority of new architecture and infrastructure will ultimately be delivered through speculative investment. We are now starting to see elements of pseudo-Manhattan in Dalkeith or even bits of Alkimos in Cottesloe. With this comes significant social as well as aesthetic questions regarding new attitudes to space, lifestyle and identity - ideas of which are condensed at Alkimos Beach. So whilst at this moment we have begun to understand the environmental impacts of 'sprawl' and have been exposed to countless valuable hypothetical scenarios and studies to retrofit, consolidate and 'scavenge,' what still remains blindingly unclear and increasingly complex is how we can begin to work within these constraints and deliver an architectural response suitable for new suburban attitudes, yet radical enough to elicit new ones.

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[50] Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia*, vi.
[51] Jameson, "Postmodernism," 68.

Alexander, Ian and Shane Greive. "Metropolitan Development in Perth: Strategic Planning or Strategic Spin." In *Planning Perspectives from Western Australia: a reader in theory and practice.* Edited by Ian Alexander, Shane Greive and David Hedgecock. 48-66. Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 2010.

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FIGURES

Video:
Joensson, Felix, Leo Showell and Jason Macarlino. *Cottesloe Beach at Alkimos Beach* (2016). Digital video.

Fig 1, 2 author's own collages.

Fig 3 – Plunkett Homes. *The Newton*. Display home. http://www.plunketthomes.com.au/display-homes/newtown

Fig 4 – Various display homes:

My homes WA. *My Manhattan*. Display Home. http://www.myhomeswa.com.au/property-list/manhattan/

Blueprint Homes. *The Espresso.* Display Home. http://www.blueprinthomes.com.au/home-designs-perth/the-espresso/

Blueprint Homes. *The Millbridge.* Display Home. http://www.blueprinthomes.com.au/home-designs-perth/the-millbridge/