

# ARCHIE MOORE

## CLOVER

4 - 25 AUGUST 2012

### Building, Dwelling, Thinking in the Lucky Cuntery

"He found or improvised shelter."<sup>1</sup> ... He took the already-domestic architecture of an artist-run space and haunted it with the mood of his childhood home.<sup>2</sup> A YouTube video takes you through the dwelling.<sup>3</sup> From the street, past a collapsed picket fence demarcating as much as can be expected its claim on a patch of overgrown lawn territorialised by weeds. Inside the kitchen, a smoky tower of black cumulus rises up the wall and billows across the ceiling above the stove where something went wrong and almost burnt the whole place down. Tarnished cutlery and useless tools in drawers. Mosquito coil. Tin of powdered milk. Television theme tunes of the '70s and '80s -- *DrWho*, *Fawlty Towers* -- fill the gaps between abject objects and slogans that point directly to racism. A small, softly pornographic photograph of a young white woman is propped on a windowsill in the sunshine like the sunshine itself. These things and other items in which a child's or teenager's memory invests make an inventory of image and sound that recalls 'growing up in Archie's house', or in his skin, in rural Queensland.

The introduction to a book begins: "Upon early exploration of Terra Australis by Europeans, an international view developed that Australian Aboriginal people did not have houses or towns, but rather occupied ephemeral camps, moving relentlessly and sheltering in flimsy, makeshift huts or lean-tos of grass and bark, colloquially known in parts of the continent as 'gunyahs' or 'wurlies'." <sup>4</sup> Against this, small churches were built to engulf and sanctify the primitive people in a missionary crusade of bricks and mortar. These mission buildings, makeshift approximations of aspirational cathedrals, have been replicated by Archie Moore in miniature, folded from the pages of *The Good Book* itself, little Houses of God built from *The Word*. The pale inhabitants of these houses systematically took black children from their families.

I walk into the melancholic last room of the John Glover exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia. Large Tasmanian 'arcadias' depict a pre-genocide twilight. A bit of bad luck, really! In these paintings, aboriginal people sit around smoking fires, beside makeshift shelters, the silhouettes of which are echoed in the undulations of the distant horizon. The green paint of Glover's palette, as great an artist as he was, blankets the scene of impending extermination at the hand of European colonisers.<sup>5</sup> The paint is like an opportunistic plant itself, a weed, whose ability to insinuate itself with great efficiency into the foreign ecosystem gives it the upper hand, lets it shove the locals out of the way and take over. Weeds are species which, in their place of origin, are valued for their beauty or some other use value but, when transplanted to foreign soil, lack a certain decorum. They are vermin of the botanical variety.

In the current exhibition at Boxcopy, Moore is again building. His work *Clover* is at once a makeshift shelter and the earth beneath the feet. The thick layering of synthetic green paint is dirt brown on the *verso* like a clod of turf, a quarter acre block (in miniature) of *terra nullius*. Scrawled across this canopy of lawn is the word CLOVER.

I'm interested in the saying to "live in clover" that Joh Bjelke said about Aboriginal people which means to live a luxurious life. Also, the four-leaf clover being a symbol of "good luck": (Australia being 'The Lucky Country'), St Patrick seeing the clover as representing the 'Holy Trinity' and how it became a symbol of rebellion for Irish against the English.<sup>6</sup>

Clover is the friendly mascot of the weed herbarium, a bit of a rock star. Its cultural references are as many as the word itself contains other words within it. Contrary, however, to Joh Bjelke-Petersen's words, it's not so lucky or luxurious, when you put down roots in your own back yard and put a roof over your head on the wrong side of the tracks.

by Amanda Rowell

<sup>1</sup> "Early man lived under the trees and stars. At some time he found or improvised shelter." Lloyd Khan (ed.) *Shelter*, Shelter Publications Inc., Bolinas, California, first published 1973, p. 4

<sup>2</sup> Archie Moore -- *Dwelling*, Accidently Annie Street, Brisbane, 2010

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1q0rL5\\_V8Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1q0rL5_V8Q)

<sup>4</sup> Paul Memmott, *Gunyah Goondie + Wurley -- The Aboriginal Architecture of Australia*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 2007, p. xi

<sup>5</sup> John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque, National Gallery of Australia, 24 April - 18 July, 2004. Included iconic paintings by John Glover such as *Mills' Plains*, *Ben Lomond*, *Ben Loder* and *Ben Nevis in the distance* (1836) now in the collection of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart.

<sup>6</sup> Email from Archie Moore to Amanda Rowell 16/07/12

Clover

Archie Moore

4 - 25 August 2012 | Opening Saturday 4 August 6pm

Copyright 2012. Boxcopy, the writer and artist.

ISBN: 978-0-9872234-7-0

Front & Left: Archie Moore *Clover*, 2012.

## boxcopy

Level 1, Watson Brothers Building 129 Margaret Street Brisbane QLD 4000

GPO Box 3197 Brisbane QLD 4001

[info@boxcopy.org](mailto:info@boxcopy.org) | [www.boxcopy.org](http://www.boxcopy.org)

Creative Sparks is a joint initiative of Brisbane City Council and the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland. Proudly supported by



Queensland  
Government



Dedicated to a better Brisbane