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A DECADE
OF AUSTRALIAN
ARCHITECTURE

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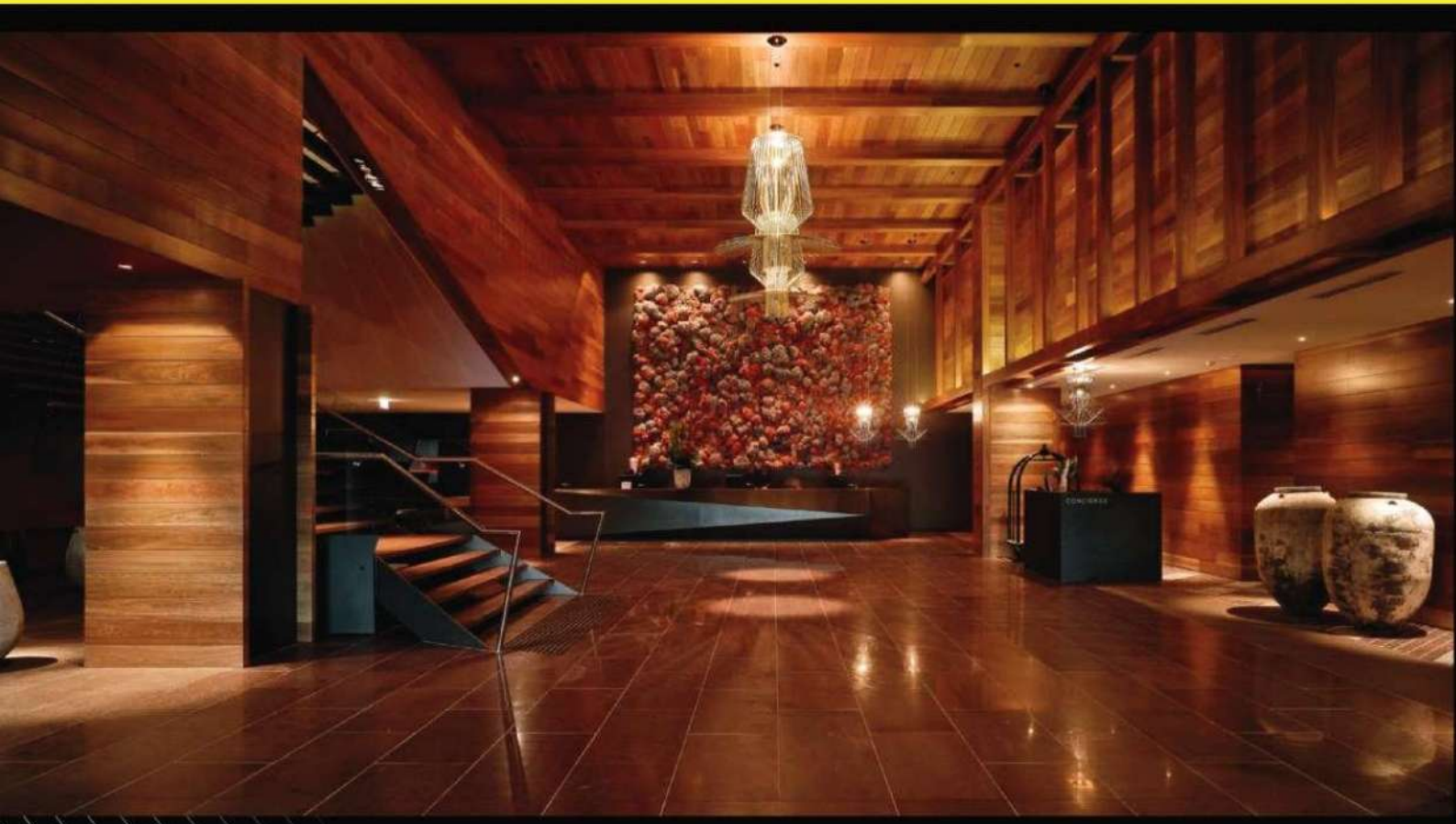

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EDITORIAL

text **Maitiú Ward**

After establishing his own practice in 1935, it took Louis Kahn close to 20 years to fully realise his first major commission, an art gallery for a client who also happened to be his employer at the time, Yale University. Antoni Gaudi devoted the last 15 years of his life to the design of the Sagrada Familia. His work on the project began in 1883, and by optimistic estimates construction will be complete by 2026. 143 years might seem a long time for a project to pass from design development through to the end of construction for some, but it pales in comparison to the length of time spent on realising another cathedral of note, England's York Minster, which took a leisurely 252 years. In the world of architecture, then, 10 years is not generally what you would think of as a long or particularly significant period of time.

This issue is *AR*'s last for the year, and our last issue for the decade. To mark the occasion, *AR* has conducted a retrospective of sorts, asking a host of critics and opinion leaders from around the country for their take on the most noteworthy developments within Australian architecture in the past 10 years. As you would expect, their responses are eclectic and sometimes contradictory; only a handful of them identify specific buildings as of particular relevance. The combined impression these responses give, however, is that it has been an unusually hectic decade for the discipline. From the more concrete developments (the appointment of a government architect to each of Australia's states, the establishment of the Green Building Council of Australia and the mainstream adoption of environmentally sustainable design principles) to the more abstract (the convergence of architecture and engineering, the détente between the proponents of a 'digital' architecture and their analogue predecessors) the one thing this exercise makes clear is that while it may be a short and fairly arbitrary unit of measure, the past decade has been a very significant one indeed for architecture in Australia.

It has been a privilege and (for the most part) a pleasure to be able to document it, and we're looking forward to seeing what the new decade will bring. See you next year.

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BOOK ROUND-UP

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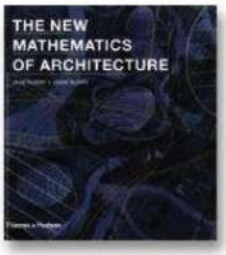

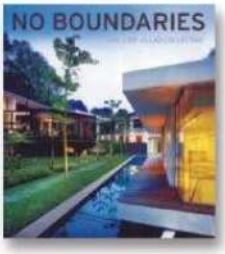

THE NEW MATHEMATICS OF ARCHITECTURE

As the executive architect on the Sagrada Familia project, Mark Burry has been applying digital technologies to very real results for more than two decades. Over the past 10 years, however, this project has been joined by a slew of revolutionary buildings that owe much of their success to digital technology. *The New Mathematics of Architecture* is a compendium of many of these projects – it is not, however, a celebration of digital design per se. The book's central premise is that these technologies have facilitated a reconnection between architecture and mathematics, which, more so than this notion of 'the digital' (a problematic catch-all at the best of times) defines and unifies the current, very distinctive direction these projects represent. An ironic claim for a technology that in many respects puts even more distance between the designer and the numbers at play behind the walls? Possibly. But in the practices of Foster + Partners and others, the language of mathematics is commonplace once more, and there is no doubt a deeper understanding of its principles is driving innovation in the built environment. As a primer to the contemporary application of mathematics in architecture, and as the discipline moves beyond the now essentially meaningless pigeonhole of the 'digital', this is a timely work.

—

Jane Burry and Mark Burry
Thames & Hudson 2010 HB 668pp

NO BOUNDARIES

THE LIEN VILLAS COLLECTIVE

No Boundaries documents a truly remarkable Singaporean development – the conversion of one family's colonial villa and grounds into a complex of seven individual houses, unbounded by walls, by seven separate emerging Singaporean architects. As Kengo Kuma describes in his introduction to the book, in its communal sensibility and in the shared ambition of the teams involved, the project represents a genuine alternative to the suburban model that has dominated residential development for most of the past century. Each house is unique and yet respectful of its neighbours. The combined impression of the complex is, remarkably, one of coherence, thanks in no small part to the approach taken by the masterplanner, K2LD Architects, which employed 'Game Theory' and other tactics to ensure dialogue and, where necessary, compromise between the practices involved. A subtle but effective landscaping strategy by Tierra Design preserving much of the site's existing vegetation and contours roots the project in its history, while also reinforcing its unity. A Garden City model for the 21st century? Perhaps, but certainly an intriguing experiment at the very least, and well worth a read.

—

Pesaro 2010
HB 160pp

ARCHITECTURE ON DISPLAY

ON THE HISTORY OF THE VENICE BIENNALE OF ARCHITECTURE

Architecture has a troubled relationship to exhibitions, to display, with much written on the subject – how do you go about the exhibition of something without actually being able to show the physical thing itself? Despite this hand-wringing, perhaps the most important event on architecture's cultural calendar is the Venice Biennale of Architecture, a bi-annual show famous as much for its ostentatious spectacle as for its traditionally rich brew of ideas. This hardly comes as much of a surprise (the disjuncture between theory and reality often being more pronounced than the disconnect presented by the challenge of representing something that, heaven forbid, isn't actually there…), what is surprising though, as the co-author of this title Aaron Levy identifies, is the lack of a historical record of the Biennale, especially given its obvious importance for the discipline ('exhibition' or no). Architecture on Display goes some way towards filling this lacuna. As a series of interviews with the surviving Biennale directors (Ricky Burdett, Aaron Betsky, Massimiliano Fuksas etc etc) about the challenges of the Biennale's curation and ideation, it's one of those simple but incredibly valuable exercises that makes you wonder why no-one had thought of it before.

—

Aaron Levy and William Menking
Architectural Association 2010
SB 208pp

PLAIN SPACE

JOHN PAWSON

Plain Space begins with a quote by American writer Raymond Carver – "It's difficult to be simple." John Pawson is the paterfamilias of British minimalism and this retrospective of his work goes to some lengths to give an impression of just how laboured the process of developing his exquisite reductions can be. Alison Morris, the author, spent 10 years in the Pawson office as an in-house writer ('embedded', you could say) and while the voice in the book is technically hers (*Plain Space* is noticeably free from any of Pawson's writing), she is a believer. But if this work is as much a vanity publication as the next architectural monograph, it is nonetheless a superbly well-prepared one – in keeping with her subject matter, Morris's prose is pared back, elegant and effective, and, (as you would hope after a decade spent trailing her subject from atelier, to airport, to building site and back again), insightful. As is to be expected from Phaidon, the book is well designed and crafted and is quite a lovely object in and of itself. The architectural work itself, of course, which includes everything from Pawson's early residential design for the writer Bruce Chatwin (a 45m2 studio – "a place to hang your hat" as Chatwin described it) to his Monastery at Novy Dur in Bohemia, makes being simple look all too easy.

—

Alison Morris
Phaidon 2010 HB 240pp

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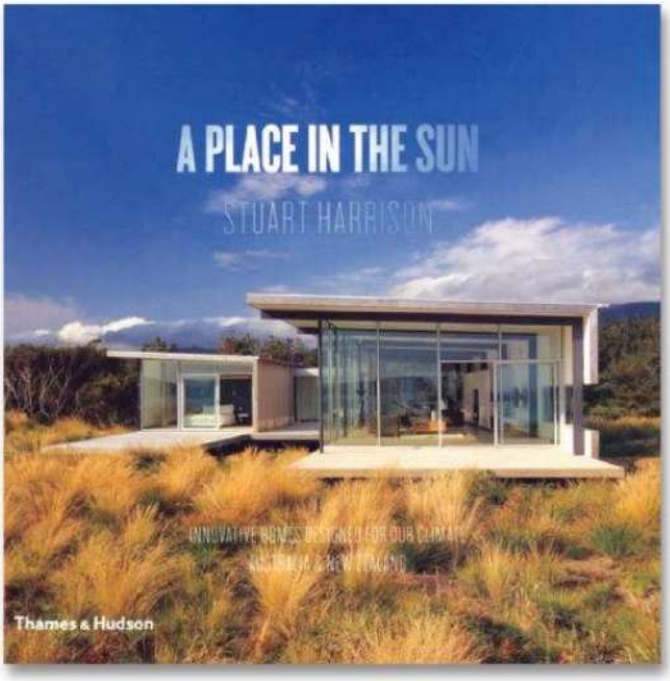
A PLACE IN THE SUN

book
Stuart Harrison
Thames & Hudson 2010
HB 272pp
–
review
Maitiú Ward



A Place in the Sun has all the trappings of your typical architectural coffee table book – a compendium of attractively photographed, contemporary residential projects, pleasantly presented in a hardback format on crisp, glossy white paper. The perfect fodder for those aspirational consumers hungry for pretty pictures of architectural objects they will more than likely never be able to afford, you might say. There is a key aspect to this book, however, that elevates it above the glut of fairly one-dimensional architecture titles that tends to clog up the bookstores around Christmas time.

Stuart Harrison, the author of *A Place in the Sun*, is a former Melbourne editor for *Architectural Review Australia* and remains a regular contributor to this magazine. He is also a co-host of Melbourne radio show The Architects. Harrison's criticism, for this magazine and elsewhere, is marked by an open-minded sensibility, refreshingly free from ideological prejudice. He has written authoritatively on everything from Cox Architects to ARM, and this eclectic and wide-ranging taste is reflected in the selection of projects presented here.

This is not to say, however, that the book doesn't have an agenda of sorts.

As Harrison describes, his ambition for *A Place in the Sun* was that the title serve as an introduction to a fairly basic architectural principle, which unfortunately many non-architects nowadays (thanks to the largely uncontested dominance of the A/C unit in contemporary housing models) are ignorant of – orientation.

The overarching concern of the book, then, is how architecture responds to site, not in a romantic or aesthetic sense, but from the very pragmatic perspective of climate. The projects featured are all located in either Australia or New Zealand, and while as a result the local conditions reflected in the book vary widely (even within these two countries, after all, extreme contrasts in climate and geography are the norm rather than the exception) this diversity has been well-handled with a novel but coherent approach that groups projects according to latitude. The reader then, be they from Wellington or Wodonga, can quickly isolate a selection of case studies that are loosely relevant to their particular neck of the woods. The book's strength as a resource of design strategies is reinforced by the consistent treatment given to architectural plans, all of which have been aligned to ensure that their north points face towards the top of the page. It's an important detail for a title explicitly concerned with design for climate, or indeed any book that purports to document architectural work, but one that is often overlooked by publishers more concerned with fetishising buildings than with explaining them.

From the perspective of explanation, Harrison's writing too does a good job of describing the key elements of the featured works, and in particular their strategies with respect to orientation. The language used is simple and concise, and by and large free from the archispeak that tends to dominate a lot of architectural commentary, even that clearly geared at a non-professional audience. But if this title's intended audience is broad, perhaps more consumer than professional, that's not to say there isn't something of value in it for the architects too. There is plenty of the usual glamourous residential work to be found here, eye-candy for the consumer and I dare say professional both – John Wardle, Donovan Hill and McBride Charles Ryan all feature. But there is also a very healthy contingent of emerging practices represented, with superb new work (which, to the best of my knowledge, seems to be in many cases previously unpublished) from young talents such as Fitt De Felice, Breathe, Nest and Tribe Studios, among many others.

A Place in the Sun is a coffee table book, and if the purported sales of its predecessor and (to quote the dust jacket) "companion title" *A Place in the Country* are anything to go by, it will be another sure-fire unit-shifter for Thames & Hudson. But if it services a demand for architectural escapism, it is also a kind of proselytising by stealth. While many who purchase it might never be able to afford the beautiful houses documented within, the principles these buildings embody are perfectly attainable. In servicing a consumer demand for fantasies of more stylish homes and lifestyles, this title might also help to create a more demanding and better-informed consumer. In the context of Australia's multi-billion dollar housing industry, the vast majority of which is foreign terrain to the architectural professional, this can only be a good thing. **ar**

Maitiú Ward is the managing editor of Architectural Review Australia *and founding editor of* AustralianDesignReview.com.

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THE BORAL DESIGN AWARD 2010

text **Tone Wheeler**

Courtyard House, the winning scheme by Aidan Murphy and Aaron Peters.

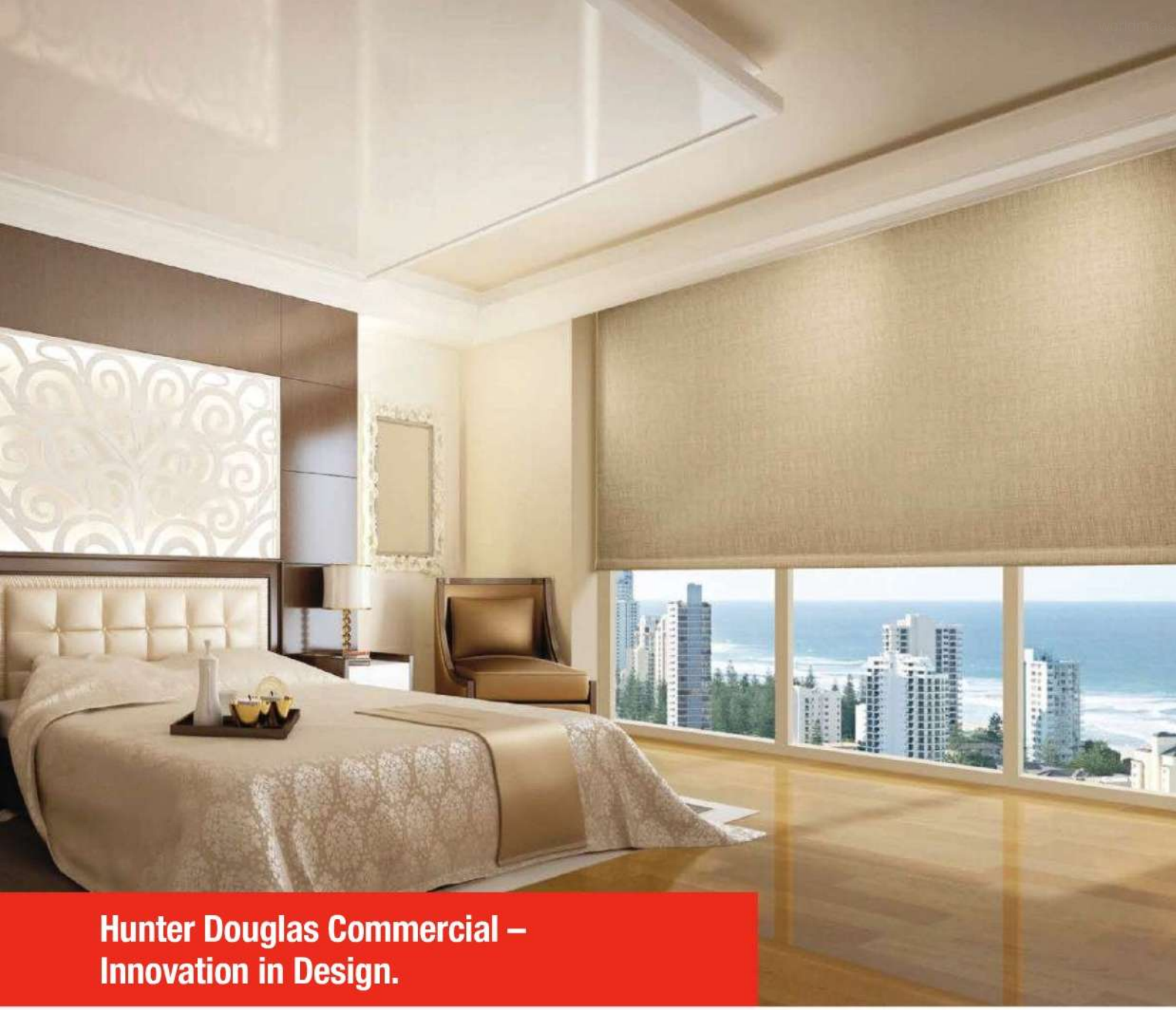
Boral's Design Award competition proved to be a tough nut to crack for many entrants this year. Juror Tone Wheeler gives us his take on why so many of the submissions struggled with this complex, challenging and forward-looking brief.

Architects enter competitions for a wide number of reasons: a release from day-to-day travails; a test bed for ideas not found in commissioned work; indulging client-less design; a team bonding exercise; testing new presentation techniques; and not least the cachet and cash that a win brings.

All of these could be seen in the 95 professional and 25 student entries to the Boral Design Award, described in the brief as a competition for "a detached residential dwelling on a compact site of the future... with a floor area of 125m^2". Every entry required not only a plan and section for a resolved design, but also high quality 3D renders. As a result, a lot of energy and commitment went into the entries, and while much of it was outstanding, not all of it was well directed. It would seem that many entrants ventured headlong into the process, fired up on the possibilities for unrestrained creativity, when a bit of restraint would have served them better.

The Sydney-born architect John Andrews, who won several big overseas competitions to kick-start a great career, once said that you should read the brief, read it again, and again, and then set it aside and start designing. For the judges it would appear that many contestants only listened to the last part of that advice. The nature of this competition has practicality at its root: it asks for a small house, flexible for a future extended family (yes, all in 125m^2) on a steep and narrow awkward site, with street access at both ends. The competition brief has two starting points that exist in every architectural project: a purpose and a place. And it seeks a third 'P': the prototype, a design that

Courtyard House street elevation.



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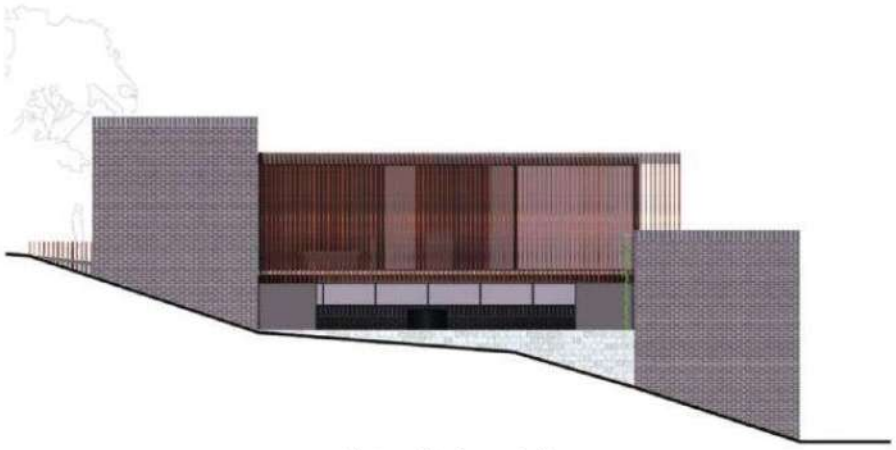

Lithe House by Whatever Studio.

Lithe House street elevation.

embodies both a response to the exigencies of the brief and site but also addresses some more universal ideas.

These definitive practical qualities, rather than some vague abstraction that lies at the heart of many 'ideas' competitions, are further amplified in the five judging criteria (right beside the list of prizes – ignore them at your peril). A couple were obvious: use Boral products and make sure the construction is viable. That should have been easy for everyone: Boral make stuff for almost every bit of current construction, and the judges will cut a good section some slack if not every junction is resolved. But there is a trap in 3D visualisation, with its emphasis on surface rather than armature, that many fell for. A complete absence of construction logic in a competition sponsored by a construction materials firm consigns the entry to the pile in the corner very early in the morning of a day's judging. There is only so much mullion-less glass that appears to support upper floors (in the absence of anything so mundane as a column), that you can look at before the second coffee kicks in.

The other three criteria are more crucial, but more subjective: design innovation, sustainability and adaptable/flexible spaces. What issue unites all three? Size. Big houses are much easier to design than small, so that's where the innovation will start, in getting more out of less. Sustainability is no longer about whacking green bling all over the box. It's more fundamental than that, but sadly the students were the slowest to avoid the gadget trap. Sustainability in architecture is now in two key areas: the footprint of the project and its ability to adapt to future changes, either in use or in technology. That future flexibility, the third criteria, was the one that was least addressed in the designs, although the quality of the rhetoric was often high (and in the entry from Michael Markham, both insightful and humorous). So it comes down to size and sustainability: getting the most out of the least in lots of different ways into the future.

On the basis of size alone the judges could exclude half the entries: many were just too big. Not that we got the ruler out – the obese ones were obvious at first glance and a second look would discard those with too many rooms on far too many levels. But smallness didn't engender flexibility; indeed the major lacuna in even the best entries was a plan that the judges could really imagine being used in lots of different ways. Rooms still had rigid names, or more infuriatingly numbers, that indicated a dedicated use (dining/sleeping/garaging) rather than possibilities. Some, such as the second place winner, had diagrams that promised more than they delivered in the actual house. And some suggested flexibility through physical additions (and, incredulously, deletions – like that's going to happen), which might circumvent the size limitations, but only in a way that is against the spirit of the program.

So it would seem the 'purpose' part of the brief was undercooked, but what about 'place'? The fictitious site had certain odd characteristics, leading to some amusing contortions in form, not least a couple of towers, but the climate was implied: it could be anywhere you nominate. Sadly, from a sustainable point of view, most entries either didn't nominate the locale (so you assumed it was in the author's home town, which was sometimes at odds with the design) or they ignored climate as a form-maker altogether. We weren't looking for a NatHERS report – we just wanted the home to look like it would be comfortable in summer and winter. Confront the street by all means, but not the occupants. Speaking of which, who says cars, that have been the ruination of the streetscape in suburbia, are a vital feature in the future? Why not a flexible room on the street that could be a living room, flat, or home office that interacts with the passers by, and another room at the rear, which can store a car until such time as the residents see that it's better used as another room of the house (a flat for the third generation, or workshop or extra bedroom) with the small electric car on a share basis up the street.

And finally a word on presentation, which proves how astonishing rendering tools have become in the hands of most architects. Photographic realism sometimes tells you too much: just like magazine shots, the furniture seems too important and the people are a distraction from the architectural idea. And maybe some just tell you all too quickly that it's all building and not too many ideas. The entries that reveal the thought process, through bite-sized text and simple but informative diagrams, always got a second look. Bigger ain't better.

So why the winners? The winning scheme by Aidan Murphy and Aaron Peters (Cox Rayner Architects/Kerry Hill Architects) is modest and delightful and the judges all wanted to move in. Perhaps not as flexible as we would like, and it dodged the car issue without really gaining a benefit on the street, but it packed just a little more punch than all the others. Second place, to the delightfully named Whatever Studio (let me guess, Gen Y?) had more rhetoric and a better diagram, but not a better house. The central courtyard has some clever ideas about adapting to the weather and use, but the harshness of the forms externally and some crudity in planning internally, let the winner through at the final post. The student winner is more conventional, but then so were all the student entries, which only reinforced the prejudice some of us held that the public's belief that youth has all the answers is misplaced, at least when it comes to architecture.

It's a tough and complex gig to make a small house, inward and outward looking, that can address a number of different functions, and serve as a prototype for future narrow allotments. No one quite nailed it, but it takes a full day of great entertainment and argument to get five opinionated judges to agree. The choices are ours jointly, but the report above is just one interpretation. **ar**

Tone Wheeler is an architect, author, educator and consultant with an abiding interest in environmental architecture and sustainable design. Tone founded the architectural practice Environa Studio 20 years ago and has designed individual and multiple housing projects, commercial buildings and urban design schemes, all with a strong emphasis on social and environmental concerns.

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– INTERVIEW –

TAKAHARU TEZUKA

Recently in Australia for RMIT's Affirmative Architecture symposium, Japanese architect Takaharu Tezuka speaks with Stuart Harrison and Christine Philips about the people-centred approach that has brought his practice international renown.

—

interview **Stuart Harrison, Christine Philips**
photography **Peter Bennetts**

STUART HARRISON **Takaharu, you spoke this morning at the symposium about your amazing body of work, and in particular this idea of the rooftop as a space full of potential for social interaction and play, where architecture can happen. How did you develop this interest?**
TAKAHARU TEZUKA Well, wherever you buy a property, always sky come with the property. There is no property without sky, so we thought it's quite an interesting idea to use the roof. And also, until we designed a roof house, we didn't know that our use of roof is so effective for the city. In Tokyo, it is very crowded, congested, so it's quite hard to have external life, but always the rooftop is free. And usually the rooftop is occupied with air conditioning units in Tokyo, but if you remove them, we can have quite nice sky all the time. That is the only way to access the sky in Tokyo.

SH **The strategy worked very successfully in the Roof House originally, but the really amazing thing is that it's evolved into a use on public buildings, such as your very famous kindergarten. Does the potential of the roof change when you go from a house to a public building?**
TT Well, it does change, and we have to have more safety, but yet I think our idea would be the same. Many people say public buildings should be different from small houses, but I think it's the same. Even if you were designing an airport, it's better to start thinking of the human being, and already we made some proposals about skyscrapers with nice rooftops.

CHRISTINE PHILLIPS **Your work has obviously become very famous. Has this become a limitation at all? Are you finding all of your clients now want rooftop spaces in all their projects?**
TT Well, not very. Some clients are asking for internal space with big sliding doors, but I must say that we're building a kind of style, and many people are asking what kind of style to want next. I don't like to change my style. These days, architecture media are asking architects to do different kinds of things, just like asking magician to pick up a rabbit or pigeons out from the hat. But looking back at the history of architecture, good architects always try to do the same things throughout their lifetime, and it's not easy to perfect one style. I'm quite happy to perfect my own style throughout my life. I'm not trying to change it, but environment and the request from society will change my style. And maybe within 20 years we may do totally different kinds of things, but I want to keep some continuity in my thinking.

CP **I think your practice, while it does have a particular style, is also very much about an attitude towards human behaviour and the human body and how we move in architecture. Do you think this has been something that there's been a lack of attention to in contemporary architecture?**
TT It's very difficult to criticise contemporary architecture. I respect Zaha Hadid, I respect Toyo Ito, because this kind of new way to make interesting shapes is very important to start the new era of architecture, and if you don't have that kind of people, we don't have evolution. But yet, I'm not interested in that kind of type, because they're different. I think it's very important to design architecture for normal people, because a special architecture is required in only a small percentage of the city or country. And I want to design for everybody. For example, always I say I want to design a car, but I don't want to design with Ferrari or Lamborghini; I want to design Citroen, I want to design for Fiat, I want to design for…

Many people say public buildings should be different from small houses, but I think it's the same. Even if you were designing an airport, it's better to start thinking of the human being.

CP **Standard cars?**
TT …yes, Toyota. I want to design standard cars because that has a much stronger effect on society. I want to change the society.

SH **What strikes me is that people like Zaha Hadid or Wolf Prix, their work is very complex or formally radical. But your work for me seems to be more radical because of the way in which it actually does engage with people and ordinariness, and uses conventional things like ceiling heights and roofs and stairs in a radical way. Do you see yourself as radical?**
TT I think we are radical as a thinking, and my logic may be radical. But maybe I am trying to be basic because our human being has been the same. After hundreds of thousands of years, we have same eyes, we use the same hands. And even if I get a time machine to bring Roman people to this period, the people will enjoy the same kind of space and kind of architecture. So instead of trying something I have never seen, I'm trying to find out which has the timeless quality.

SH **I just want to mention the kindergarten in particular, because it is so widely known and so successful. Have other architects, or has the government built more schools that follow that model closely with a continuous roof garden on it? Has the building been copied?**
TT I know that many people tried, but it's very difficult because you need certain size to copy that idea. The kindergarten has 640 children, and there are only two bigger kindergartens in Japan and they've got enough buildings. And if you have just only 100 children, there's no way to make elliptical building because the courtyard is going to be very small. It doesn't make any sense. Are you going to have only three-metre wide strip around the courtyard? But I think our idea of endless circulation is becoming quite popular.

SH **And that brings us to this idea of where ideas come from in your work and how ideas form. Originally it was the clients who sat on the roof that became the inspiration for the project. Is that how you managed to make such a successful humanitarian architecture?**
TT First of all, you have to know that the client is different from users. We try to understand the users. And when you design a hospital, usually you talk to the owner of the hospital, and we talk to the patient first. When I design kindergarten, I talk to children. That is the key to it. **ar**

This interview was originally conducted for The Architects *radio show on Melbourne's RRR – see* **www.rrr.org.au/program/the-architects** *for more.*

FROM FORM TO FORMLESS

Exploring Non Linear Space Over Five Decades

text **Anuradha Chatterjee**

An exhibition of innovative residential buildings from the last 50 years unearths a hidden history of architectural experimentation in Australia.

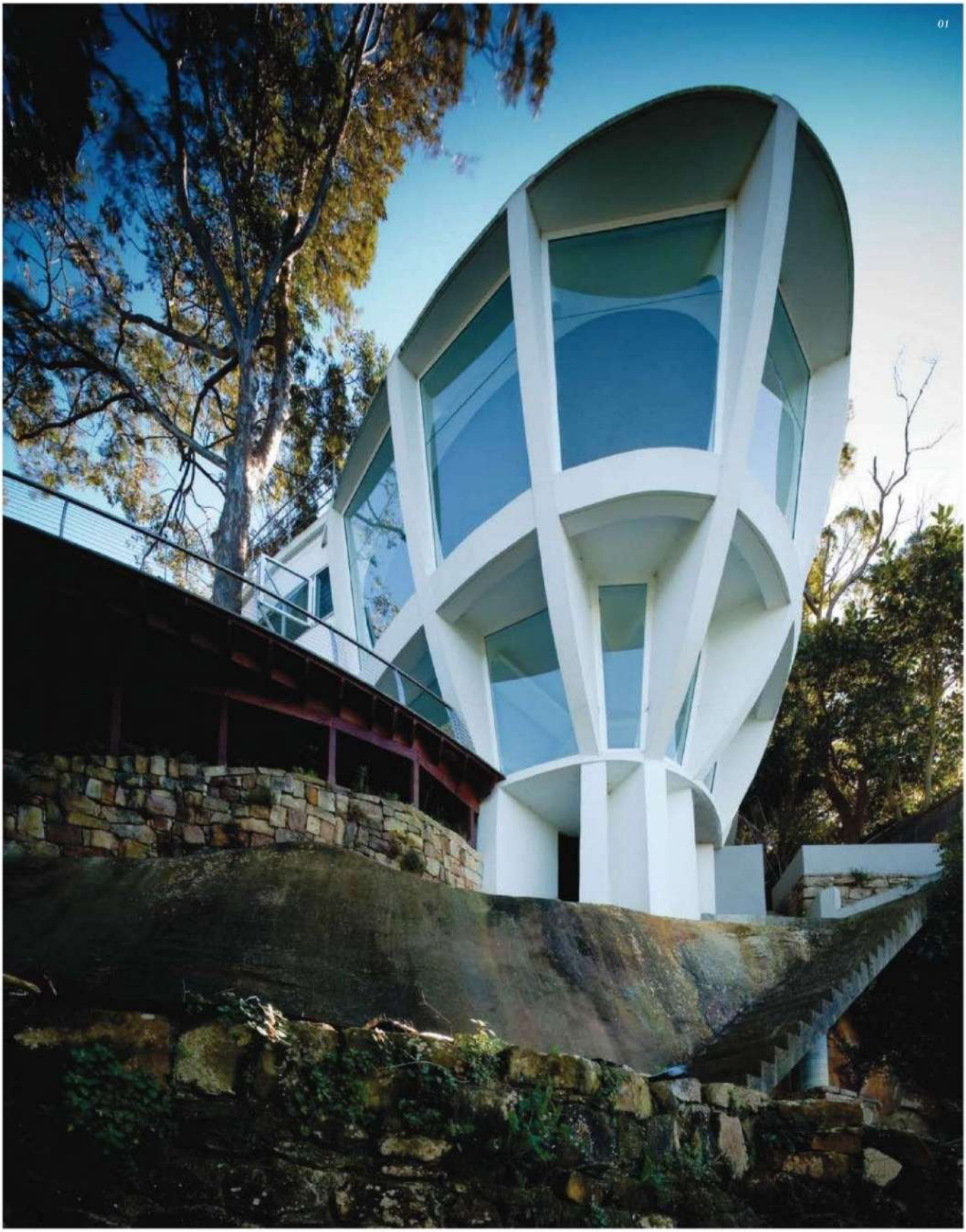
That space is not a static entity experienced by a stationary occupant, and that space and occupants are in simultaneous and relative motion is a well-known and key premise of architectural and philosophical modernity. The exhibition From Form to Formless: Exploring Non-Linear Space for Five Decades, Customs House Sydney (16 September – 17 October 2010), curated by Patrick Keane, is a brief historiographical take on this theme in the Australian context, showcasing rarely published and unpublished local built works. The works featured in this exhibition evidence the quest for dynamic space through the exploration of non-orthogonal geometries, fostering as well as gaining from new methods of fabrication.

From Form to Formless is a purposeful exhibition. Keane's curatorial agenda seems to reflect an aspiration to correct a common misperception that prior to the advent of the contemporary digital architects, Australian (and particularly, mid-to-late century Sydney) architecture was overwhelmingly the product of a modernist, or regional modernist, sensibility that proscribed non-orthogonal geometry or overtly sculptural form. This is especially pertinent given that these projects for the most part hail from New South Wales, the supposed stronghold of a particularly conservative strain of Australian modernism. The exhibition is also the start of an inquiry that is underpinned by a self conscious search for historical precursors, which demonstrate that the interest in fluid spaces is tied not exclusively to the recent technological advances in digital technology (a circumstantial and pragmatic criteria), but to the innate desire for a sensory experience. These desires are manifested in the featured projects as they attempt the unrealisable, pushing the boundaries of technologies available at the time. The exhibition opens up the possibility of writing an(other) history of 20th century Australian architectural modernism, while providing an anchor for the emergent wave of digitally minded architects.

The curatorial and institutional context is important in the conception and articulation of any exhibition. Keane's own professional accomplishment and interest in the field of digital architecture is oriented towards the experimental. His practice, Enter Architecture, is interested in exploring a redefinition of formal language and construction techniques, as well as architectural materialities and spatial experiences, evidence of which can be seen in recent schemes like the Invisible House, Cluster House, and Ribbon House. This finds alignment with Customs House Sydney, which has become increasingly active, visible, and important in the stimulation of architectural discourse, providing patronage to the artists, architects, and students who demonstrate a penchant for, and the skills to depict, a new ambition for the built environment.

From Form to Formless features works that demonstrate distinctive mindsets and accomplishments. Built in the 1960s in New South Wales, the Lilli Pilli House by Hugh Buhrich undertakes a figure-of-eight organisation of programmes, which is intended to dynamically absorb the occupants into domestic life and link them to the surroundings. Stan Symonds' News South Wales projects, Schuchard House on Battle Boulevarde, Seaforth (1964), Boronia Lane House, and Kywong Road House were envisioned as a kind of habitable sculpture, where curvilinear plans and cross-sections provide a sense of depth and changeability in the spatial experience. Cowra Place House, also known as Apollo Gate, Cronulla, New South Wales (1973) by Reuben Lane demonstrates the exploration of free form roof construction techniques and non-orthogonal spatial arrangements. Farrell House, Vaucluse, New South Wales (1993) by Harry Seidler and Associates employs a corridor-less, pinwheel arrangement of spaces along a central circular staircase, which allows a dynamic organisation of the interior, and the tear-drop outer form enables an active experience of the surroundings.

Chris Bosse/LAVA's Plastic House is made of recycled PET surfaces based on non-linear patterns observable in nature, which become



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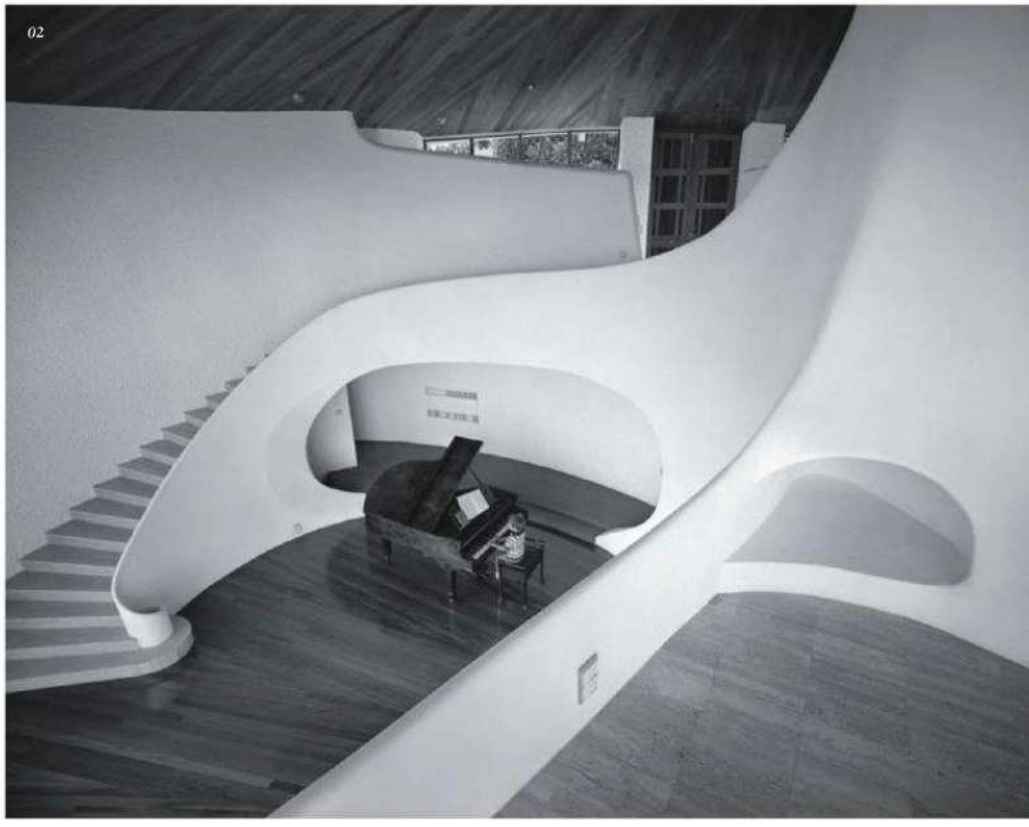

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Schuchard House on Battle Boulevarde, Seaforth (1964) by Stan Symonds. Photo: Brett Boardman

02. 03.
Apollo Gate, Cronulla, New South Wales (1973) by Reuben Lane. Photo: Max Dupain

simultaneously surface, structure, and space. North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club, North Bondi, New South Wales (forthcoming) by Durbach Block uses fluid circulation, curvilinear cuts into the façade, and angular windows to provide a social reading of a private building on public land, and rounded edges to evoke the translucent luminosity and streamlined form of sea tumbled glass. The Qantas Airbus A380 interior is filled with non-linear geometries, but is resolved and purposeful in delivering comfort, durability, and the experience of expansiveness and weightlessness.

Keane's curation of the exhibition is convincing in content. The featured projects engage with non-linear geometries and spaces, some evidencing the crossing over and sharing of imaginations and technologies between space travel, aviation, and architecture, and most projects push the limits of construction, spatial depth, programmatic organisation, and thresholds. The use of non-orthogonal geometries is never exclusively formal, as it is always connected to inhabitation and context. However, Keane's curation is confronted with a difficulty that would characterise any curated exhibition, especially an architecture exhibition with a historiographical ambition. Architectural practice is married to the compelling need for the novel and the innovative. As the curatorial process entails not only selection but also de-selection, the embedded assumption that buildings outside of this oeuvre are static, orthogonal, and normative is implausible. This could have been overcome by disabling the interchangeability of the non-orthogonal and the experimental. Furthermore, the historiographical ambition that is announced in the title of the exhibition remains largely unsupported by an expected quantity of projects and a depth of discussion. It risks being labelled capricious, an outcome of connoisseurship rather than that of rigorous historical excavation. Notwithstanding these minor difficulties, the exhibition is an engaging experience.

The crafting of From Form to Formless (layout and display) is carefully considered. The layout follows an un-self conscious spiral movement. The visitor moves from the corner of Custom House's Red Room, where they pick up the catalogue, towards and around the four centrally placed free-standing 'benches', which present models, photos and texts. The spiral movement is continued as the visitor is prompted to move in an anti-clockwise direction along the edges of the room, examining the large wall-mounted photos of buildings by Symonds, before being led towards the Media Wall. Through a composition of moving and still images (models and photographs) and text, the Media Wall skilfully re-presents and recapitulates the exhibits in the Red Room. The spiral movement that begins at the outer corner of the Red Room culminates at the Media Wall, leading the visitor quite fittingly from the realm of absorption to the space of speculation. This duality is expected and anticipated in an exhibition setting.

A number of architectural curators, critics, and theorists have noted that architecture exhibitions are practices distinct from other exhibitions, as they are marked by absence. The objects on display are not the buildings but representations of buildings. From Form to Formless surmounts this gap through its high quality multimodal displays, which involve not only architectural representations but also interactive displays, videos, moving stills and text, thereby encouraging a multisensory experience. In addition, the exhibition is not 'over-curated'. The commentary by the curator is contained, which maintains the voice of the participating practices. Such an approach makes the exhibition less overt and, most importantly, amenable to interpretive practices of visitors.

Ambitiously curated and skilfully executed, From Form to Formless has made a significant contribution by bringing forth lesser known projects framed within the thought provoking theme of experimentation, non-linearity, and dynamic spaces. **ar**

Dr Anuradha Chatterjee is an architect, academic and writer based at the University of New South Wales.

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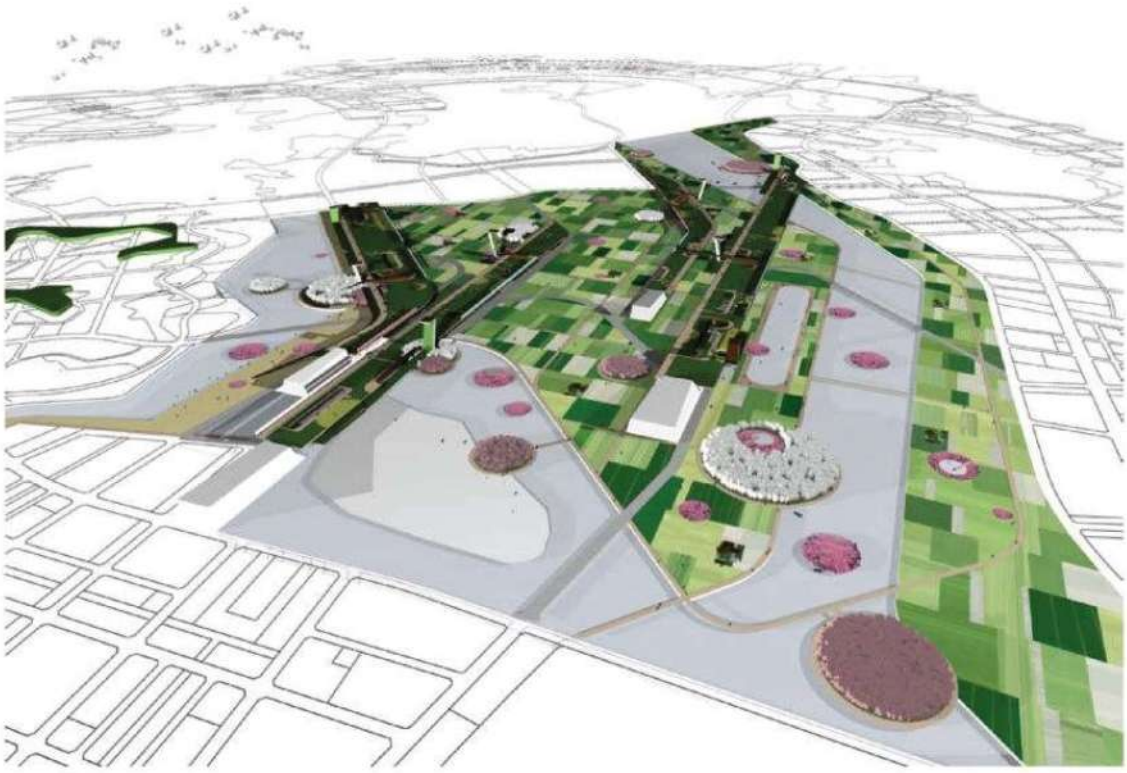
UNLIMITED: ASIA PACIFIC DESIGN TRIENNIAL 2010

text **Stuart Harrison**
imagery **CJ Lim, Stuart Harrison**

A workshop at the recent Unlimited: Designing for the Asia Pacific brought some of the world's most accomplished design thinkers together under one roof – but didn't quite live up to the very pragmatic, action-oriented goals established by its participants.

"Design Thinking" was the catchcry of the inaugural triennial event Unlimited: Designing for the Asia Pacific, held in Brisbane in early October 2010. A series of exhibitions, symposia, keynote lectures and workshops were themed around ground-up approaches, working in the developing world, and the role of design itself. The big hit of the event was the keynote lecture (and other appearances) of Bunker Roy, the inspirational community entrepreneur who in 1972 formed the Barefoot College in Tilonia, India – later becoming a solar engineering training and fabrication centre. Roy worked out that the most capable people in India were women, particularly grandmothers (he described men, in fact, as "untrainable"), who train at the college and then go on to train others. Roy has spread village-based solar electrification around the world, working with limited means but accomplishing more than many well-meaning but costly international agencies and bodies could ever hope to. He is not a designer, and his approach is one of 'can do' common sense that comes out of local traditions and skills, making for a genuinely sustainable outcome.

One of the two-day workshops, Emergent Cities, encompassed lectures by CJ Lim of Studio 8 in London, as well as a symposium featuring shorter presentations from futurist Oliver Freeman (who then conducted the workshop), Julianne Schultz (founding editor of Griffith REVIEW), Mark Ingram (CEO of Business for Millennium Development – B4MD), Bunker Roy, Marie So (director, Ventures in Development, Hong Kong), and



Masterplan for an urban park in Yeongi-gun, Korea by CJ Lim.

Paul Bennett (IDEO). All spoke of interaction with the developing world – ranging from the more paternalistic and business model-based approaches to the self-empowerment model of Roy. A lot of this, like much of the festival, was policy and case study oriented. The design works that were displayed were often not 'beautiful', which reflected the overall objectives of the curators – the promotion of design as solution rather than fashion.

CJ Lim is a vision-maker, and uses drawings as a propositional device, both through early investigations to his more recent large-scale masterplans in Asia and Europe. In these schemes, the model is the 'Smartcity', where basic human needs, such as food security, are considered first. They are, however, strongly authored schemes – they look like 'design', and he has fought against an obsession with European models, particularly in China. His work was a well-placed catalyst in the middle of the Emergent Cities workshop, which mostly involved Australian practitioners working on scenario-based strategies for future Australian cities. Lim's highly attractive designs addressed the concept of urban food production, and skilfully combined geometry with looseness and a human emphasis that is rare in this kind of work. His capabilities in this regard might stem from his understanding of two cultures – Malaysian-born but based in London, Lim's work is able to look beyond architecture into the broader conditions of income, tradition and sustainability, and in this way his work was central to the ideas behind the festival and the workshop.

Most cities in the Asia Pacific region, including Brisbane, are 'emergent cities' undergoing rapid change. The workshop took a group-based approach, with discussion tables working on different themes of 'nature', 'society', 'politics', 'economics', 'culture' and 'technology'. On day one, participants were asked to consider the driving forces relating to these very broad topics, which produced considerable overlap (they tended to be each other's forces). From this, major issues were identified and expanded on, leading to 2030 scenarios that "embraced uncertainty", with alternating emphases on optimism and pessimism. These tended to be verbal descriptions of a world that has responded to climate change either well or badly. Corollary considerations included resource depletion and other forces linked to human patterns – mainly population growth and ageing, urban form and other social trends. Both days of the workshop were interspersed with "provocations" from different participants – which set up debate and helped break up the format.

The second day of the workshop aimed to be more design-led, with the ultimate objective of a design strategy to be presented back to the participants. The outcomes cut across the original themes and ranged from redesigning the Australian political system to enable better long-term strategic thinking, to proposals for free regional universities to encourage in-land population growth, linked with the seemingly unattainable beast of fast inter-city rail. Another group sought to encourage further demonstration projects and industry-linked research, as well as embedding media further into the evaluation process. The two-day workshop, possibly a day too long, brought into focus the role of long-term strategy and theme-based scenario planning, often to furious agreement with the design professionals. Throughout the workshop, I kept thinking back to Roy's decades of action, of making stuff and exporting his method outside of India through doing, and of saving livelihoods.

A topic that came up during the workshop was 'globalism' and, specifically, the complacency that surrounds climate change in Australia – despite widely held acceptance within the community that climate change exists, real action has yet to come. With respect to the likely consequences of this inaction, we are living in a pleasant state of denial. In India, the effects of globalisation have been more virulent, with a much more direct impact in terms of economic upheaval and the destruction of traditional social systems. Bunker's proposals were not just about solar-electrified villages, building water storage and promoting handicrafts – he has an urban vision too, and the village is at the heart of it. In his view, the city is not the answer at all, emergent or not.

Photo: Stuart Harrison.

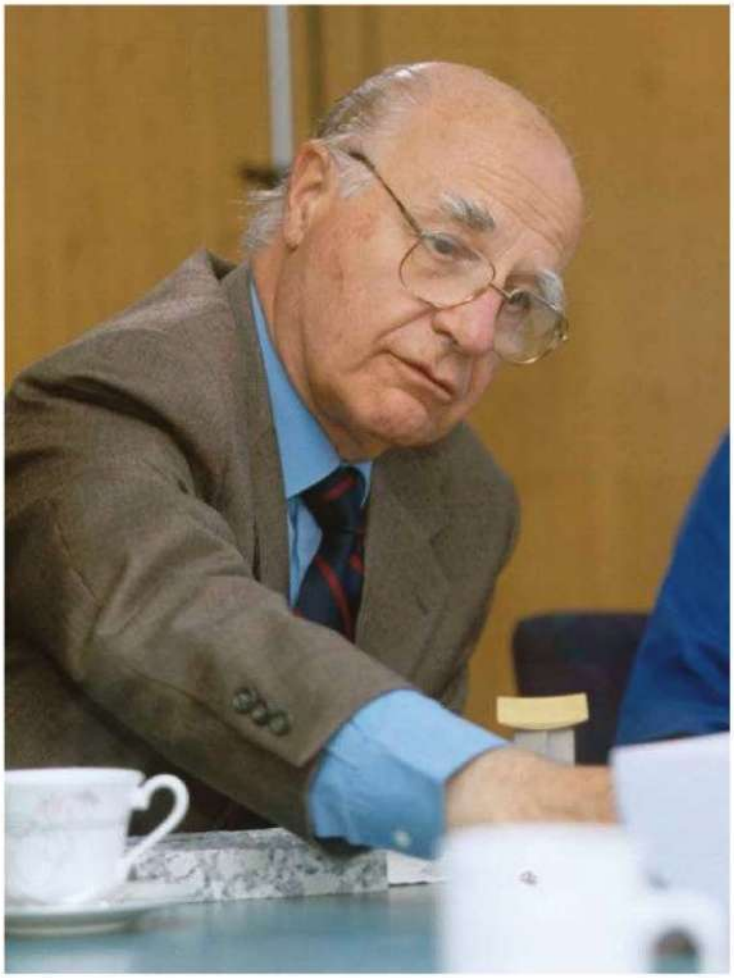
Photo: Stuart Harrison.

So what is design thinking? The main festival exhibition housed within the State Library of Queensland, "Make Change", was designed and installed by March Studio and curated by Fleur Watson, and provided some excellent ideas on how design thinking can be applied to shape the Asia Pacific positively. The space was filled with a series of large sheets of generic white paper, laser cut and hung to produce a series of domes and arches. Between these, 12 socially engaged regional projects were also suspended, as well as the message, "More than how something looks or functions, it is to do with systems and the way we approach problems." It was a great temporary space, and in keeping with the festival it was well crafted and broad in its aspiration. **ar**

Stuart Harrison is an architect, writer and lecturer at RMIT. His book on innovative Australian and New Zealand houses, A Place in the Sun *(Thames and Hudson, 2010), has just been released.*

– INTERVIEW –

ROMALDO GIURGOLA



This year marks the 90th birthday of Romaldo Giurgola, architect of Parliament House. To honour the occasion, an exhibition of his architectural drawings was held in Canberra, where *AR* met with Giurgola to discuss his hopes, and his concerns, for the future of Australia's cities.

—

interview **Maitiú Ward**
photography **Courtesy Romaldo Giurgola**

MAITIÚ WARD **An exhibition of your drawings has just opened at Parliament House. Drawing is becoming less commonplace nowadays in architecture, so I'd be interested to know what role it has played in your practice?**
ROMALDO GIURGOLA We have two aspects of practice nowadays. One is involved very much in the presentation of buildings, buildings that are there for publicity, to which the architect unfortunately becomes a servant in a way. A building becomes a piece of merchandise, and therefore the eventual form of it becomes a saleable form. Then there are the practitioners that, in the famous phrase of Le Corbusier, really dedicate themselves to the "patient search". There are not so many of them, but they are there; starting from Glen Murcutt, and others such as Lindsay and Kerry Clare, Richard Johnson, who did that beautiful building here recently.

MW **You've had an incredible career, with AIA Gold Medals in the United States and here. In your opening essay to *Luminous Simplicity*, the St Patrick's monograph, you mentioned that your motivations when you began work as an architect were too empirical, and then gradually over the course of your career, there's been this shift towards an understanding of architecture that allows for difference; a pluralist architecture, I suppose. But at the same time, you've never given up striving for, as you describe it, "a logical structure that offers a comprehensive process for building". There seem to be two competing processes at work: on the one hand you have this desire for order, which symmetry plays a part in, and on the other hand, there's an obvious humanism and respect for complexity and cultural variation. How have you managed to reconcile these two forces?**
RG It's not that I reconcile them really, but it happens in a way, perhaps because I have an eclectic temperament sometimes, which is a characteristic of our times too. In other words, reflecting on our changing condition and so on, leads to an eclectic response. But I hope there is not only that. The search for me is the search for the appropriate answer to a certain problem, where the stylistic result is dependent on the answer to the particular problem. That is why I have spoken often of content in architecture. I think content has often been excluded in favour of making form, but form in itself is nothing – form is the instrument of communication, but you have to have something to communicate, and unfortunately we have been dealing in form as an aesthetic exercise to no end for a long time. In architecture it's very difficult to do that; you probably can in painting and the other arts, because you can set up certain principles for which the form becomes an intimate part. But in architecture, many of our principles come from the life of people. Making a building for me is to make a thorough study of why the building has to exist, of the people behind it.

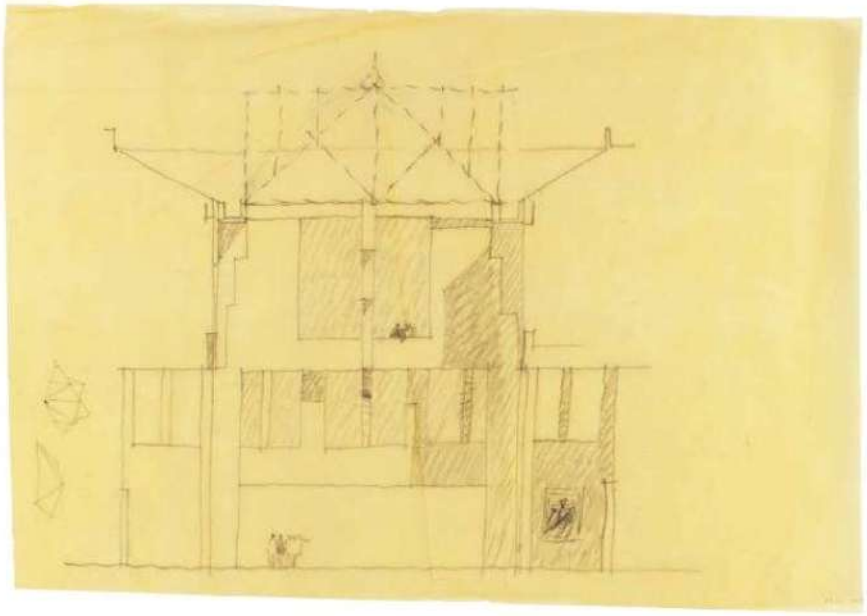
MW **Which is a nice segue to my next question, which is you talked in your essay in the St Patrick's monograph of an architecture of a possible future, addressing more significant cultural and spiritual connections with human needs and values. With this in mind, do you think that we're on the right track in Australia?**
RG We may be, because there are lots of young people who feel very strongly about that, and also because we are in a place that is totally different to Europe, and even America. We are a little piece of Asia. Niall Fergusson has spoken of the end of an epoch and the collapse of Europe and the United States, and he says we are lucky in Australia because we are in the sphere of another kind of empire, which would be China and south-east Asia and so forth.

We say culture is always generated gradually through the consistency of a certain place – how to deal with the environment, your train of thought, your aspirations in life. In the world there is this fabulous wealth that you see in the States and Europe and so forth, but here the inequality is much less than in other places. It's a bit like Scandinavia. I find potential here from a social standpoint, because again, we deal differently with the urban environment, and our sense of community is relatively new.

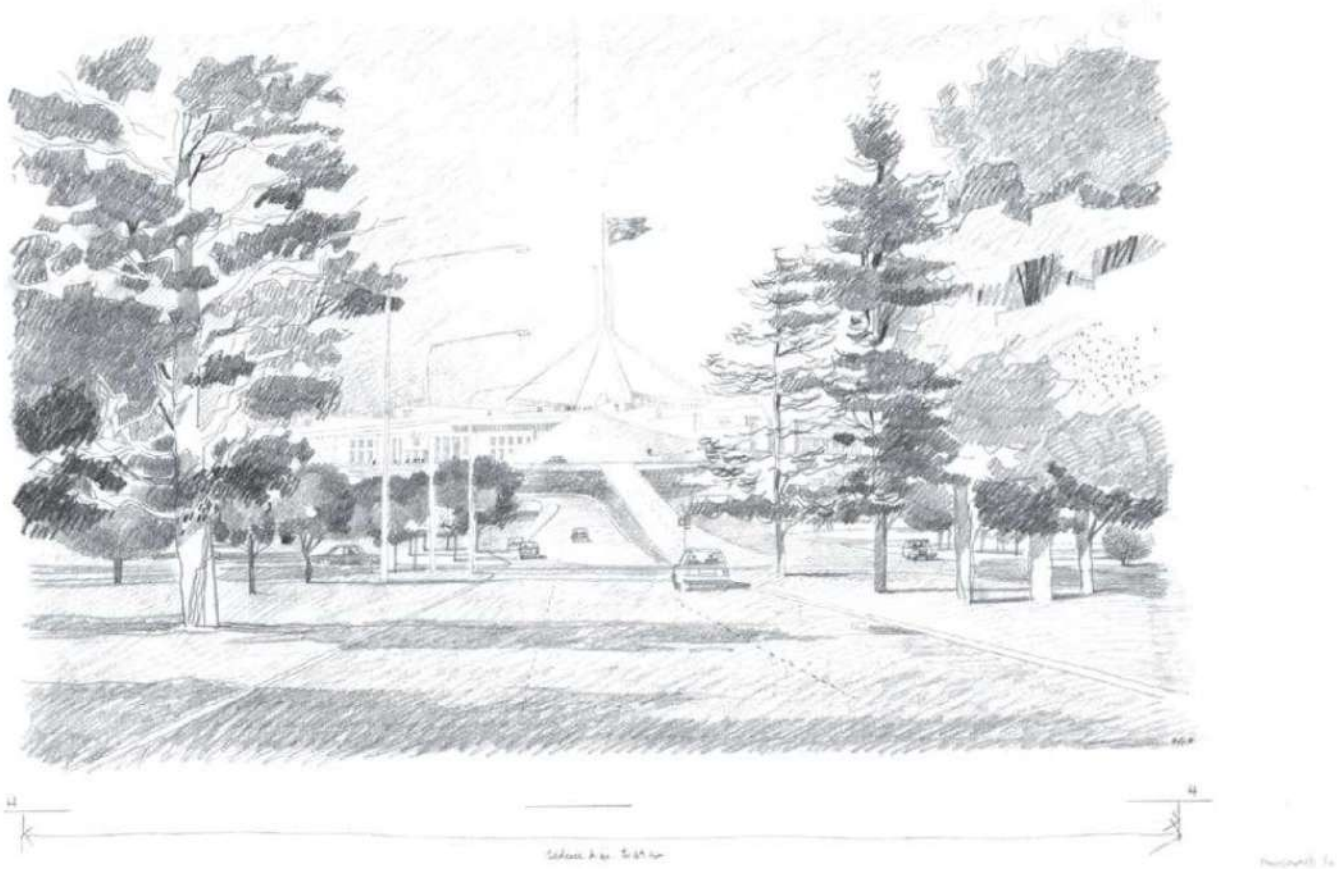
But culture is born from a small place – from where people can talk to each other, if nothing else, and look each other in the eye. In Canberra when they say we have to have culture, they ask somebody from Sydney to be a consultant. They should ask someone from here, because it's only in this way that you gradually build a culture.

MW **What do you think is the biggest challenge facing architects today?**
RG One thing that needs to be reassessed is the relation to society. This will always be a preoccupation for architects, of course. The modern movement created a theory about it, but this also became an almost meaningless standard – the house for everybody, which is the same box for everybody! [laughs] But our challenges are much vaster, much more comprehensive – how we humanise what the environment is in terms of both the city and the country, how we make the scale at which man is a participant and an indispensable but not dominating element of nature. I feel very strongly about that. Even in this project [Parliament House], I tried desperately not to fall into the trap of making a glorious building.

I'm not a particularly religious person, but I must say that for the St Patrick's Cathedral we laboured for seven years, because from the beginning they didn't know where to go. At the



Early sketch study, Members' Hall, Parliament House, Canberra, c. 1981.



View from Commonwealth Avenue, Parliament House, Canberra, 1981.

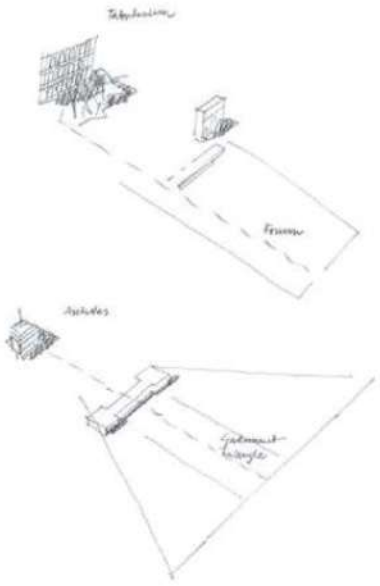


Diagram comparing the location of the legislature and the archives of the ancient city of Rome and Walter Burley Griffin's design for Canberra, c. 1980.

beginning, following the fire in the heritage-listed church, the client said maybe we should select a new site for the cathedral where the business is, or where the community is. And then there was the historical option – to continue to have the cathedral located in the place where they had the first church. So we dug into it and worked with them, and eventually we all arrived at the conclusion that the historical place was the most important one for the Cathedral, that people would go there because there is a precedent. So we built the new church, incorporating the old chapel, in that place. And now it's very successful; people come to the church not only from the community, but from everywhere. The project happened because there was good motivation for doing it. You cannot do something simply as a business transaction.

MW **You've spoken of architecture in that regard as being created collectively and built collectively, for a collective purpose.**
RG Absolutely.

MW **Where do you see the role of the architect in regards to that process?**
RG Certainly the role of elucidating his task, and then not being afraid of collaborating intensively with people, to have a project where everybody can be part of it as much as possible. Architecture is an art, but it's a particular art. A painter can say, "If you like it, you take it; if you don't like it, I can do something else." An architect is not in this position; an architect has to work with the life of other people, to get the right sensitivity to the nature of a problem. So I very much believe in collaborative work. For this building [Parliament House], we all had a wonderful relationship, from the builders' union to the parliamentarians. It was a very special time because everybody wanted this building – there was not this pressure on the design of making money with the project.

MW **What drew you to establish your home here in Canberra?**
RG We finished Parliament House, and to be frank, I found myself in a wonderful place. I had a wonderful experience. It was the greatest thing that I'd done in my life, if nothing else in size [laughs]. I was born in Italy, and spent most of my career working and teaching in America, but I found that I belonged here.

MW **You've been here in Canberra now for more than two and a half decades. How do you feel the city has evolved over that time?**
RG Unfortunately, I lived in that period where everybody was disoriented in a sense from the economy, and then the city was split. Before self-government in the ACT, the city was part of the government, and then it became an

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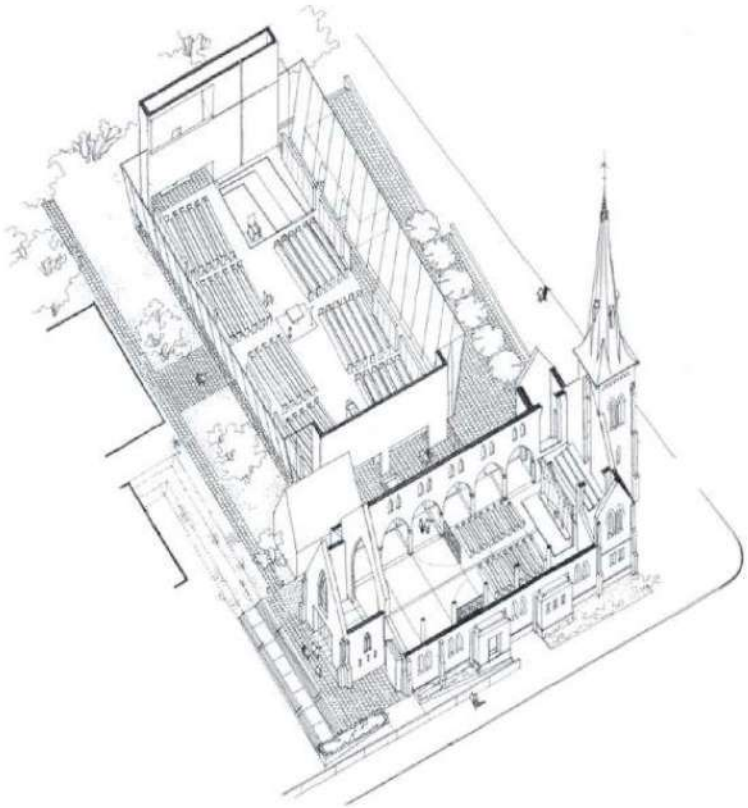

Cut-away axonometric view, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta, NSW, c. 2002.

independent entity. The local government had to try to survive financially as much as it could, and they started to build this process of creating revenue for the city, and they kept building and building. In contrast to this are the strict conservatives in Canberra that want to defend every little inch of the city from development. In the city, life changes and you have to accept that something has to happen. What should happen is another thing, but you cannot defend something just because of the Griffin legacy. Griffin said a wonderful thing: that this is a model for a democratic city. I take it that he was thinking in terms of Frank Lloyd Wright and Chicago in the early 1900s. So by taking a position like that, nobody listens very closely to these people. That's an archconservative position – they say, "You shouldn't build there because otherwise you don't have the view of the Parliament from a certain distance." But you walk 10 metres away and the view changes! [Laughs] So that position is more dangerous than the people that take action. But I still believe that they have to be careful about increasing density, about what that means. The row house is an important model. Why can't we sit down and design what is proper for this place?

MW **You mentioned in your Sir Roy Ground's Memorial Lecture in 1983 there was this issue of the city becoming more and more sprawling, which is creating more and more problems. Twenty-five years on, we've had a vast amount of sprawl, particularly in Melbourne and Sydney. It's become very problematic, and obviously one of the solutions that architects are talking about is density. You're saying that density of a certain form is a bad idea, but you yourself lived in a Roy Ground's apartment, which you referenced in that lecture…**

RG I live in an apartment, yes, with a beautiful view. But you see it depends how it's done, because when an architect says density, there are various ways of thinking about what it means – big apartments, small row houses... We have to think here of what density means in terms of Canberra. The problem also is what the developer means when he talks of density, because governments can be very weak. So we have to be very careful when we pronounce a statement like that, "an increase in density". For them it means the big buildings that you see around, but we don't have a plan – planning is very important, but they have two planning offices here with no power and not enough professional staff.
It's not that I deny the need for density, but for every place there should be a particular density.

MW **In the course of your career, have there been any disappointments at all?**

RG We had a project in Seattle. I'd never worked for a developer, and the first time that we worked for a developer, I got in trouble [laughs]. We spent years doing a project that was for a complex building in the city, and again, I was trying to make a building open enough to be receiving people easily, and he wanted instead to use every little inch available from the ground up. I couldn't stand it because doing that was also creating overshadowing for other structures. That was a real disappointment. But there was another disappointment that was eventually successful in a way, which was the competition we won for headquarters for the American Institute of Architects in Washington. There was an old building, and we designed a circular building with specially configured glass walls that reflected this heritage building. It was a very nice thing. When we went to present the project to the Commission in Washington, it was rejected because it was too modern for their taste – I don't know why. There were actually some good architects in that Commission – Skidmore Owings and Merrill was there, but they didn't like it. We did five different design stages for that project and eventually we resigned the commission, and we became famous for that [laughs] – our fame is not a result of being great architects, but because we resigned a major commission! Another disappointment I had was that we were commissioned for an addition to the Kimbell Museum in Texas. We were engaged for a first design stage to expand and complete this building by Louis Kahn, but our design proposal got everybody against it – artists and some architects, especially critics.

MW **Kahn of course was a friend of yours?**

RG Yes. And I knew the original design which he had completed for the Museum, which was never fully constructed. We didn't do anything special in our design proposal; I just faithfully extended what he was doing. The image was very strange that people make in their minds, because since Kahn's building was unfinished in that way, people think that it is precious in that form, when in fact Louis Kahn intended to do a much bigger building. But because the Kimbell Museum image was crystallised into what they saw in a particular way, it didn't go through. It was a disappointment.

MW **So what has been the most defining moment of your career?**

RG I think I would say it was this building [Parliament House] because I have never been so delighted by the generosity of the people involved. It was a choral effort around the idea of making this place be a culmination of the city plan. I wish you could have this kind of fortune some time in life; I wish everybody could have this experience… **ar**

Maitiú Ward is the managing editor of Architectural Review Australia.

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SPECULATIVE ARCHITECTURE

RECOVERING A VALUE PROPOSITION

text **Anthony Burke**

"The speculative haunts all systems of production, threatens them with the destruction of their order and with collapse. It continues to appear to all orthodoxies as artifice, black magic, which is to be unveiled, because it is somehow effective..."

– Mona Mahall and Asli Serbest, editors, Junk Jet

Returning from interstate recently, I picked up the in-flight magazine to read an article about a well-known Australian architect's project for his happy clients. The project in question was a house retreat just outside Sydney, but what struck me about the story was not the architecture (which was neo-modern, predictable, *nice*) but the absence of any trace of meaning in the interview-based commentary. Granted, an in-flight magazine is light entertainment and pretends nothing more, the audience, distracted and general. And yet the obsequious familiarity of the architect's comments struck me as so hollow they could only be understood as a perverse agenda to commit to nothing that might make the reader think anything of the project beyond what was conveyed by the accompanying moody photographs. The prose was of light and shade, capturing views, listening to the client, material selection and lifestyle – words that bothered not because of their relevance to architecture, but because of their active avoidance of any specificity or commitment to an actual idea. The text could not be 'safer' in that it was incapable of being understood as anything but the most absolutely generalised notion of architecture, served up for popular consumption like the foodie articles a few pages on, and therefore in the context of this particular architectural commission, with its particularities, personalities and opportunities, absolutely meaningless.

I realised of course that the architect was talking not about his ideas, but the absence of them; or, perhaps more worryingly, his professional and commercial responsibility not to speak of them. On another recent occasion, I was reminded by a very considerate professional colleague that speaking out as a practice against appalling circumstances (such as the recent development proposals for Sydney's Barangaroo), puts jobs and families at risk and should be professionally avoided. This is a point of view that not only makes me weep for our discipline, but undermines the very premise of professional integrity. Ideas are dangerous, they can be held against you, and the official line in the in-flight article, as with all mass media, must be to keep things simple, inoffensive, neutral. We would all agree neutrality, the absence of an agenda, is the antithesis of design excellence, and as Robyn Boyd recognised in 1950, it takes a certain confidence to treat the audience as intelligent, a recognition that has been forthcoming too rarely in recent Australian architecture and media history. It made me think again about ideas, positions and agendas in architecture, and why in Australia it seems to be so difficult to speak of such things.

Open Agenda is a response to just this difficulty and was created after many conversations with colleagues and those not jaded enough to have forgotten the value to the profession of the unconventional. It is based on the proposition that there is ample talent and a strong desire for a distinctly Australian discussion of non-commercial architecture, that is in need of a forum and a clear means of financial support not tied to arcane Australian Research Council formats or institutional correctness. A forum where the agenda is literally left open to be written by the participants, where risks are a condition of entry, and where polemic and bias is openly encouraged. To borrow the words of Bernard Rudofsky in 1965, Open Agenda is conceived of as a necessary escape from the "narrow world of official and commercial architecture" and "a point of departure for the exploration of our architectural prejudices".

Why would this be useful here and now? With the recent Venice Biennale's speculative futures, with any number of architectural competitions up and running about the future of the built environment, why would another be necessary? Simply put, Open Agenda is not a competition about buildings. It is a forum about architecture in its richest and most expanded definition, from forms of drawing to domains of work, from forms of practice to new sites of contestation. For the other 10 percent of the profession for whom architecture is a discipline requiring intellectual enquiry as part of the development of our own professional domain, and for whom pretty neo-modern buildings are, strangely enough, less than satisfying, Open Agenda is a space created where other forms of architectural work are allowed to exist. It does not represent the profession, rather it seeks to challenge our pre-conceptions of what architecture is and is not, and more importantly what it is capable of doing.

The relatively recent ground swell of youthful architectural culture marks an impressive moment worth recognising in our Australian discipline. Thanks to new forms of media combined with a generational confidence, and motivated by a general dissatisfaction with guarded establishment positions, a generation of young professionals and recent graduates is flexing its right to protest simply through establishing its own discourse. We might

David Pigram and Iain Maxwell's CityBREEDER project, one of the three winners of this year's Open Agenda competition.

speculate that there are several causes of this groundswell, from a weariness of established and polite positions on sustainability, a lack of vision in mannered third generation modernism, and the relentless campaign of the worst forms of architectural education being mounted against the discipline by bizarre reality TV personalities are a few that come quickly to mind.

What is important is that from blogs to Pecha Kucha, from societies both self-appointed and spontaneous, action and words are forming a conversation in Australian architecture that replaces with enthusiasm and optimism the tired bitterness of conventional wisdom. It feels like a moment where the doors have been cracked open a touch, and another possibility for architecture and its institutional structures is just visible. Just.

In 2010, its inaugural year, Open Agenda has seen a raft of ideas emerge through entries from almost all states. The finalists were chosen by the advisory panel for their unique positioning and capacity to animate a debate about architecture, its value, its relevance, its future. The inaugural winners set issues of architectural representation against artificial ecological infrastructures, and the rules of urban morphology were laid bare for public abuse. Issues of context, process and representation, overlap and tussle with each other as they are rebuilt in these specific investigations, from the ground up.

The competition however is constructed as a ruse, a means of putting ideas into a contested space surrounded by an audience on three sides (lecture, publication, exhibition). Open Agenda does not take its audience to be simple, but genuinely motivated to discuss the complexities of ideas that do not make perfect wholes. In this sense the agenda of the competition is not so open at all, the provocation is clear. This is the other tradition of architecture that is yet to have its history properly recorded, taken up in the form of magazines like *Pamphlet Architecture*, and *Junk Jet*, in projects from Etienne-Louis Boullées' Tomb's of 1785 to *Perfect Acts of Architecture*, to manifestoes from The Futurists to Architecture Must Burn – minor incursions into other forms of architectural work influential well beyond their modest means.

The competition as much as the entries in it are a risk taken in the interest of developing an architectural discussion outside of conventional wisdom, a value proposition that is difficult to argue in risk averse institutional contexts. As a competition for Australian recent graduates, it offers a possible mirror to the future of the profession. Even so, it will be deemed irrelevant by many, and ignored by most, but the value of 'planting' notions that destabilise our own discourse is not only a self-evident investment in developing new and necessary forms of discourse, but a disciplinary survival instinct. **ar**

OPEN AGENDA is an annual competition initiated in 2010 by the School of Architecture at the University of Technology, Sydney aimed at encouraging speculative architectural research and design. Open to recent architectural graduates, three proposals were selected from an open national competition and awarded seed funding for further development as an exhibition at Customs House in Sydney from 20 October 2010 to 30 January 2011. Open Agenda Vol 1, a publication on the works is planned for release in January 2011 to coincide with the launch of Open Agenda 2011. The public lecture from the winners was held at UTS on the 27th October 2010. The inaugural winning proposals were 'The Architecture Drawing Project' by Byron Kinnaird and Barnaby Bennett '(In) Human Habitat' by James Gardiner and 'CityBREEDER' by David (Dave) Pigram and Iain (Max) Maxwell (Supermanouevre).

A DECADE OF AUSTRALIAN ARCHITECTURE

The 2000s have been tumultuous years – host to terrorism, climate change, the rise of digital society, and an economic boom followed by an economic bust of truly global scale and affect. Unsurprisingly, it has been a turbulent time for architecture, too, at times both decadent and conservative.

To mark the close of this decade, and in an attempt to come to terms with what, if anything, it has meant for the discipline, *AR* has asked a host of leading practitioners and critics from around the country to identify three projects or tendencies from the past 10 years they believe have had a positive influence on the practice and production of architecture in Australia. Their comments follow: an appropriately diverse and eclectic response to the complexity and contradiction that has marked the beginning of the new millennium.

CAREY LYON
Director, Lyons Architects

THE RISE AND RISE OF GOVERNMENT ARCHITECTS

Only six or seven years ago, the political landscape for design was moribund, with only the NSW government architect holding the torch (having done so for 190 years). Since then, Western Australia followed by Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania, the ACT and now South Australia, have all established equivalent positions appropriate to each political need and jurisdiction – a number of them reporting directly to the respective premier or cabinet. The value of this 'project' to the local and national architecture culture is inestimable; from small words in the right ears to front row seats to the big shows. Another 10 years of this ongoing project and the effect should be profound.

SUSTAINABILITY UBIQUITY

The construction sector's adaptation to sustainability as an industry project, and architects' leadership through design, has been nothing short of staggering – from sideshow to mainstream in less than a decade. The Green Star rating scheme didn't even exist until 2002, and already no self-respecting developer or government agency can advocate for less than five stars without looking parsimonious or churlish. Whether it's enough to save the world, or whether architecture can resist dissembling into mere environmental systems, is a key play space for the coming decade.

NERO FIDDLES IN SYDNEY

The profession looks into Sydney's architectural culture in the same way the national culture looks into NSW politics – with a mixture of respect for its traditions, abject fascination and horror. Yet this is at odds with the work of a number of significant architectural practices working in the city. So what makes for a successful architectural design culture as a form of cultural project? Perhaps the diagnosis is that the political culture is sufficiently contagious and the architectural culture cannot be immune, or that the patient needs to give consent to a treatment before it can be effective. Recent appointments to the local faculties and schools of architecture give hope for resuscitation.

KARL FENDER
National President, the Australian Institute of Architects/Director, Fender Katsalidis Architects

EUREKA TOWER – FENDER KATSALIDIS ARCHITECTS

Within Australia, and during this period of community soul-searching with respect to our sustainable future, the exploration of new residential typologies has become increasingly relevant. In this environment, Eureka Tower in Melbourne's Southbank Precinct stands as testimony to a broad section of the community embracing higher density, high-rise apartment living, once so maligned. The potential to reduce our individual carbon footprints, and indeed our physical footprints on the planet, is benchmarked by this project, which provides 580 apartment homes on only a half-hectare within the inner-city precinct.

The project was marketed in 1999, when apartment living was in its relative infancy within Melbourne. However, despite being extreme at 92 storeys high, its offer of elegant lifestyle, safety, vertical community, minimisation of vehicle dependence and maximisation of amenity was readily committed to. This highly awarded building has become a Melbourne landmark, and is well regarded internationally. It has helped enrich Australia's reputation as a nation concerned with the built environment, sustainability and design excellence.

STATE GOVERNMENT ARCHITECTS

The propagation of sustainable cities is underpinned by the need for excellence in urban and architectural design. Much of the necessary facilitation in this regard lies squarely within the province of state and territory governments, and any assistance they can garner is compelling. Accordingly, the recent achievement of a full suite of state government architect positions throughout Australia is a great step forward in the advancement of our built environment.

The government architects and their teams provide strategic inhouse advice to their governments about matters of architecture, urban design and heritage protection. The relevance of their advocacy work relating to the importance of good design to make and maintain excellence in living places and urban design cannot be underestimated.

The state government architects exchange ideas and experiences through the GANA alliance (Government Architects Network Australia), which also, like the Australian Institute of Architects, supports the creation of the next step: a commonwealth government architect position.

RECONCILIATION

"We cannot imagine that the descendants of people whose genius and resilience maintained a culture here through 50,000 years or more, through cataclysmic changes to the climate and environment, and who then survived two centuries of dispossession and abuse, will be denied their place in the modern Australian nation." – Prime Minister Paul Keating, Redfern Address, 1992.

The Victorian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects has acknowledged the need for implementing a process towards reconciliation, parity and healing, by piloting a Reconciliation Action Plan for the profession, including its educational facilities.

Currently, there exists only 10, albeit extremely talented, indigenous architects throughout Australia. The Institute seeks to change this, by improving opportunities and understanding. Accordingly, this initiative will facilitate new pathways for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to integrate their history, knowledge and skills within both the architectural profession and throughout the construction industry generally.

LEON VAN SCHAIK
Professor of Architecture
(innovation chair), RMIT

ARCHITECTURE AND POPULAR CULTURE

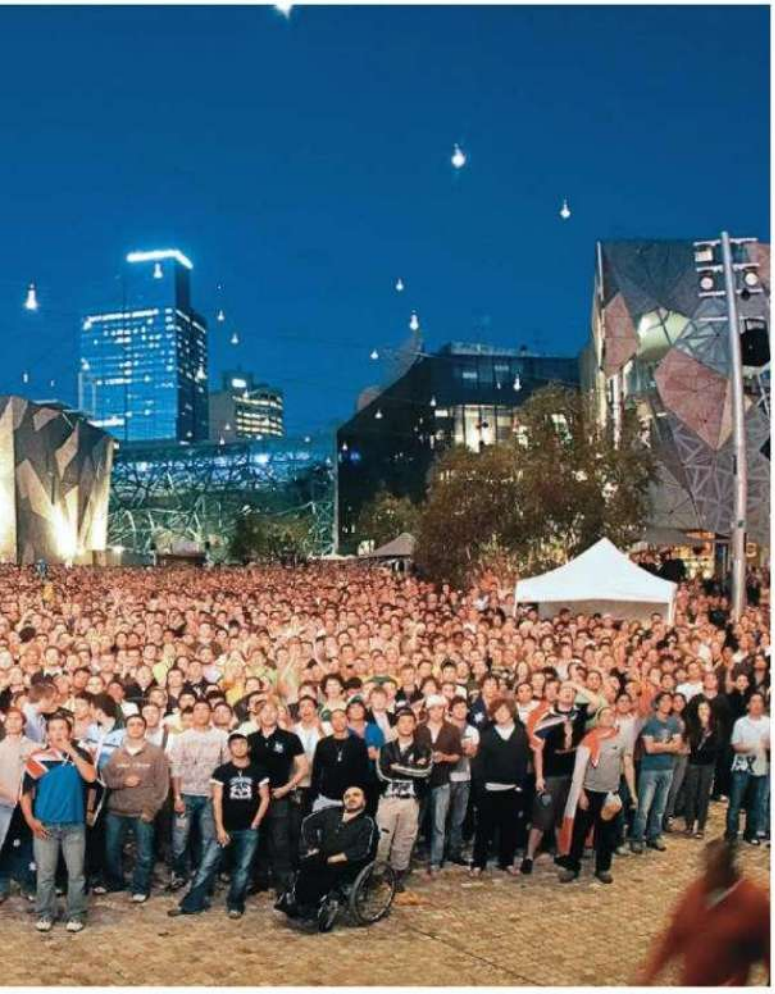
Raymond Chandler made the architectural reality of 1940s Los Angeles a persona in his popular books. Shane Maloney (1994) began to make Melbourne a player in his fiction, mood and action, defined by the industrial estates of Broadmeadows or by the city – reached through "the tunnel of shade" of Royal Parade. In 2007, the method was firmly in place: "On the southern bank of the Yarra squatted the long, low lump of the casino." In 2005, Peter Temple wrote: "Cashin looked away, at the water running down the huge plate-glass window. Two blurred figures outside were running fingertips across the stream, making wavy transient lines." *His Truth* (2009) describes the housing in the city in a crisp critique. Christos Tsiolkas uses architecture to define character in *The Slap* (2008), from Beach Road, Brighton to "a bar across from Federation Square." Here in Melbourne, architecture is now part of the popular culture.

THE RETREAT OF IDEOLOGY

This decade saw the first glimmerings of an empirical (as opposed to an ideological) understanding of what drives intellectual change in our architectural culture. In Melbourne Masters Architecture – an exhibition at TarraWarra Museum of Art (November 2004 – February 2005 – I trialled a tri-polar analysis of local architectures. The poles were 'civic narrative expression', 'technics' and 'poetics'. Edmond and Corrigan's Newman College Study Centre defined one pole, Sean Godsell's Peninsula House the second, and Allan Powell's TarraWarra Museum of Art the third. Between these were arrayed, beginning with the first pole, Ian McDougall (ARM), McBride Charles Ryan, Lyons Architects, Denton Corker Marshall, McGauran Giannini Soon, Shane Murray, Kerstin Thompson and Tom Kovac. Heading towards the last pole were Ivan Rijavec, Wood/Marsh and John Wardle. Fascinatingly, the continuum kept flipping, with a new 'surface' architecture pole becoming evident through the work of three firms. This reinforced the spiral action that characterises 'intellectual change' – a breakthrough of sorts.

PRACTICE AS RESEARCH

Design practice has emerged as a key research mode, embraced in the research evaluation in the UK and Australia, and by their respective professional bodies. Having pioneered the approach here in Melbourne with the practices of ARM, Allan Powell, Nonda Katsalidis, Norman Day, Peter Elliott and Michael Trudgeon, in 1987–88, it was gratifying to have new ground broken. Terroir, using electronic journals, captured every moment of interaction (sketches, chats, models, computer renders) between the directors and staff as they designed their entry for the Prague



Federation Square, Melbourne – initially controversial, the project became a huge success for Melbourne's public life.

The Helix Bridge, Singapore, is reflective of a convergence of the disciplines of architecture and engineering.

Archives competition. M3 analysed their ways of designing – a complex matter given their deliberately flat organisational structure – and then designed icons of these modes that revealed the power of visual communication of design practice. Robert Simeoni tracked his influences through the vernaculars of North Melbourne and North Italy, tracing their artefactual implications into his own architecture of delayed consummation. Three new poles!

LINDSAY AND KERRY CLARE
Directors, Clare Design

THE PROBLEMATIC RISE OF THE 'ICONIC'

Although there has been a number of 'notable projects' produced in the last 10 years, we do not consider that there are clear standouts that have had a "positive influence" on the discipline. We are concerned that some of Australia's high-profile projects (in attempting to be original and iconic) have had a negative influence and repercussion.

However, there is an emergence across Australia of more contextually and environmentally aware projects. We believe these projects are subtly paving the way for a good future for our built environment. There is an urgent need for architecture to contribute to the framework and character of our communities. While we recognise the need for symbolism at times, we don't need more meaningless big-bang or blob architecture – and we think that there is a growing recognition and understanding that such moves can be very detrimental to our cities. As Lawrence Nield pointed out to us, the Italian poet Cesare Pavese wrote, "The true astonishment comes from recognition, not novelty".

MARCUS TRIMBLE
Director, Supercolossal

THE MARKET AND PLAN LITERACY

This decade has seen real estate recast as entertainment. A decade ago, the real estate listings comprised of pages of three- to four-line text listings, with the occasional 'prestige' property that was afforded a half page ad. Today, listings are full page by default; they are in glossy booklets, on websites and are televised. Real estate agents have pioneered a strategy of photography and post-production that leaves every house sitting beneath an infinite summer of perfect blue skies, while the agents' smiling heads line the streets broadcasting their recent triumphs.

While this commodification of architecture is bemoaned, the upside is that the population is now far more literate in the language of buildings. Critically, every property is listed on *domain.com.au* and other real estate sites with to-scale floor plans, and as such the client base for architecture has been exposed to this most basic of architectural tools to a degree previously unheard of. Literate clients are good for the profession and the real estate agents are educating the population for us, for free.

THE ARCHITECTS ON RRR

Every Tuesday since 2004, Simon Knott, Stuart Harrison, Rory Hyde and, more recently, Christine Phillips host The Architects

on Melbourne public radio station Triple R. The typical show features news and events from the world of architecture and an interview/discussion with a local or international architect.

It is local radio, but international syndication through podcasting means that it has a global audience. The success of the show is that it brings broad appeal to architectural nerdery, delivering an intelligent discussion on the built environment to an incredibly wide audience. The wide audience does not mean that the content is watered down but rather the opposite – the hosts are disarmingly frank and direct with their critique of the built environment. They talk about architecture in a plain spoken way that is accessible for the general listener and particular enough to be an important contribution to the detailed discussion of architecture within the profession.

SEPP 65

It is near impossible to demolish a strata title apartment building. Without 100 percent owners' consent, the only option open to individuals or groups without unanimous support is to go to the Supreme Court. Given this reality, it is clear that the strata apartment buildings that do get built need to be of good stock.

In 2002, the New South Wales State Environmental Planning Policy 65 – Design Quality of Residential Flat Development (SEPP 65) was adopted. It stipulates that for an apartment building of three or more storeys, a registered architect is required to verify the design and construction of the development. It sets out a series of 'design quality principles' that must be considered, and puts in place 'design review panels' to review relevant applications.

The result of this has been a clear improvement in the overall quality of apartment buildings in New South Wales. This improvement extends beyond the immediate benefit of an increase in thoughtfully designed buildings, to creating a far more attractive proposition for higher density living. Better apartment buildings make the pitch to increase much needed higher density developments in suburban centres and along rail corridors a more palatable prospect to the local constituents.

PHILIP COX
Director, Cox Architecture

The main influences on Australian architecture have been external, with a direction towards sculptural or so-called iconic projects that have little regard for the urban environment, function or the previous edict that form should follow function from the last century. Architecture of this genre has little regard for purpose, materials or environment and is reflective of a fetish for being noticed. This approach has demonstrated a self will of artistic indulgence that cries for attention, rather than the desire to complement and add to the quality of the environment. However, it is the approach of many young designers who hanker for attention. There are many examples of this in Melbourne and the fashion has reached Sydney. Hopefully, it will be as short-lived as postmodernism was in the 1970s.

The most notable change in Australian architecture in the past 10 years has been, at least superficially, the incorporation of sustainable principles, with a more intelligent approach to the incorporation of both passive and active energy systems within a building. These have yet to find an aesthetic other than being secondary elements, rather than primary.

Donovan Hill's State Library of Queensland. One of several highly accomplished projects contributing to the transformation of Brisbane's South Bank.

The Watercube proved that digital architecture could be both beautiful and functional.

CH2, MELBOURNE – MICK PEARCE AND DESIGNINC

The CH2 building in Melbourne is a demonstration of a pot-pourri of environmental issues, patter-caked together into a building. It is a noble effort and has had the desired effect of marketing to the architectural community that if there is money and determination, environmental initiatives can be achieved. In urban or aesthetic terms, it equally tells a story that there is much to do to humanise this approach. Social and other aspirations are deserving of equal consideration.

THE ENGINEER AND THE ARCHITECT: A NEW RELATIONSHIP

Goodwill Bridge Brisbane, Kurilpa Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge Brisbane, Helix Bridge Marina Bay Singapore and Yarra Park Pedestrian Bridge Melbourne have shown the change in engineer and architect relationships. Architects are now used more extensively in design within a domain previously considered exclusive to engineers. The reason is mostly twofold: the education of engineering students in design, and a new attitude towards architects, given their ability to 'place make', taking structures into consideration.

BARANGAROO

Barangaroo in Sydney has had a positive outcome in mustering architectural opinion against a project that does not contribute to the city or recognise the issues of city grain, texture, waterfront amenity, public versus private space, scale, bulk, connectivity and a litany of other architectural and urban considerations. To question the role of government in bringing in named overseas architects to assure the public of solutions, despite rigorous assessment by Australian architectural opinion pointing to the contrary, brings to the Australian architectural and planning environment a new self-confidence, considering the disastrous solutions being offered by overseas architects.

SANDRA KAJI-O'GRADY
Lecturer in Architecture: History and Theory, The University of Sydney

FEDERATION SQUARE, MELBOURNE, LAB ARCHITECTURE STUDIO

From winning an international competition in 1997 to completion in 2002, Federation Square aroused in the locals a contradictory mix of jealousy, disdain, enthusiasm, censorship and admiration. From its obvious debt to Daniel Libeskind to its alleged interference with the view of a historic building, Federation Square was a source of controversy. Everyone was talking about architecture! Look past its of-the-moment facade and it is apparent that its composition is deeply informed by historic examples of successful urban spaces – indeed, it's a textbook example of Kevin Lynch's five elements of good urban form, and its plaza has supported, indeed, generated urban life. Several leading architects and academics said it would never work and still owe the architects an apology.

BEIJING NATIONAL AQUATIC CENTRE, BEIJING – PTW AND ARUP

It should really be nicknamed the watershed, as this building marks the turning point in what had become a tedious conversation among architects about the value of so-called digital architecture. In Sydney, especially, that discussion saw those holding on to a regionally inflected modernism concerned with place and materiality pitched against younger architects dreaming of geometrically complex and digitally produced architectures. The Watercube confused this stand off and muddied its terms – witness Chris Bosse and Peter Stutchbury, sharing the stage in 2007, each espousing the beauty of 'nature' and 'structure'. All the criticisms that had, until then, been levelled at the digital fell away. For a start, it was built. It didn't look like a blob. Moreover, the Watercube is materially innovative, structurally expressive, programmatically driven, symbolically appropriate, place-specific, environmentally attuned and multi-authored.

WOMEN IN ARCHITECTURE

Kerstin Thompson, Cassandra Fahey, Clare Cousins, Hannah Tribe, Polly Bastow, Alice Hampson, Catherine Lassen, Annabel Lahz, Rachel Neeson, Camilla Block, Marika Neustupny, Zahava Elenberg, Rachel Nolan, Jill Garner, Kate Hislop, Danielle Pinet, Stephanie Smith, Annick Houle, Willea Ferris, Sally Draper, Fiona Winzar, Debbie Ryan, Caroline Casey, Penny Collins, Ingrid Richards, Jennifer Hocking, Emma Williamson, Abbie Galvin, Georgia Singleton, Emili Fox, Meaghan Dwyer, Eloise Atkinson, Rowena Marsh, Laura Harding, Rosemary Burne, Lucinda McLean, Rowena Hockin, Janet McGaw, Shelley Penn, Jennifer Calzini, etc...

My last nomination is a group whose fate it has been to work in a context where their gender is remarkable – a generation of female architects now in their thirties and forties, who in the past 10 years have won awards and critical acclaim for practices they have led, co-directed or within which they have had a senior design role. These are architects who, in addition to the development of a significant body of work, have been regularly called on to speak for women, to give gender balance to juries, committees and talk fests, and generally make our profession appear more diverse than statistics tell us it is. Rather than be curmudgeonly about this attention and additional burden, these women have modestly turned the conversation back to the urban and architectural ambitions in their work. Their contribution to architecture has been invaluable for the next generation and their combined presence has dramatically changed the culture of our profession for the better.

THE ARCHITECTS ON TRIPLE R
Stuart Harrison, Simon Knott, Christine Phillips and Rory Hyde

SOUTH BANK REDEVELOPMENT, BRISBANE

Brisbane's recent re-engagement with public architecture had its catalyst with the redevelopment of the Robin Gibson-designed South Bank cultural precinct towards the start of the decade. Competitions were held for both the new Gallery of Modern Art building (GoMA) and the reworking of the existing State Library of Queensland (SLQ). Donovan Hill's exceptional SLQ manages to do what many projects only try to – it delivers genuine

CH2, Melbourne – DesignInc with Mick Pearce.

CH2 saw ESD move into the mainstream.

Karl Fender sees the success of the Eureka Tower, Melbourne, as reflective of Australia's wider embrace of higher density living.

contemporary public space, blurring the boundaries between indoor and outdoor, and achieves porosity in both its architecture and use with a strong civic presence that is not overly monumental. The tempered and screened architecture first developed by Donovan Hill in its houses was successfully transferred to institutional work. This project has influenced the quality of the built environment in Brisbane, with subsequent projects by Donovan Hill and others seeking to 'raise the bar'. The neighbouring GoMA complex by Architectus with Kerry and Lindsay Clare follows a more traditional path, but also added to the precinct, as did thme earlier connectivity improvements with the Grand Arbour walkway (DCM, 1997) and more recently the innovative tensegrity-based Kurilpa Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge (Cox, 2009). The precinct has evolved into one of national significance, used as a model for urban design and public architecture.

FEDERATION SQUARE – LAB ARCHITECTURE STUDIO

Federation Square (2002) is possibly Melbourne's greatest public asset. The result of a major open architectural competition in 1997 that attracted entries from around the globe (regrettably the last competition of its kind to have been held in Melbourne), Lab Architecture Studio's design is a significant cultural contribution to the city.

Initially met with criticism from both the public and conservative heritage advocates alike, and then political turmoil following the change to a Labor government, Federation Square has provided the city with a much-needed, exceptional public space and a centralised cultural precinct. It has reconnected people with the Yarra River and is a flexible outdoor space that hosts everything from screening major sporting activities to arts and festival events, and is also just a place to 'hang out'. After completion, the suite of decorative 'shard' buildings surrounding the plaza also gave Melburnians a taste of the innovative public and institutional buildings that were soon to come from other practices in the following decade. It ignited debate about contemporary architecture among the public, and this debate has helped further an understanding and interest in architecture in the wider public realm.

RMIT

Over the past 10 years RMIT has built on the successful architectural program started in the 1960s and 70s to develop an international reputation as a leading design school. Practitioners such as RMIT"s professor Mark Burry have worked at the leading edge of computing, technology and design internationally, while the architecture school has continued to grow its local and international credentials. One of the great successes of RMIT has been its ability to integrate the academy with the profession, not just in terms of its ability to attract the best practitioners to teach within its ranks, but also to have those same top architects and designers come back and learn through its impressive and pioneering postgraduate program. This symbiotic relationship will continue to enrich and develop the architectural culture of Melbourne for many years to come. RMIT's building program has championed cutting-edge design and given several small Melbourne architecture practices their first large-scale projects, from which many have gone on to grow into large-scale national firms. The graduates from RMIT continue to establish architectural practices that operate at the forefront of design practice and the institution continues to engage and stimulate design thinking at the highest levels. It is difficult to imagine an entity that has affected and contributed more to the architectural culture in Australia than RMIT Architecture. **ar**

CODA STUDIO

text **Beth George**
photography **Bo Wong**

CODA Studio, with directors Emma Williamson and Kievan Wong at centre.

Unlike many of their contemporaries, on graduation the directors of Perth-based architects CODA Studio resisted the temptation of work in foreign ports. Instead, they turned their passion for Perth into a local practice. A short 10 years on, that commitment has paid dividends, as CODA has grown from a small, multi-disciplinary collective into a firm of 17 with an enviable portfolio of public and private works to its name.

In 1999, CODA featured in an article in *Monument* called '20 for 2000' as a studio to watch. And here it is again. After a decade of purported 'emergence', husband and wife team Kieran Wong and Emma Williamson see their practice as having emerged several times over. From their idealistic beginnings within a cohort of graduates of varied disciplines, the duo have steered their practice through a series of phase changes, and in the process established a distinctive language and earned a watchful eye.

HOLDING GROUND

Williamson refers quite regularly to the importance of "holding your nerve", and this theme of robustness, of steadfastness, is something that resonates with several aspects of CODA's practice: its commitment to Perth; its somewhat brave entry into the field of architecture; and the formal language of its work.

On graduation, while many of their peers headed east or overseas, Williamson and Wong established CODA in its first guise – as a collective of artists and designers, many of whom were migrants who came to rest in Perth with a shared esteem and optimism for the place. Its early work was consistent with the multidisciplinary nature of its team – graphics, public art and architecture produced in collaboration.

Having gone out alone with limited practical experience, its early architectural work came first from family and friends, then family of friends and friends of family, and was bolstered by several years of teaching practice, which Williamson regards as having provided CODA with a clarity of purpose and an ability to be deliberate in the selection of its projects. Its readiness to start from scratch is an indication of CODA's resilience. Since then, it has amassed a series of residential works, and has more recently 're-emerged' in the public realm.

DELIGHTFUL RATIONALISM: ROBUSTNESS, HUMBLENESS, PLIANCY, HUMOUR

In the first half of its decade of practice, CODA developed a language that is at once brutal and playful. The bulky quality of its work situates it in opposition to architectures of surface, of the 'stuck-on'. Rather, it favours the subtractive solid, and Wong offers a lovely description of CODA's design process as mass form plied by conversation. "We have, because we're married, a lot of time to talk to each other... all of the time! We work a lot with physical models, and the model then starts to respond to that pushing and pulling of the discussion."

Wit and humour enter CODA's projects through colour and texture. Exemplifying this pairing of mass and play is House SB in Fremantle, a staunch masonry box incised with a large window, its deep reveal patterned with brown-hued mosaic tiles. "Many people came and said how 'Fremantle' that house is," remarks Wong. "There is a lot of discussion about what the heritage of the place is, and whether it's confined to a certain period."

Indeed, discussions of heritage call to mind a very different language to that of House SB – it speaks to an alternate history of the place, of the shopfronts, bore-stained garden walls and Doric-columned Californian bungalows of Fremantle's South Terrace. Feeling they had provided a work that went against the grain of Fremantle's conservative design guidelines, Wong and Williamson were almost affronted to garner approval from their neighbours. "It feels like a comfortable fit on that street and in that neighbourhood, which I think is extraordinary, " says Wong. "It's a bit like when we did our own house. We were expecting this big reaction, and people were like 'oh yeah, I quite like that.' We tried really hard to be controversial!"

On paper, the elevation of their house, House W+W, may look a little like a neat weatherboard box, but as Williamson explains, "It's like a billboard. They did not look at the colours when they approved this..." Wong describes CODA's language as "somewhere between a delightful rationalism and a kind of witty brutalism", and this seems apt. A preoccupation with the plan, a penchant for the heavy (even the clumsy), ideas of endurance and a sense of humour defines its work. Williamson and Wong believe that Perth demands a certain quality of humbleness from its architecture, and joke about specificity and appropriateness to place arising from the impossibility of transposing a foreign project into Perth. They pose a scenario in which a precedent project might be nominated as "the bible" for a particular scheme, but which, once it has been squeezed through the layers of constraint posed by client, site, climate and code, doesn't stand a chance of being recognisable. The delight they take in this assured loss in translation is part of the fondness the pair have for their hometown, seeing opportunity in it, and projects like House SB make palpable CODA's desire to operate meaningfully within the west and its peculiarities.

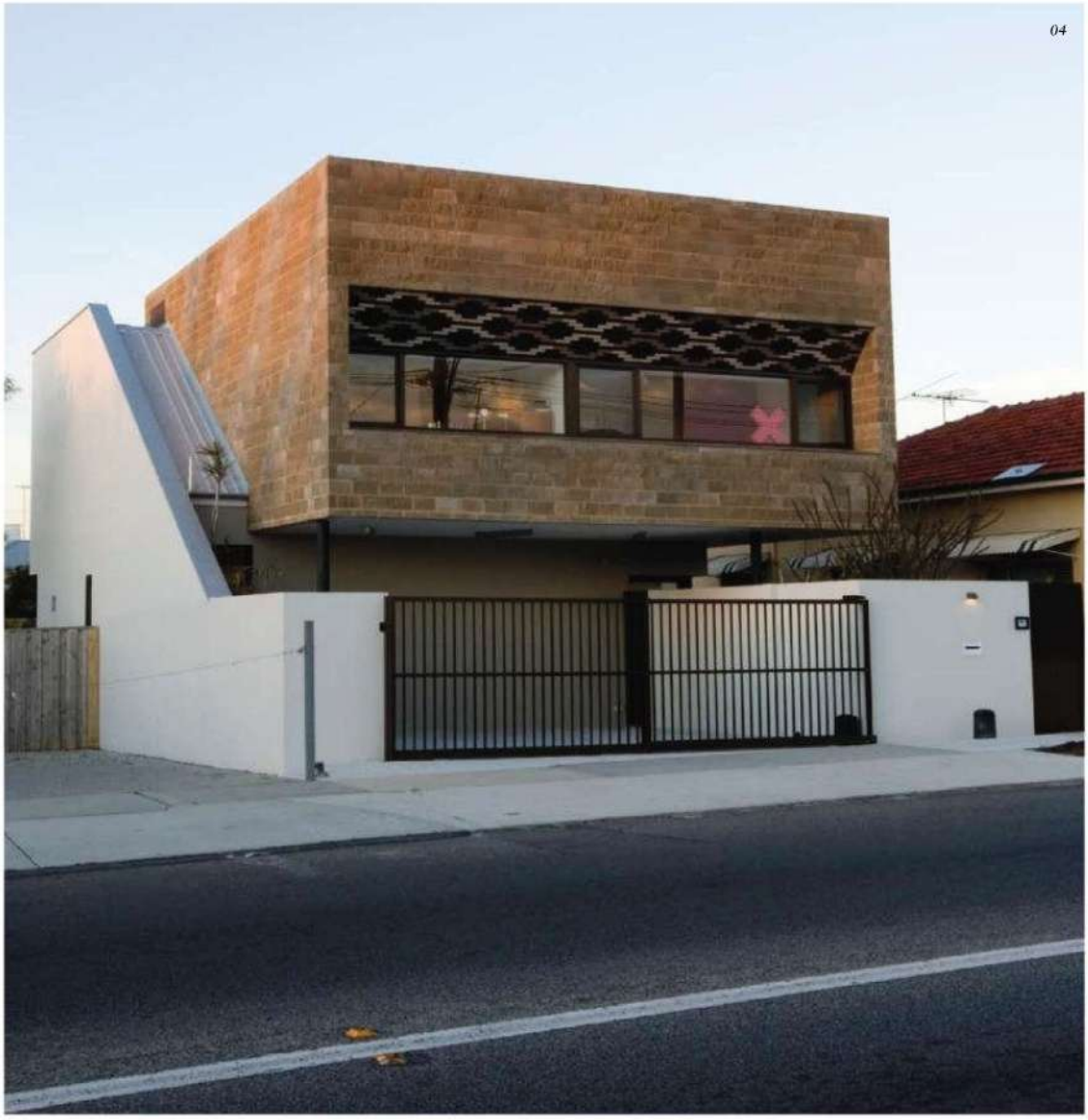
01. 02.
Horse Barn.
03.
Norfolk Farm.

GENEROSITY AND USEFULNESS

A staunch belief in architecture's responsibility to be useful to society underlies the more recent shift in CODA's work, and its third phase as a studio. It was only after accruing a body of work that Wong and Williamson felt they could consider what their practice might be. Over the past four years, CODA began to move away from residential projects (quite a feat when it required turning clients away during the economic downturn – again this theme of "holding your nerve") and into the realms of urban infrastructure and housing. It is this change of emphasis that brings us to the studio's current form as a team of 17, and to its 're-emergence' in the public sphere. They see in this realm a demand for architecture to become secondary to need, to become engaged with contingency and lose a bit of control.

Two of CODA's urban projects are growing side by side on Newcastle Street in Northbridge: Foundation Housing (a competition win for CODA) and the new Women's Health Services building. The latter maintains their interest in the subtractive solid, a red brick hulk behind a neat, glazed-tiled shopfront. A thin horizon separates two types of brickwork – running bond below and a basketweave pattern above – while thin metal skins deepen the window incisions in the east wall and timber vertices seem to acknowledge the presence of two little residual cottages to the building's west. It has a familiar presence in its setting and a restrained dialogue with Northbridge's light industrial history.

Williamson refers to an "unappreciated legacy" of architecture in Perth – the brutalist works



04.
House SB.

Wong describes CODA's language as "somewhere between a delightful rationalism and a kind of witty brutalism."

05.
Living area, House W+W.

06.
House W+W.

of the 60s and 70s. They hold in high regard the civic quality of the buildings of firms like Cameron Chisholm & Nicol and Brand Deykin & Hay from this period, and this is the language that seems to be employed (albeit a little more whimsically) in CODA's public works.

In a residential context, Williamson talks about generosity entering the projects through surprise – of offering the client something unexpected in their experience of the building, and the importance of projecting yourself into the scheme throughout the design process. More literally, CODA extend their services to a clientele for whom architecture is useful, not just possible to commission. They have taken on several pro bono works, in which they see themselves as facilitators rather than designers. For Williamson, their horse barn project was "a high-five moment" for the studio. A design-build project on the fringe of Perth, it provides for the treatment of abused horses on the Palmerston Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Farm. The barn was erected by CODA staff, volunteers and residents of the farm over the course of three weekends. Colour is offered in earnest to the human residents of the scheme, but a little less sincerely to its colour-blind equine inhabitants.

WEIGHING UP

CODA's early beginnings still resonate, as Wong recognises in the practice's work a kind of opportune naivety. He refers to Neutelings Riedijk's concept of laziness as a virtue; whereby "laziness enforces ingenuity", and sees CODA as risk-ready and willing to venture into unfamiliar territory. A win in the Think Brick competition last year saw them immerse themselves in the idea of the brick, a turn that led them to experiment with and even make their own bricks (the CODA-brick will be used in an upcoming affordable housing scheme for 104 apartments in South Beach). You get the sense that such forays are attendant to that naivety – that nerve – and would not be possible without it.

Wong and Williamson feel that CODA's future trajectory will be in keeping with the balance of public and private work it is currently undertaking, and appreciate the challenge that is paired with the expansion of its project base. Now taking on an urban design project in Kununurra, Wong reflects on the otherness of the place, and the way in which the language that they have become adept at employing is thrown by the shift in constraint. Yet the mission and the themes endure; and after three distinct modes of practice playing out in little more than a decade, we're still watching. **ar**

Beth George is a lecturer at Curtin Univeristy. She completed her PhD, 'Scouring the thin city: an investigation into Perth through the medium of mapping' at RMIT in 2009 and is a co-author of Procuring Innovative Architecture *(Routledge, 2010).*

» Increasingly there is a discrepancy between the acceleration of culture and the continuing slowness of architecture. «

— REM KOOLHAAS

BASE CAMP

ARCHITECT'S STATEMENT

Base Camp is a compact, climate responsive and adaptable weekender, sitting off the land yet immersed within it. Robust and singular in form, it is multi-layered in interior detail. The 'two-thirds' house is smaller than the average home, with a footprint of 82m² including decks. Designed to use and consume less, it features multi-functional areas that can be adapted by opening and closing sections to transform the rooms. The house explores the lifestyle potential of a future reality, in which space and resources become increasingly scarce and building operating and energy costs are at a premium. The elongated form creates a house that is one room wide, allowing views through the interior to the landscape beyond. Reinforcing the compact yet open feel, this blurs the edges between areas of the house and integrates the landscape into the interior. Wide views and close-up porthole views of the landscape encourage interaction with nature, allowing occupants to experience the bush at different times of day. **ar**

architect **In Site**
photographer **Ben Glezer**

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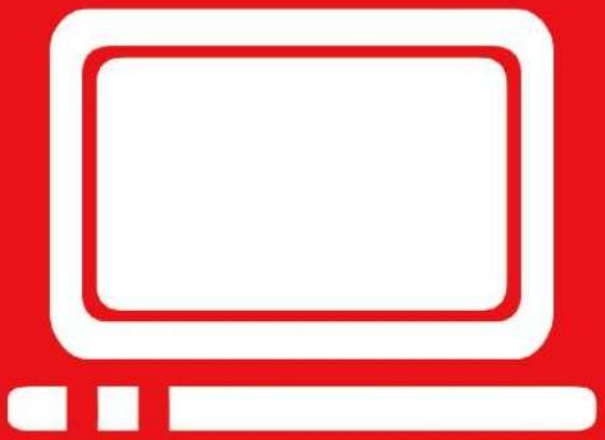
HINTERLAND HOUSE

ARCHITECT'S STATEMENT

Arriving at Hinterland House is a startling experience. The sandy track winds through the sloping site and stops at a gravel clearing. A powerful rammed earth wall, firmly anchored to the ground, enables other elements to float. The site seems to flow through the building and there is no obvious entry – the house is deliberately elusive; it challenges expectations. The architecture allows views of the site to be enjoyed and confronted – the dam, modest scrub, bushfire-scarred eucalypts and abundant wildlife. The design is a fragmented building with living, working and sleeping zones separated by glazed slots, links and open spaces. Once inside the building, personal privacy is created without the use of barriers. Movement between zones is reinforced by changes in materials, and the house provides a journey with minimal definition between the interior and exterior. It invites the occupants to think, observe and encounter the uniqueness of the Australian bush. **ar**

architect **Morris Partnership**
photographer **John Gollings**



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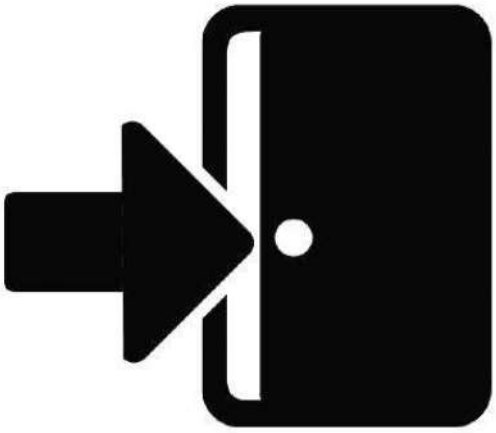

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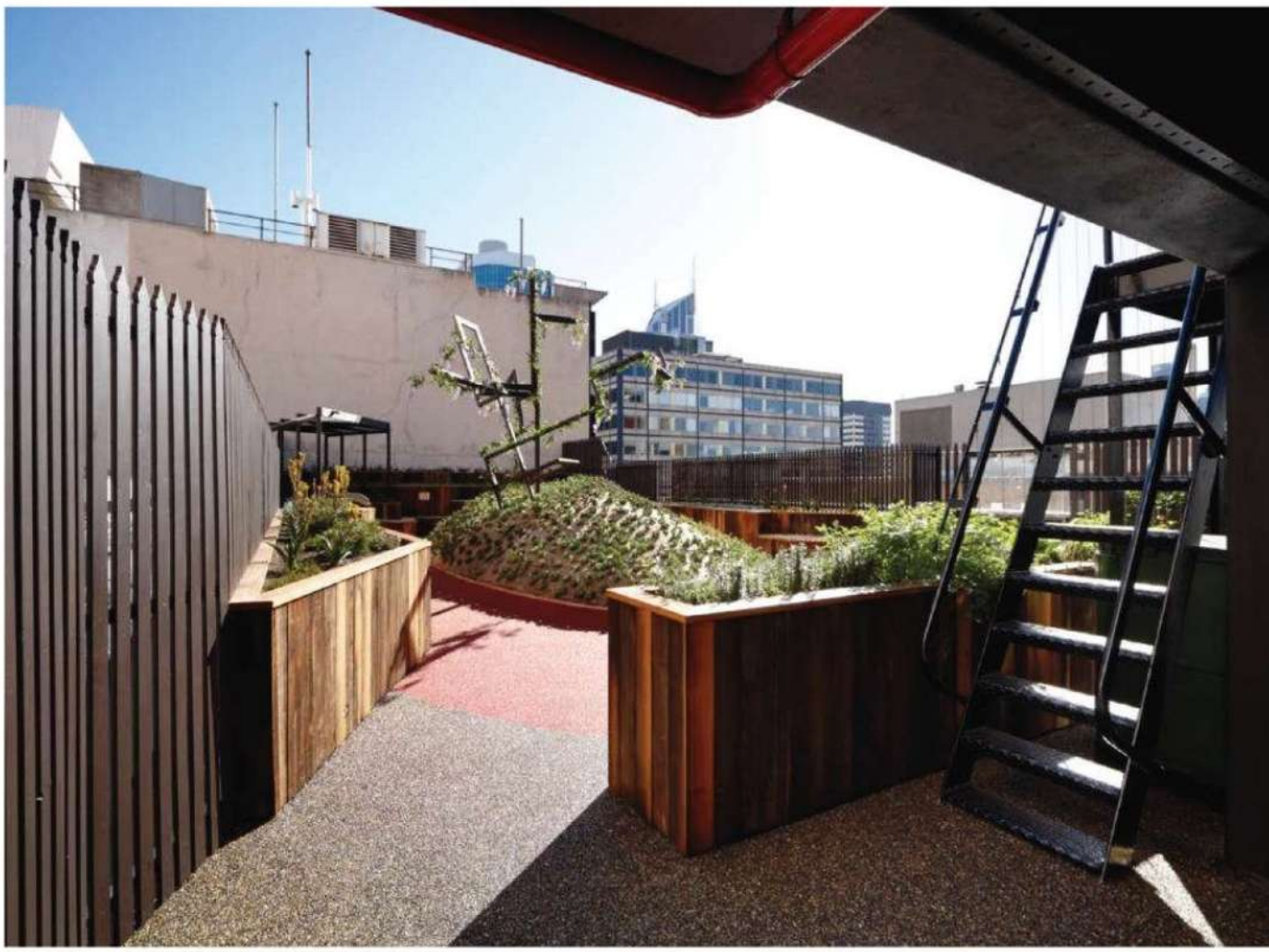
HEAD FOR THE HILL GREEN ROOF

architect **BENT Architecture**
photographer **Dianna Snape**

ARCHITECT'S STATEMENT

Head for the Hill is a competition designed, retrofitted green roof. The project was initiated by the Committee for Melbourne's Future Focus Group, in response to their Future Map 2030 Climate Change Taskforce recommendation to increase Melbourne's resilience to climate change by installing green roofs on city buildings. An open design competition chaired by the Victorian Government Architect was held in 2009, and industry leaders and suppliers were called on to provide financial and in-kind support. Head for the Hill explores the environmental, social and spatial potential of a green roof. The scheme proposes a central landscaped hill, around which a singular circulation zone expands and contracts to create a number of gathering spaces of various scales and orientations. Bound by edges of seating and planting, inhabitants are to be completely surrounded by greenery. Traditional garden structures, such as a folly, gazebo and terracing, create diversity. The rooftop also includes a dedicated planting zone for University of Melbourne scientists to analyse green roof performance data. Head for the Hill creates an oasis within the city – a place that is both connected to and protected from its surrounds. **ar**



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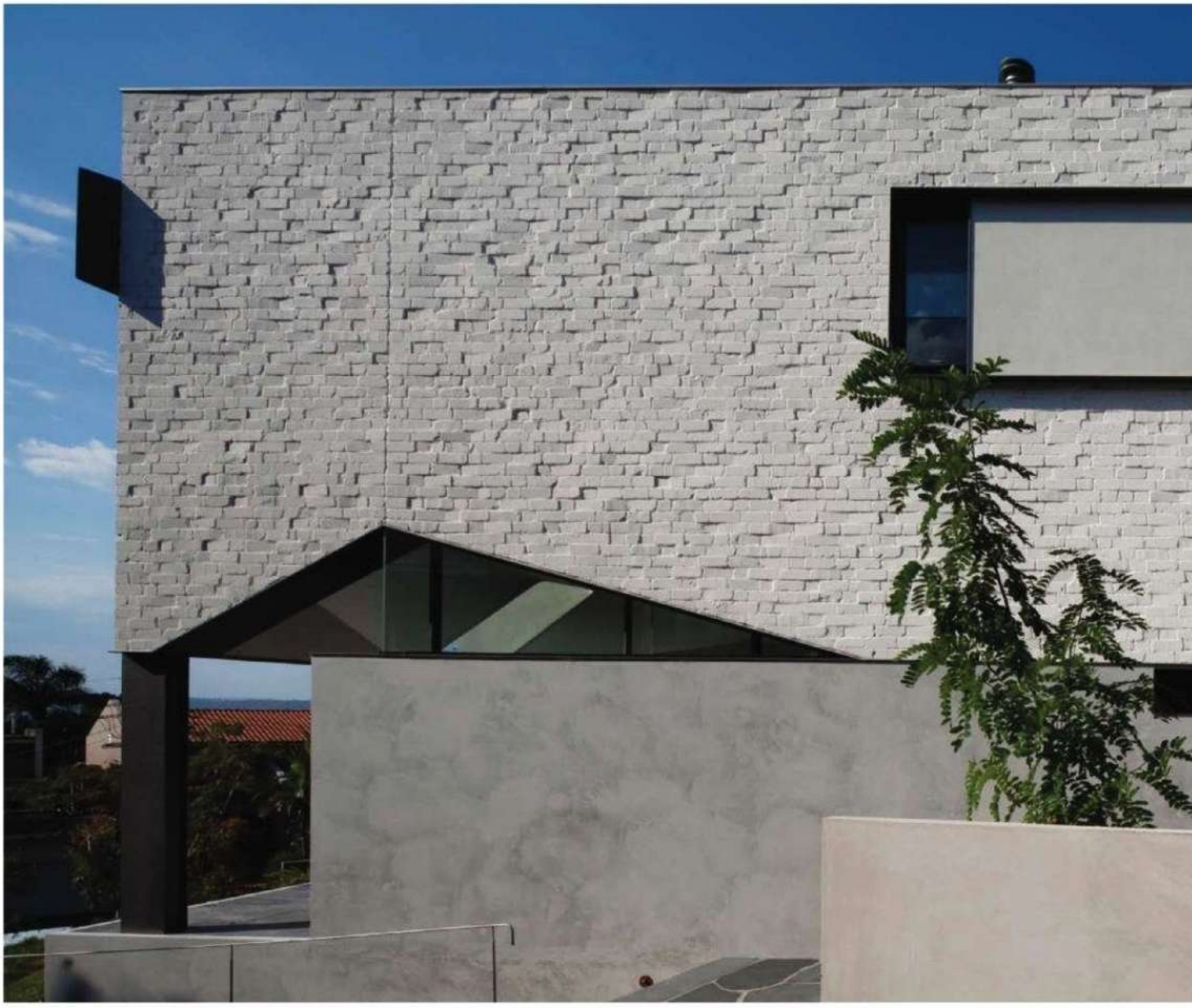
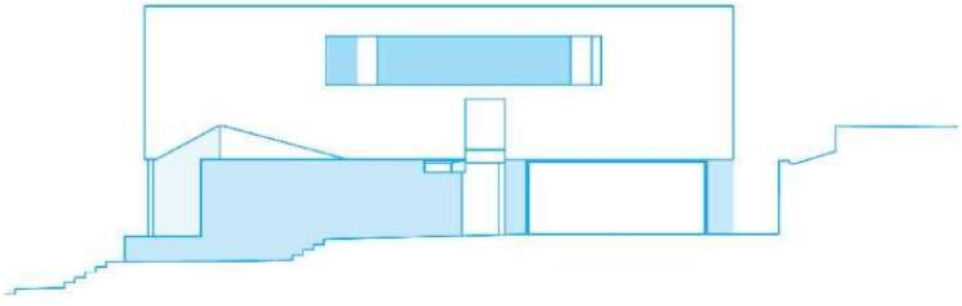
GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHT

A new house by Durbach Block plants a little patch of Arcadia on a hillside in suburban Sydney.



west elevation



01

Architect's Statement

Garden House is built on a wider than normal site in an almost Tuscan part of Sydney. Established gardens surround gracious houses with generous verandas and traditional rooflines and materials. The house is sited to hug the sloping rear boundary, orienting to the northern sun and a new garden with established trees.

The house is a simple L-shaped plan, both containing and extending into the stepping garden. An internal garden court is hidden in the depth of the plan, bridging between the floors and inverting the line of inside and outside. Governed by a height covenant, the roof parapet line is fixed and straight. The first floor contains the private spaces of the house, with a slightly compressed floor to ceiling height. These private spaces have precise and figured openings in the continuous brick façade. The mass of the first floor rests on the lightest of support systems, improbably hovering over the ground level. The underside of this looping façade tilts and lifts, admitting light and views to the ground floor public rooms through clerestory glazing.

The brick façade is given a fabric-like quality through its pattern, texture and treatment. The edges of shadows are slightly corrugated by the pattern, while strong sunlight flickers cinematically on the surface through the day. The woven brick surface contrasts with the glazed set render of the ground floor. Designed as a series of archipelagos, the garden will eventually fully enclose and complete this project.

02

Review: Garden House

Spring has arrived just in time for my visit to the Garden House. Cirrocumulus clouds hurry across a psychedelic blue sky. Plants seem to climb out of the soil before my eyes. Bees hover. Dogs frolic in the grass. The lavender is pungent.

Like a Palladian villa, the Garden House sits at the top of a rise, its elevation stretched across the width of a double block. It has a stately disposition in keeping with its affluent suburban surrounds. Between street and house there is first a sandstone retaining wall, then a sloping expanse of garden. Concrete walls wind down from the house, encasing an undulating flight of stairs before folding into a gatehouse. The house behind is modernist in appearance, and the gate unexpectedly whimsical, overgrown with a vine-like pattern of steel curlicues. Architect Neil Durbach, of Sydney practice Durbach Block, greets me at the gate. Dressed in a sky blue shirt surmounted by his trademark halo of fluffy white hair, he looks ready to float into the ether.

"It's a very formidable looking house from the street," says Durbach as we ascend the stairs. "It's almost like a fortress, it doesn't give much away." Interestingly, at that precise moment I am thinking the exact opposite. With the exception of their Droga Apartment (1997) – a glinting rooftop jewel visible from passing city trains – Durbach Block houses tend to be almost invisible to the public eye, their living spaces secretly unfolding. The Garden House is comparatively exposed. While vacant for my inspection, it's easy to imagine the home overrun in summer with pool-bombing teenagers, the parents seeking refuge on their upstairs balcony, all of this visible from the pavement. A few saplings have yet to grow thick enough to offer refuge.

The plan of the Garden House is an L-shape, with communal spaces on the ground floor and bedrooms above. "It is the most simple plan we've ever done," says Durbach, "but the section is quite complex." Wrapped in a brick skin, the upper storey straddles a concrete and glass plinth. Steel struts support the overhanging volume and enclose a ground-floor veranda. The anti-gravitational effect of placing an opaque mass above a translucent base recalls Sky Haus, Durbach Block's design for pre-fabricated dwelling company Happy Haus. A sculptural brick object surrounded by landscape, the Garden House also has much in common with Infinity House, the architects' winning entry in the recent 2010 About Face competition. Draped in a brickwork ribbon, Infinity House proposes an exuberant form for project housing in a suburban context.

01. Coarsely laid recycled bricks lend the façade a textured, fabric-like quality.

02. First floor circulation, with the internal courtyard garden visible at right. Voids and excisions in the building volume allow light to percolate throughout.

03

While the Garden House is the latest in a long line of bespoke Durbach Block residences, it is clear from these aesthetic overlaps that investigations into low-cost and mass-produced housing are spilling over into the architects' other work. Indeed, Durbach cites Le Corbusier's Maisons Jaoul at Neuilly-sur-Seine as a key reference. Designed for a father and son and constructed between 1954-1956, the Maisons Jaoul were built to modular dimensions and on a limited budget amid frugal postwar conditions. The houses have a raw, brutalist quality in keeping with Le Corbusier's Indian projects, but are much cruder than the white render and smooth lines of his earlier French houses.

Le Corbusier has always exerted influence over the work of Durbach Block. Those earlier French houses – Villa Stein, Villa Savoye – have surfaced time after time in projects from their Darling Point House (1992) to the extraordinary cliff-top Holman House (2004). Here, the attempt to emulate the crudity of the Maisons Jaoul represents a stylistic departure, an interest in surface modulation perhaps encouraged by the tiled façade of Durbach Block's Roslyn Street building (2009). "It was the first time we've used brick," explains Durbach. "We asked the brickies to make it rough." Initially, the normally meticulous brickies failed to satisfy the architects' instructions. To achieve the desired effect, Durbach resorted to recycled bricks and a full-scale pattern that painstakingly mimics irregularity. Resting brick on concrete, he artfully inverts the logic of the Maisons Jaoul. Reminiscent of the arched portals in Palladio's Villa Poiana, a pair of compact arches punctuates the house's long west-facing façade.

On entering the house, the first thing that catches my eye is the glint of a custom-designed brass door handle. Abundant light enters the living

03.
In the kitchen, a void to the level above creates a complex intersection between plaster walls and glass.

04.
Leafy aspects to the internal courtyard enliven the crisp white interiors with verdant colour.

04

05

So rich is the house with organic curves and sculptural incisions, with detail and incident, that it is practically an architectural ecosystem in its own right.

space through a fissure between the overhanging upper storey and the lower storey wall. The overhang is periodically cut away to admit views of the sky. Occupying the hinge in the L-shaped plan, the kitchen is the site of maximum vertical intensity. Here, a void to the level above creates a complex intersection between plaster walls and glass. Behind the kitchen, an internal yet inaccessible courtyard drops down dramatically between levels. The courtyard contains a miniature jungle that casts green light into the house's predominantly white interior. At the far end of the ground floor, a lap pool juts out along the house's northern boundary.

The house's upper level teems with memorable elements and spaces. The top-lit stairwell is enclosed in a sloped plaster hood, which is in turn punctured by a rectangular green aperture. "It's a little bit of Firminy," says Durbach, and indeed it is: a miniaturised segment of Le Corbusier's posthumously built chapel. En route to the master bedroom, a corridor spans between the lush internal courtyard and the glass-walled void down to the kitchen. Windows from the master bedroom overlook a row of oversized Provincial-style dwellings. If you squint, it could be the French Riviera. However, the balcony handrail keys us back into place, squiggling suggestively at the vantage point from which Sydney Harbour can be glimpsed.

Containing panes of variously textured translucent glass in one direction, and coloured glass in the other, a crinkled clerestory window animates the long passageway that leads to the secondary bedrooms. With its zigzag form and rainbow glass, the clerestory reminds me of Roy Ground's (pre-renovation) National Gallery of Victoria. At the end of the passage, a stair descends through an exaggerated arch, lined in plaster to magnify afternoon light. With a staircase at either end, separated by the garden, the house constitutes an elongated loop. I find myself retracing my steps over and over during my visit, spaces arranging themselves in cinematic sequence as I pass.

Architects are responsible for just three percent of Australian homes. We have largely been excluded from the growth of the suburbs and from the development of affordable housing. Durbach Block's foray into cheap and mass-produced residential design is significant. The Garden House resides in a suburb at the pointy end of the economic spectrum and its budget, program and clientele are very different from those of the typical suburban house. However, its spatial, material and atmospheric qualities give me reason to anticipate Durbach Block's pre-fabricated dwelling experiment with optimism. The name Garden House is appropriate, and not just for the obvious reasons. So rich is the house with organic curves and sculptural incisions, with detail and incident, that it is practically an architectural ecosystem in its own right. **ar**

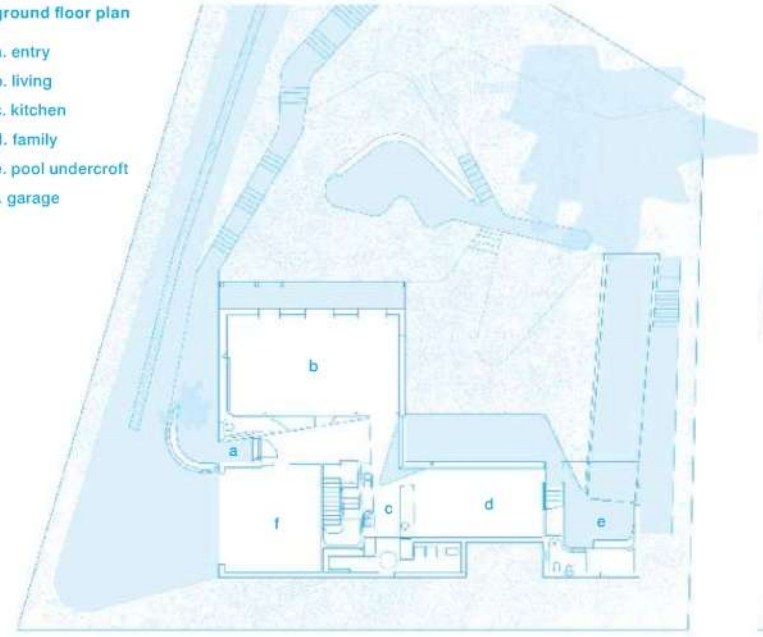
David Neustein is the Sydney editor of Architectural Review Australia *and teaches in the architecture program at the University of Sydney.*

05.
The house's L-shaped plan wraps around a lap pool and garden, which enjoy northern orientation.

06.
Light floods the interior through clerestory windows. Externally, the heavy brick-clad volume of the upper story appears to float above these glazed excisions.

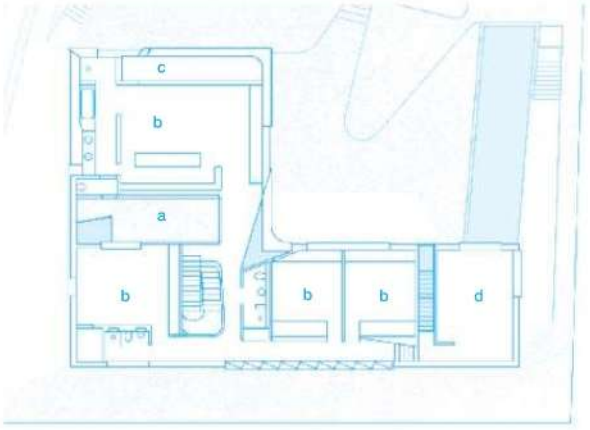
ground floor plan

a. entry
b. living
c. kitchen
d. family
e. pool undercroft
f. garage



first floor plan

a. courtyard
b. bedroom
c. terrace
d. family



06

ARCHITECT: *practice* Durbach Block Architects — *project team* Neil Durbach, Camilla Block, David Jaggers, Lisa Le Van, Joseph Grech, Stefan Heim, Deborah Hodge, Sam Boyle — BUILDER: GNC Quality — CONSULTANTS: *engineer* Simpson Design Associates — *quantity surveyor* Murray Robinson — *landscape architect* Sue Barnsley Design *other contributors* Mersonn Pty Ltd, Whipps Wood, ITC, Jeffery and Katauskas, Acoustic Logic — PROJECT: *size* 370 m² — *time to complete* 18 months — *council* Woollahra — *design software used* Vectorworks — MATERIALS: *walls* Recycled bricks, brickwork, blockwork, concrete — *wall linings* Bauwerk Marmorino burnished concrete finish — *roof* Brownbuilt 305 Lysaght — *guttering* ARC — *roofing* Rheinzink zinc and stainless steel — *paint* Murobond Cement Paint whitewash — *paving* Onsite Mintaro paved slate — *windows* Skyrange/Aneeta/Boweld steel revealed — *doors* Stockwell Joinery and Davis Aluminium timber framed glazed doors — *glazing* Davis Aluminium/Stockwell joinery/Aneeta/Australian Stained Glass Supplies clear glazing and stained glass — *hardware* Lockwood and Olivari stainless steel door hardware — *internal walls* Stucco Lustro — *lighting/light fittings* Xenian/DeDeCe/Anibou Boaz 'Audrey', Artek A440, Viabizzuno, lumascape and kreon — *flooring* Stained blackbutt — *surfaces* Stanford Stainless glass bead blasted stainless steel — *joinery* PJR Industries/Jeffrey Broadfield polyurethane panels with solid timber edging and steel reveals — *furniture* Tim Allison Associates — *kitchen appliances* Miele, Liebherr — *fittings and fixtures* DeDeCe Vola.

FREE FORM

An extended riff on influences ranging across early modernist architecture, art and cinema, a new house in inner-suburban Melbourne serves as a celebration of our eclectic contemporary culture.

architect
Nervegna Reed Architecture
+pH architects
–
project
The White House, Prahran
–
photography
John Gollings
–
review
Leon van Schaik

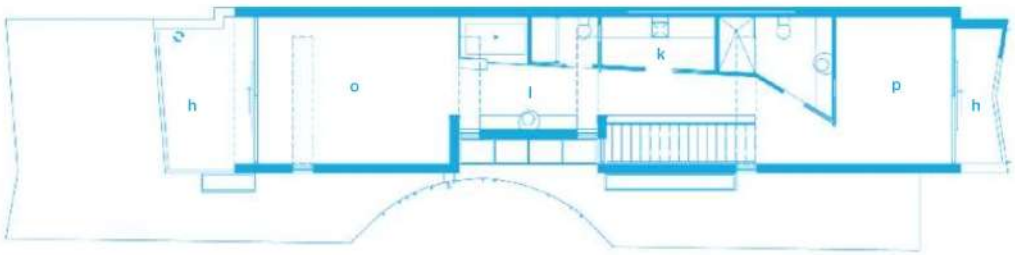
Architect's Statement

The client, an art gallery director, asked for a contemporary home on a narrow inner city allotment. The house was to have two bedrooms plus an extra study that could be used for visiting artists to stay in, and was also to include a private subterranean gallery.

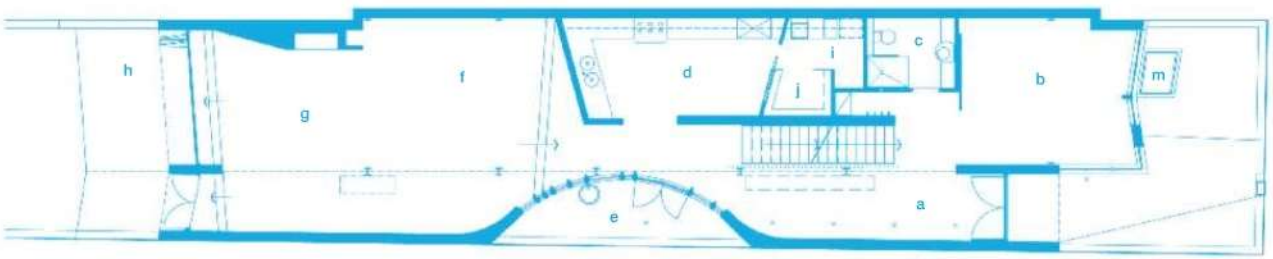
The house extends over three levels; the entry is on the ground level, where all the living spaces flow around a courtyard, a sliced circle, a hint of a possible larger courtyard in an expanded field of scattered architectural objects and events. The placement of objects on this level works much like the layout of a pinball machine, with each surface hinting at possible routes that one could take through the building, sometimes encouraging a certain movement, sometimes not. The front study is for visiting artists and has an adjoining bathroom. Downstairs is a basement gallery, indirectly lit from the north front garden via a concrete light shaft/skylight, which also doubles as a seat/sculpture podium.

The house works a bit like a Rorschach test, enabling people to read into it what they like. Whether it be virtual (or actual?) images of a "?" or a number "2" seen in the front of the house, or other architectural images throughout the spaces, these reside as virtual and sometimes hidden images, like vague reflections in a crystal. The Rorschach test became a metaphor for architectural design and its relation to the supposed paradoxical duality of abstraction and representation. The house in some ways became an experiment in treading the line between representation and 'pure' abstract space/form. No matter how much one might endeavour to design pure space or form devoid of representation, it is impossible to fully eradicate it from architecture, as images always emerge like reflections, no matter how transparent.

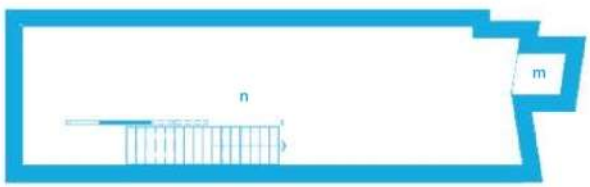
upper floor plan



ground floor plan



basement gallery plan



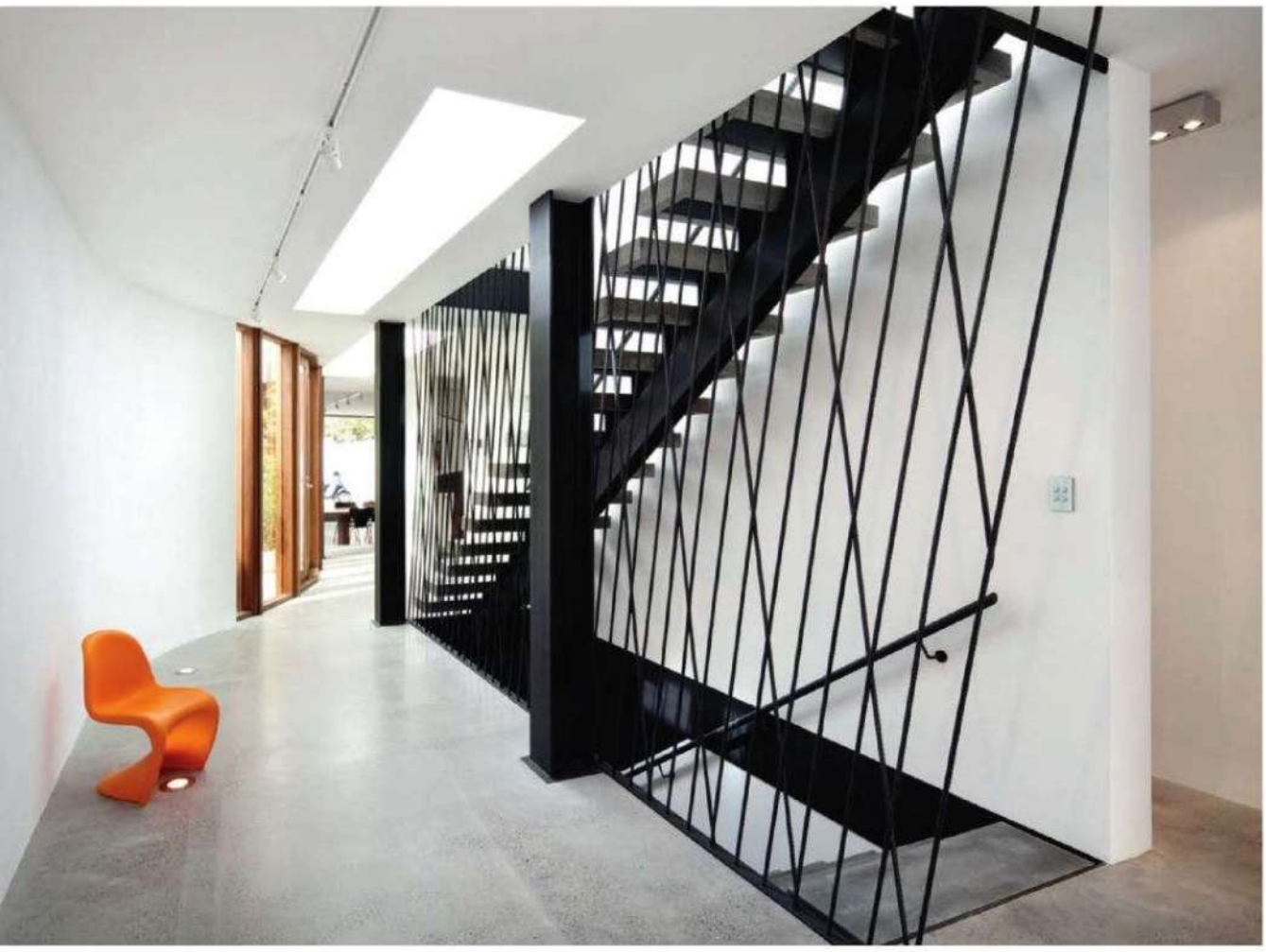
a. entry
b. guest/study
c. bath
d. kitchen
e. court
f. dining
g. living
h. terrace
i. laundry
j. pantry
k. robe
l. ensuite
m. skylight
n. gallery
o. master bedroom
p. bedroom

In this house for gallery owner Anna Pappas (for whom they have also refreshed a nearby gallery), Nervegna Reed continues its quest for an architecture that is imbued with Deleuzean multiplicities, containing every referent that they and their client bring to the project and delivering it in a way that impinges on us in a 'felt' rather than a 'told' manner. The ambition – fuelled by their involvement in the world of film – is as out of the ordinary in its comprehensive persistence as it is important in its implications for how we may deliver an architecture that is fully engaged with our current intellectual state of affairs.

The parti is simple enough: a terrace slice stretching from a road to a service lane; a section rising from a basement gallery, through a living floor to a withdrawing floor, with a balcony facing the road; a terrace overlooking a backyard. The basement is lit by a glazed-top sculpture niche or seating nook; the living floor presents a flowing sequence of spaces subdivisible by timber sliding doors, veiled from the see-through stairs by a full-height screen made of reo bars, defined by a large conversation pit and served from a cockpit kitchen which has a literal 'V' on its side opening, offering a 'sliding scale' of visibility. The upper floor has a space at each end linked by a corridor of services, and can be variously opened and closed into a single or dual occupancy mode – as indeed can the ground floor. In mind was the pinball ricochet. In practice the eye is presented with multiple options, while the body moves easily through the throats between spaces. All of this is realised with a confined palette of materials: polished concrete floors contain the heating, stairs are polished concrete treads pivoted on a single inclined steel beam. The handrails are 40 millimetre diameter reo bars that are amazingly soft to the touch, and chime satisfyingly with the artful screen. Timber frames windows and doors, white render deals with walls and façades. This is the aesthetic of black and white film.

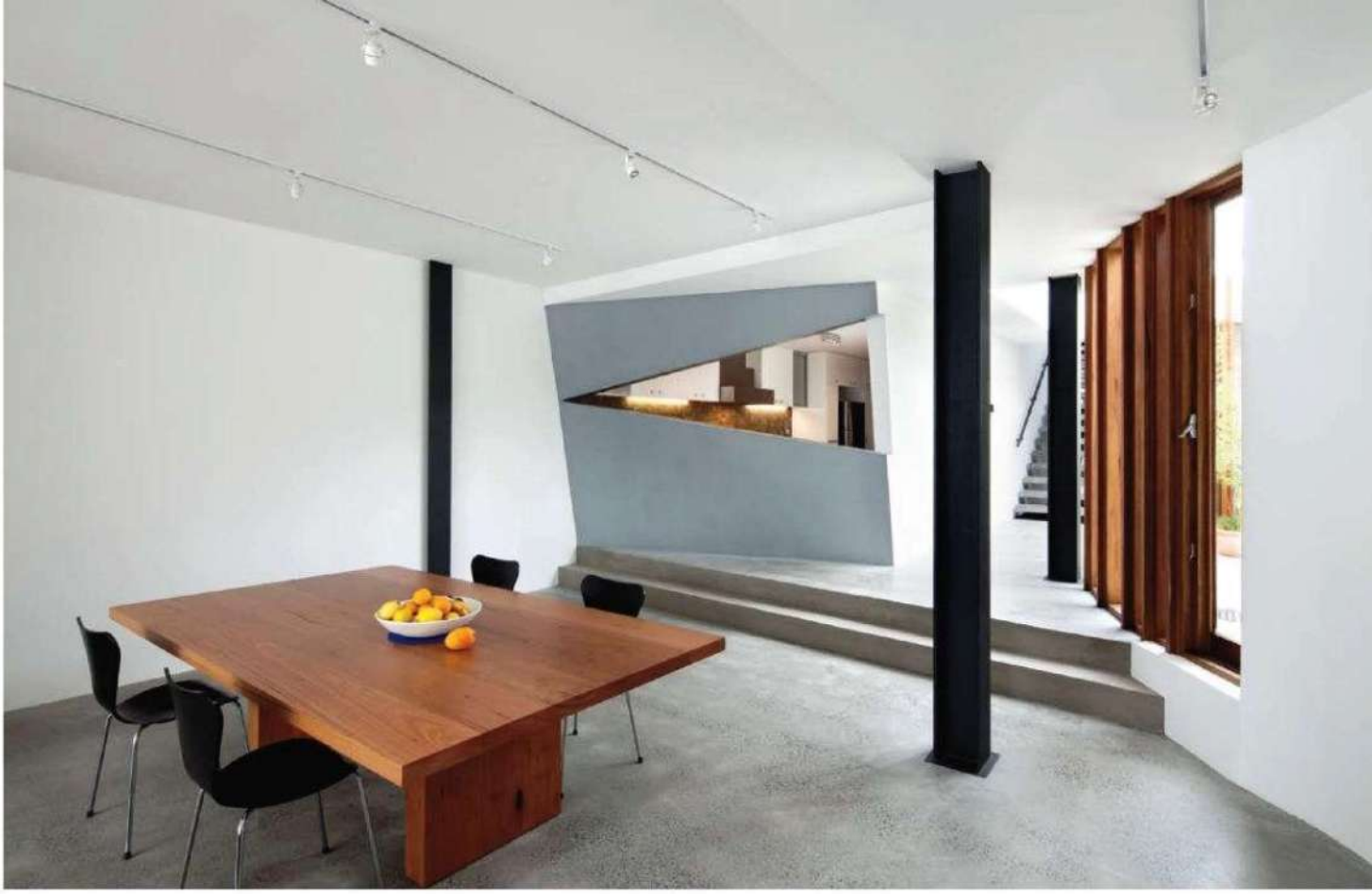
The architectural intentions are various and multiple. The arced light court is intended to evoke – as a fragment of a possible whole – a Roy Grounds courtyard. The veiled screen recalls the op art of Bridget Reilly or the early work of Frank Stella. The form of the building coils between Loosian anti-ornament façades and Le Corbusier's exaggerated spatial grab in the Maison Citrohan, while the horizontal window bands in the front elevation channel Walter Gropius. The indented

01.
A stairwell screen of reo bars makes for a high contrast, high impact statement on entry.



01

02



04

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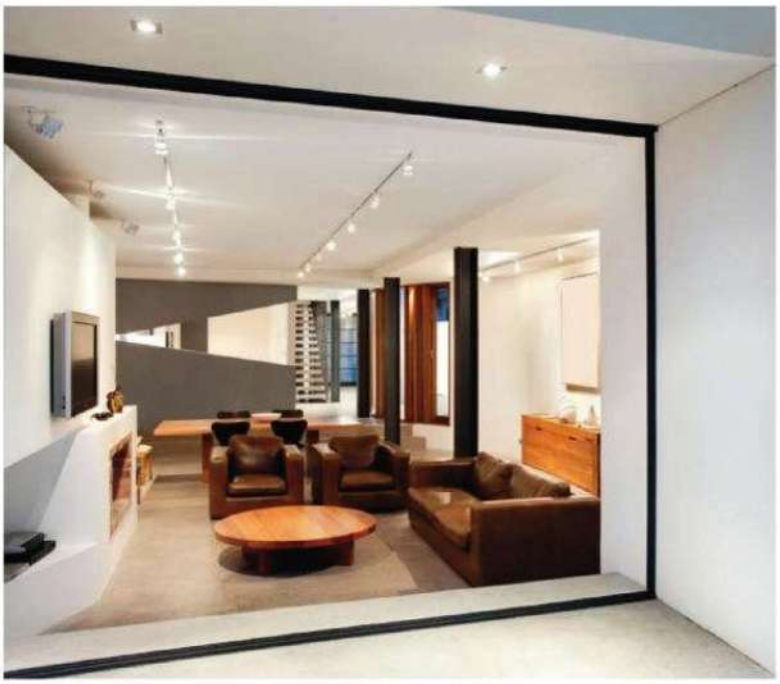


02.
Living spaces wrap around a small light court, at right – a sliced circle faintly evoking the architecture of Roy Grounds.

03.
The ground floor presents a flowing sequence of spaces.

04.
A triangular reveal between kitchen and living area works to provide a 'sliding scale' of visibility.

05

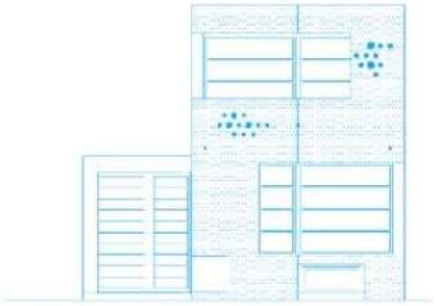
This is an intensely humanist project, revelling in the complexity of our cultural makeup and embracing the contradictions of contingency that characterise our everyday lives.

front façade is a homage to Gio Ponti's Pirelli plan. How could all of this be carried in one far from over-blown artefact? The architect conceived of the house as a dispersion of objects on a virtual tabula rasa (another consciously challenging frame) that is then crimped by the constraints of plot size.

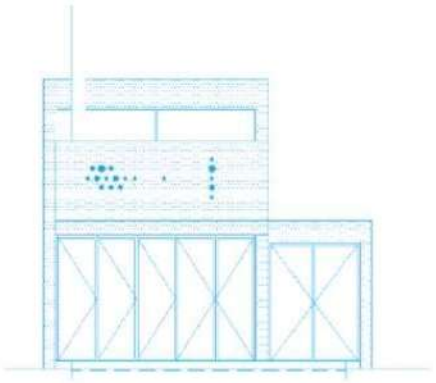
"Film teaches us about the way that we see objects and spaces," says Toby Reed, fresh from five years of immersion in that world. "Humans are pattern makers. Nothing stops them interpreting everything, variously…" He describes how the front façade is seen as a giant "2" or a giant "?" Both interpretations are acceptable: no one can control interpretation. There is, believes Reed, arguing against Peter Eisenman (and Aldo Rossi), no 'deep grammar' in form. While working on the design, Reed played John Coltrane, thinking of his drive to purity. As Coltrane said: [01] "All a musician can do is get closer to the sources of nature and so feel that he is in communion with the natural laws." But in spite of this, as he worked he was conscious all the time of making references, only recalling later what they were. Those characteristic clusters of holes in the façades, cunning de-scaling devices, also provide discreet outward views from the terrace without contravening overlooking regulations. They came floating into consciousness from Paul Schrader's movie *Patty Hearst* (1988), as well as the bullet holes in the Coen Brothers' *Blood Simple* and Kathryn Bigelow's *Near Dark*. For Reed, abstraction and representation exist on a continuum, not so much in opposition as two aspects of every situation. The references slide along other continuums, from international art, the canons of 1920s modern architecture, the post-war revival in Italy and a deep involvement in the local architectural culture, with much owed to the teaching of Peter Corrigan, Howard Raggatt and Ian McDougall. Reed's practice has emerged in an appreciation of, and in contestation with, the admired achievements of peers: Rob McBride, Paul Morgan, Paul Minifie and Jan van Schaik, Callum Fraser – with Lyon Architects and Sean Godsell Architects as boundary riders.

Nervegna Reed eschew narrative construction, striving for an inclusion of our cultural lives without labelling or sequencing. This reminds me of artist Richard Hamilton's prescription for making a good collage: each image must be reduced to the point at which it is on the point of being unrecognisable. Then new combination is possible. The aims of this most emotionally and intellectually engaging house put me in mind of the practice of 'post-production' in film-making. In this house, the filmic achievements are so well judged that the combinations, the references, the objects and

north elevation



south elevation



spaces are experienced in delight. There does then seem to be a deliberately pragmatic cast to the architectural post-production. The Loosian purity of the front façade is capped off with a very practical flashing capping. The reverie of a Groundsian abstraction is halted by the sight of a Hopper head and downpipe of distinctly humble cast. The VCAT dictated off-axis setback of a skylight above the arced geometrical form forces a contemplation of its unfulfilled purity. What this indicates to me is the inclusivity of this approach to architecture: the intensity comes from parallel lines of post-production, a strong contrast to the obsession with architectural geometry alone that gives rise to concerns such as *The Poetics of a Wall Projection* – an entire book [02] devoted to the analysis of a fugitive wall in the house Wittgenstein designed for his sister.

This is an intensely humanist project, revelling in the complexity of our cultural make-up and embracing the contradictions of contingency that characterise our everyday lives. **ar**

Leon van Schaik is Professor of Architecture (Innovation Chair) at RMIT, from which base he has promoted local and international architectural culture through practice-based research.

FOOTNOTES

[01] Quoted by Jenniy Diski *LRB Vol. 32*, No. 16, 19 August 2010, p17

[02] Turnovsky, Jan, *AA Words Three 3: The Poetics of a Wall Projection*, Architectural Association 2009

05.
The basement gallery is lit by a sculpture niche with skylight, seen here on the far wall.

06.
The backyard, crested by a small terrace. Holes in the façade serve as de-scaling devices, but also provide discreet outward glimpses without contravening overlooking regulations.

06

ARCHITECT: *practice* Nervegna Reed Architecture and ph Architects — *project team* Toby Reed, Peter Hogg, Anna Nervegna — *project manager* Toby Reed, Peter Hogg — BUILDER: RM Building Services — CONSULTANTS: *engineer* Nettle Engineering — *landscape architect* — Pauline Enright *site supervisor* Daniel Alexander — PROJECT: *size* 364 m² — *time to complete* 12 months — *council* Stonnington — *client* Anna Pappas — *design software used* AutoCad, 3D Max, Rhino — MATERIALS: *walls* Double brick — *wall lining* Render — *cladding* Render — *paint* Dulux Vivid White — *paving* Brazilian slate — *windows* Double glazed steel framed Ironbark solid timber — *heating/cooling systems* Hydronic in concrete slab — *ceiling* Plasterboard — *internal walls* Render on double brick — *flooring* Polished concrete slab — *joinery* Concrete benches — *kitchen appliances* Viking stove.

architect
—
Bates Smart

project
—
Queanbeyan Government Service Centre

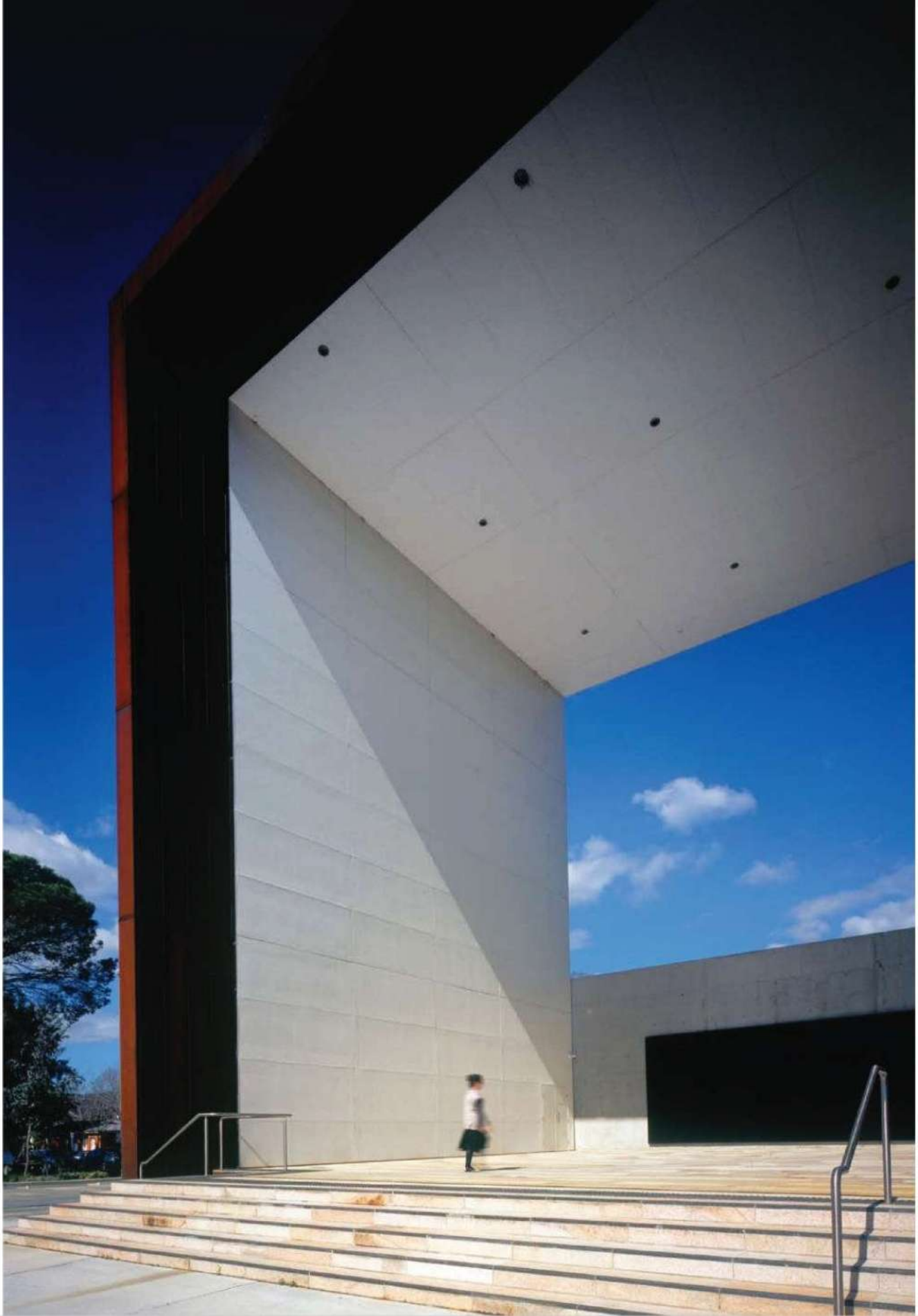
photography
—
Tyrone Branigan

review
—
Maitiú Ward

RED CENTRE

Rational and yet raw and elemental, Bates Smart's Government Service Centre in Queanbeyan provides a fitting new civic heart for this township on the edge of New South Wales' rugged Monaro Plains.


Government Service Centre
11 Fazer Place



01

Architect's Statement

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The New South Wales (NSW) Government Service Centre at Queanbeyan is the prototype for a series of multi-agency centres, which the NSW Government aims to create in regional centres across the state. Each building will co-locate several government departments into a single structure, offering a one-stop shop for government services in NSW, while creating a new civic building type.

BRIEF

The brief required an open flexible floorplate, designed around NSW Government fitout standards. The building provides accommodation for 13 government agencies, with a one-stop shop on the ground floor for public transactions. In addition, several government legal agencies required their own separate ground floor shopfront for security and privacy. Each department required a reception and meeting area for transactions that could not occur at the one-stop shop, as well as a staff breakout on every floor.

PROGRAM RESOLUTION

The design creates an open floorplate based on a long span structure of 13.5 metres by six metres, which is derived from the modules of a standard government office fitout. The fitout consists of perimeter open plan work areas, with centrally located enclosed offices and shared services. Two diametrically opposed end cores maximise the uninterrupted floorspace. The cores create a 'public' end of the building on the street side opposite the lifts, which is used for meetings and reception, and a 'private' end for breakouts overlooking the showgrounds. The ground floor is set back from the street, creating a colonnade that provides access to the shopfronts. This level extends out towards the showgrounds, creating a single storey that mitigates the scale of the building.

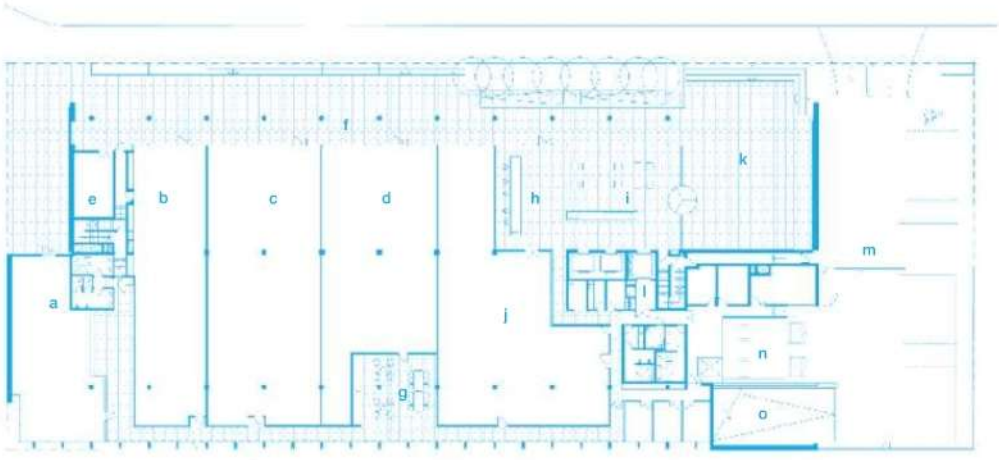
RESPONSE TO CONTEXT

The building is located on the edge of the historic showgrounds, and forms part of a civic precinct of buildings including the Courts, Police Station, Museum and Tourist Information. Located on Farrer Place, it is just outside Queanbeyan's commercial centre on Monaro Street. The building has been expressed as two linear forms, each with a folded roof plane that encapsulates the core and extends out in opposing directions to modulate the scale of the building and visually frame the showgrounds. The folded roof planes create a dramatic, civic- scaled entry forecourt. Each floor of the building is extended to create a deep, shaded, verandah-like space. A series of fine vertical columns supporting horizontal sunshading recalls the historic context of the verandahs along Monaro Street, as well as the showground buildings. Natural unfinished materials, such as off-form concrete and weathering steel, recall the rugged windswept Monaro Plains.

ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

The building has a 4.5 Star Australian Building Greenhouse Rating. The deep overhangs and slatted sunscreens provide shade and reduce heat gain to the north, while the short east and west ends of the building are solid. The 'public' common areas and breakout spaces are mixed mode to allow natural ventilation. Floor-to-ceiling glass provides excellent natural light on the floor plate, while argon filled double-glazed units provide thermal resistance. Rainwater is collected and reused, and drought resistant plants are used in the landscape.

floor plan



legend

a. Murrumbridge Catchment Management Authority (MCMA)
b. Department of Housing (DOH)
c. Department of Corrective Services (DCS)
d. Department of Juventile Justice (DJJ)
e. plant room
f. colonnade
g. shared breakout space
h. reception
i. foyer
j. tribunal room and spaces
k. forecourt
l. goods lift
m. security
n. loading dock
o. staff parking

02

Review: Queanbeyan Government Service Centre

Queanbeyan is situated on the far edge of New South Wales' Monaro plains, on the fringe of the ACT border, so close to Canberra that the township could almost be called a suburb of the Federal capital. Historically an agricultural centre for the region, Queanbeyan was later populated by the European construction workers who came to Australia to work on the nearby Snowy Mountain Dam, Australia's largest engineering project ever undertaken. Despite its proximity to Canberra, the town's identity is very much its own.

On the day I visit with Philip Vivian, design director of Bates Smart's Sydney office, there is a distinctly toothy edge to the breeze whisking up Queanbeyan's main drag, Monaro Street, fittingly named after the nearby wind-bitten plains. It's making short work of the linen jacket that I've donned for our tour around the perimeter of Bates Smart's recently completed Queanbeyan Government Service Centre.

"Urgh… that is seriously cold!" I remark to Vivian, who is briskly pacing along beside me.

"It's not cold Mat – it's *bracing*…"

Vivian, I can't help but observe, has come to this outing sensibly braced in a thick black leather jacket, zipped to the chin.

Queanbeyan has a ruggedness to it, a tough quality that, as Vivian describes, is reflected in its people, the farmers and descendants of the immigrants who came to Australia to expend their blood, sweat and tears on one of the country's most brutally demanding construction projects. He should know. He had the unenviable task of convincing many of them that a resolutely contemporary four-storey, rusted steel box would be appropriate to the township's scale and to its character – low-rise, heritage brick and timber.

Vivian recalls a community consultation meeting where he made the mistake of describing the corten cladding as a fitting response to the area's cold climate. One lady immediately took offence. Her objection? That Queanbeyan wasn't cold – it was *bracing*. Many in the community, it seemed, were determined to be affronted by the project no matter what the logic.

Sited in what is effectively Queanbeyan's civic centre, the area surrounding the building is home to the town's law courts, police station, museum and information centre. Its immediate neighbours also include several historic buildings constructed of brick, and it is this character that Bates Smart was in part responding to in its use of steel cladding,

01.
Entry forecourt. The folded roof form both protects from, and frames, Queanbeyan's natural elements.

02.
The lobby, which makes judicious use of natural finishes, a luxury not available to the standard government office fit-outs upstairs.

03.
Break-out space.

which has weathered to take on a variegated hue of rich, reddish ochre.

From a rational perspective (and the building is without a doubt a consummately rational work) there is much to recommend it. The project, also known as the John Akister Building, is the first in a series of 'one-stop shops' that the New South Wales government is hoping to roll out across the state. This initiative will see public services, which in many regional townships are scattered across scores of disparate locations, brought together into one purpose-built facility. The hope, of course, is that this will allow for greater efficiency, both in terms of government expenditure, but also in terms of ease of use for the general public.

As Vivian points out, the government was very keen that the building be cost-competitive with the private commercial office alternative, given this is the first project of its kind to be rolled out. It was also a requirement of the brief that the resulting building meet with New South Wales government office fit-out requirements. The floorplate is a direct result of this constraint – open plan, flexible offices broken into rectangular modules of 10.8m^2, supported by a long span structure of 13.5 metres by six metres. Somewhere between these two constraints – the need to provide a solution that was cost-competitive with the nearest market alternative, and the need to provide standard issue government office stock – Bates Smart also hoped to be able to squeeze in a little architecture. Far from designing another blandly utilitarian, anonymous box, Bates Smart's ambition was to create a building that spoke of its function with an inflection, at least in part, a product of locality. It was, in other words, to have something of that very old fashioned notion – a sense of the civic. As Vivian describes, "We didn't want to have to hang a sign out; we wanted the building to speak for itself."

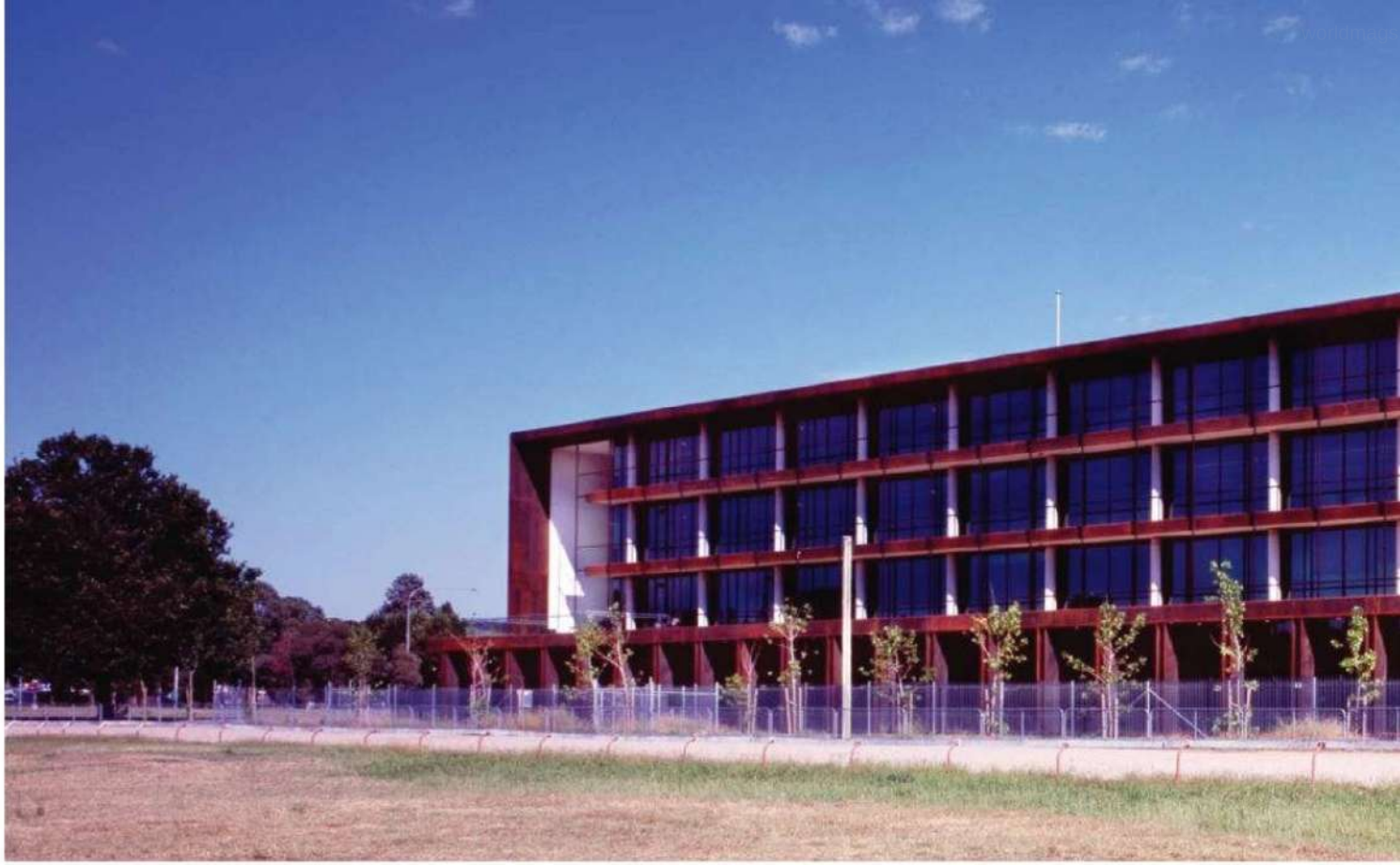
The strategy that Bates Smart has employed towards addressing these challenges seems to be, as is often the case with projects of this nature, a question of picking your battles. The building's orthogonal form reads as an extrusion of the rectilinear modules that define its floorplate. In this respect, it is very much in keeping with the ethos of commercial office development – a box-like volume, which maximises net lettable floor area. Internally, Bates Smart has focused resources pragmatically. While the lobby does boast some judiciously deployed natural timber and marble, as Vivian comfortably admits, there is nothing especially remarkable about the offices proper. These areas benefit less from the quality of their finishes, and more from sensible planning. All offices and pods are setback from the floor-to-ceiling windows, forming a circulation channel around the edge of the floorplate, which ensures that everybody is guaranteed ample natural light and aspects to Queanbeyan's bush-clad hills. Service cores are positioned at either end of the building, while the south-western corner includes breakout zones for staff. On the first floor, this includes an outdoor garden-cum-terrace, accessible to all of the building's occupants. When we toured the building at lunchtime, many of the staff were taking full advantage of the terrace's evidently quite productive herb garden.

Floorplates have been extended beyond the thermally resistant, argon-filled double-glazing on the north-western and south-eastern elevations to create a veranda-like space on each of the office levels. On the north-eastern elevation, additional sun protection is provided by a series of suspended steel sunshades.

The impression of the building in this respect is one of a series of very pragmatic strategies, robust enough in their simplicity to secure a strong outcome no matter what outrageous misfortunes befell the project during public consultation, cost-rationalisation or construction – which was just as well, for if many in the community had had their way, the entire building would have been clad in brick veneer. As the security guard recounts to me as Vivian and I are touring the premises, the corten was initially cause for complaint among some of the locals, who couldn't get their heads around the idea of rusted metal as an effective and genuinely beautiful cladding. In truly hard-headed country town fashion though, they were eventually convinced of the choice on the grounds that it would save a fortune on paint.

Now that it has been built, most of those initial concerns about the project's appropriateness have been assuaged – from anecdotal reports, it seems the locals are now actually quite proud of their rusty Service Centre. This doesn't come as much of a surprise, as despite the initial sentiment of some

03



04

04.
View to the Centre from the neighbouring showgrounds.

05.
Slatted screens and deep overhangs provide shade.

05

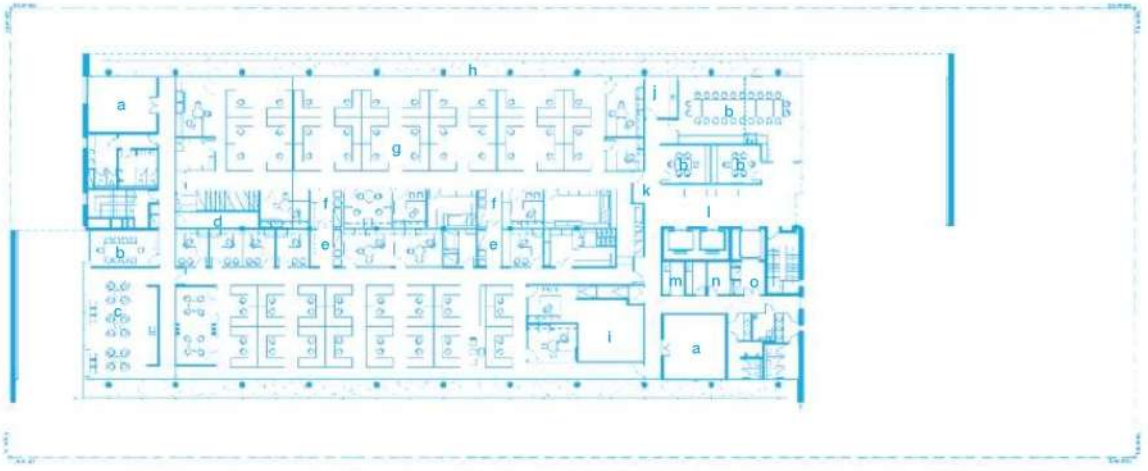
of the locals to the contrary, the Service Centre is not a radical project – it does a lot of sensible, simple things, and it does them well. At the ground plane, a colonnaded walkway set back a suitably respectful distance from Monaro Street makes a significant contribution to the public domain. Composed of off-white, regularly spaced pilotis (which contrast elegantly with the rusty reds and glossy blacks of the cladding and glazing), Vivian saw this move as re-instating the rhythm of the township's original streetscape, which like most Australian towns was once characterised by an orderly series of columns supporting verandas and street awnings. This generous address to the street tempers the building's potentially monolithic quality and is a far cry from the less than challenging precedent set by the police station across the road – a two-and-a-half-storey volume combining zero setbacks and blunt concrete walls that wouldn't look out of place in Baghdad's Green Zone.

The walkway also serves another purpose though, and is designed to address one of the challenges presented by the aggregation of all of Queanbeyan's government services into one location. Several of the facilities provide highly sensitive human services and the building's design needed to allow for discreet access to these. Separate shopfronts have been incorporated, accessible from the walkway, and here the colonnades provide a degree of privacy.

For all of these sensible strategies though, it is the project's romantic qualities, not its rational ones, which are most affecting. When conceptualising the building, Vivian drew inspiration from the work of Rosalie Gasgoigne. A New Zealand-born artist, Gasgoigne made her home in Canberra and fell in love with the wide-open spaces of its surrounding plains. She became famous for her assemblages of found objects – compositions of the rusted scrap metal and road signs she would stumble on while wandering the landscape of her adopted hometown. Vivian has succeeded in channelling something of the sentiment of Gasgoigne's art in the forecourt to the Service Centre. Here, the folded form of the rusted steel roof creates a protective canopy, but also a suitably expansive frame for Queanbeyan's sweeping landscape and big skies. It's the element of the building that Vivian is proudest of, and it's easy to understand why – it is a simple but dramatic gesture. Through it, the building speaks volumes about both itself and its relationship to the tough beauty and tough people of this place. Embracing the surrounding environment while also providing shelter from it, it lends the building gravitas. No signage, thankfully, is required.

Maitiú Ward is the editor of Architectural Review Australia *and founding editor of* AustralianDesignReview.com

typical fitout plan



legend

a. plant
b. shared meeting
c. shared breakout space
d. compactus
e. link
f. utilities
g. office
h.deep overhangs
i. computer/ comms
j. kitchen
k. security point
l. lift lobby
m.kitchenette
n. comms
o. goods lift

ARCHITECT: *practice* Bates Smart — *project team* Philip Vivian, Simon Swaney, Albert Gregori, Matt Davis, Nicole Milne, Nab Speakes, Rachael McCarthy, Alice Pennington, Ezabella Dalla — BUILDER: Richard Crookes Constructions Pty Ltd — CONSULTANTS: *structural engineer* Northrop Engineers Pty Ltd — *landscape architect* Turf Design — *mechanical services* Climatech Pty Ltd — *electrical services* The Heyday Group — *steel fabricators* Dunsteel — *access* Morris Goding Accessibility Consulting — *ESD* EMF Griffiths and Mechanical and Electrical Design — *town planning* JBA Urban Planning Consultants — *BCA and fire* Trevor R Howse & Associates Pty Ltd — *photography* Tyrone Branigan — PROJECT: *size* 7415 m² — *time to complete* 2 years, 6 months — *client* NSW State Property Authority — *design software used* Autocad — MATERIALS: *cladding* Bluescope custom profiled 3mm weathering steel façade — *roof* Bluescope Lysaght Colorbond steel in Woodland Grey — *soffit linings* Wattyl vivid white cement sheet — *sunshades* Bluescope custom screens — *glass façade* Southern China Glass double glazed units within aluminium frames — *glass louvres* AGP Fineline series motorised louvres — *paint* Wattyl Vivid White — *external stone paving* Sam the Paver Man granite — *decking* Australian hardwood with Lanotec timber sealer — *blinds* Euroscreen Vertilux — *lighting/light fittings* FY2K Snowflake hanging lamp; ISM Drum pendant; Cloth Fabric Two Up for feature pendant — *walls and flooring* Classic Ceramics lobby floor, lifts, IRC and desk cladding; Comcork Flooring breakout flooring; Tuftmaster carpet tiles — *joinery* Rest Interiors custom reception unit and timber veneer meeting room — *furniture* Inline Commercial Furniture reception chairs; Offecct and Austex lobby chair; Corporatte Culture client lounge and tables; Living Edge chairs; Stylecraft chairs; Mokum Textiles chair fabric; Stem Industries chair; Koskela table; Artedomus Group marble table top; Iken table — *Fixtures and fittings* Caroma basin and WCs; Reece basin mixer.

architect
–
Gunn Dyring Architecture and Urban Design

project
–
Hamilton Courtyard House

photography
–
Aaron Tester

review
–
Reno Rizzo

SQUARE ROOTS

Graeme Gunn has spent much of his long and illustrious career exploring the courtyard house typology. But can a lifetime's worth of learning accrued through architectural practice in the city, be applied successfully in a heritage context in the country? Here, together with practice partner Sophie Dyring, Gunn returns to the rural township where he was born and raised, to inject a little bit of contemporary architecture into this quietly conservative community in regional Victoria.

01

02

Architect's Statement

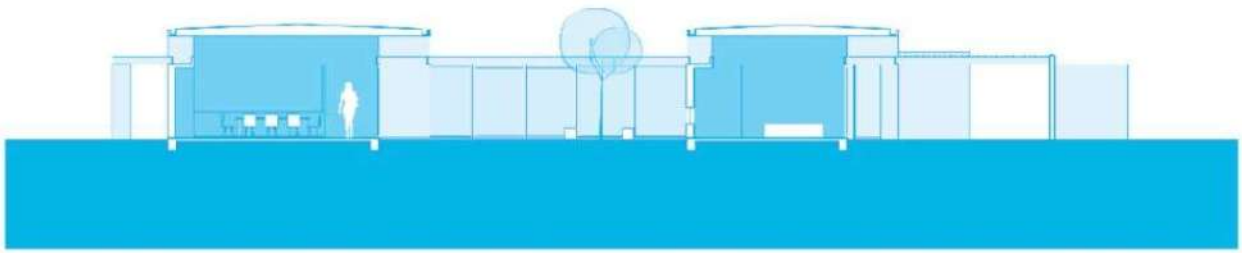
The historically successful, tried-and-tested courtyard house model was employed as the typology to execute this project's concept of integrated interior and external spaces. The encompassing living environment of the Hamilton Courtyard House is achieved through the union of built form, geometry and landscaping.

The house is planned in two functional zones. Firstly, the living pavilion experienced on arrival is located to the south of the central courtyard. The second, a sleeping pavilion, is to the north of the central courtyard and located for greater privacy. These forms are joined by a glazed gallery, which describes the central courtyard and frames a second smaller courtyard to the west. A variety of passive and active external spaces were designed to maximise the client's use of the house in terms of time of day and number of occupants. The central courtyard is a large space with northern aspect and integrates with the open plan living, dining and kitchen. The contemplative courtyard to the north of the office is secluded and much smaller in scale.

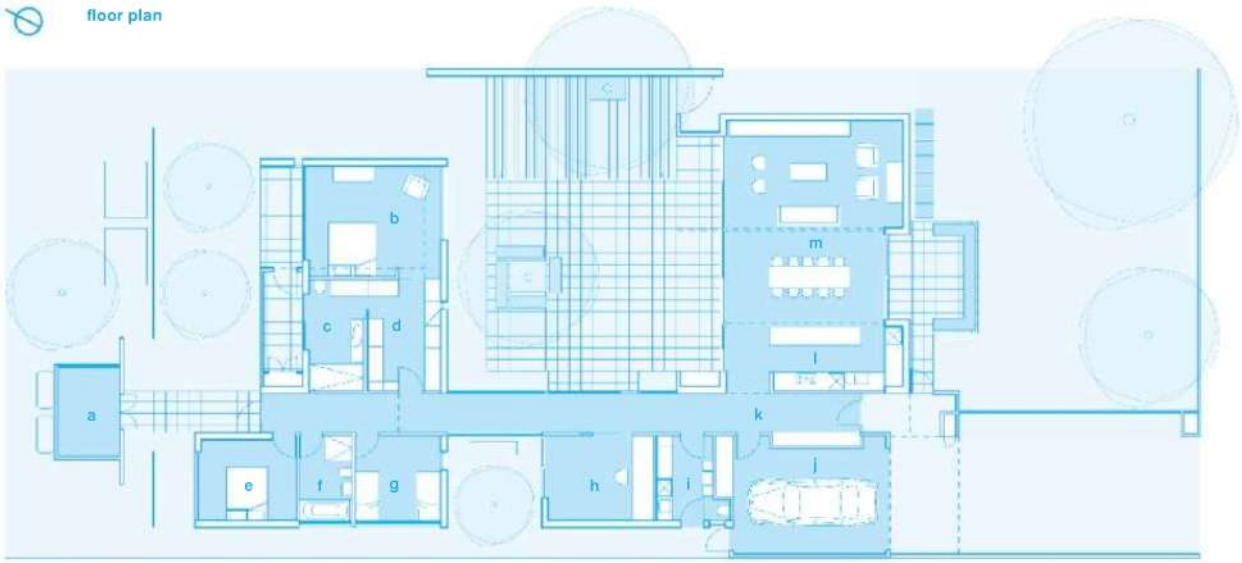
Passive design principles had the greatest influence on the resolution of the built form. Used in the living/dining room, master bedroom and along the corridor, pop-up roofs and clerestory windows shift in geometry and scale according to location. These are employed as shading devices to the extensive north-facing glazing, as well as increasing the natural ventilation.

Architectural design is partly achieved through the expression of structure. Exposed beams are used throughout the project to highlight and frame elements. They intersect with the concrete planes and anchor the floating roof forms. Aesthetically, reducing the palette of details throughout the project creates a visual cohesion.

section



floor plan



a. shed/ b. bedroom 01/ c. ensuite/ d. WIR/ e. bedroom 02/f. bathroom/ g. bedroom 03/ h. office/ i. laundry/ j. garage/ k. entry hall/ l. kitchen / m. dining/living

03

Review: Hamilton Courtyard House

Hamilton Courtyard House is immediately welcoming and familiar. Gunn Dyring Architecture and Urban Design have deftly superimposed a relaxed rural personality over an engaging, rationally planned home. There are so many layers of history and interpersonal relationships here that have relevance to the story of this piece of architecture.

Hamilton, 300 kilometres west of Melbourne, is a major regional centre in Victoria and is founded on a strong pastoral heritage. This project is located within the Church Hill Precinct, Hamilton's dress circle, where the spires of churches built in the late 1800s once dominated the skyline. At the end of the street on which it sits are the Hamilton Botanic Gardens, designed by William Guilfoyle, a renowned 19th century landscape gardener and botanist also responsible for the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne.

Hamilton Courtyard House is a successful example of a city practice working in a regional location. The Melbourne-based Gunn Dyring is a recently formed partnership between architects Graeme Gunn and Sophie Dyring. Gunn's achievements and awards in architectural design are legendary. His male ancestors arrived in Australia in 1846 and set up as builders in Dunkeld, not far from Hamilton. Gunn himself was born in Hamilton and worked for his builder father there until 1956, when he left the town to study architecture in Melbourne as a mature age student. More than 50 years later, the practice of Gunn Dyring has returned to Hamilton, to design a new house for a dear friend of the Gunn family.

The brief was for a home for a sole occupant with enough space for visiting family. The owner is a friend of the highly regarded Hamilton Art Gallery and jokingly refers to the house as an annex of the gallery. The collection of contemporary furniture and artwork contained within is impressive and lovingly placed, and the integrated continuity between the disciplines of architecture, landscape and interiors shows evidence of a successful and harmonious collaboration between architect and patron. The highly fraught brief of the architect working for a good friend has been tested in the most robust way, with all parties the better for it.

The Hamilton Courtyard House is a continuation of Gunn's lifetime study and exploration of the residential courtyard. The site planning has evolved around three evenly spaced gardens; the front garden, central courtyard and rear garden. The two wings of the building are linked by an axial glazed hallway which terminates a long view towards a pair of red shed doors.

This project has many endearing qualities that respond to its location and differentiate it from its city relations. Firstly, there is the lack of emphasis on the garage and the number of vehicles required to be stored indoors. Then there is the comfortable single storey approach, which allows the home to drape across the whole site. Views of surrounding buildings are accepted for

01. A continuation of Graeme Gunn's career- long interest in the courtyard house typology, this project seamlessly merges architecture and landscape.

02. Low-slung and muted in palette, the house's rectilinear form nonetheless proved challenging for some in the neighbourhood.

04

what they are, without the laboured placement of high fences and sightscreens so often seen in the big cities, where everyone wishes to protect their own design purity.

The rear garden displays a refreshingly honest and practical approach to everyday life. It reminds me of country homestead planning, where life's necessities are expected to be a part of the everyday visual environment. Galvanised freestanding water tanks, vegetable gardens and a metal shed are all in full view, confidently positioned within the landscape rather than shoe-horned into tight side setbacks. The lush green of this young landscape provides a stark contrast with the grey building palette, although within several growing seasons the front elevation will be mostly hidden behind a lilly pilly hedge, with only the tops of strategically placed exotic specimen trees visible.

Within this prized heritage streetscape of freestanding bungalows, the modernity of the home has raised local eyebrows, despite the neutrality of materials and rectilinear forms. It's all a matter of perception though. Architects gaze on rendered concrete walls and think neutrality, while conservative neighbours might perceive them as something harsher. Melbourne architects will fondly remember earlier examples of Gunn's grey in pivotal projects such as Molesworth Street Kew Townhouses, 1968 (1970 Bronze Medal Award AIA Victoria Chapter), and the brutalist concrete Plumbers and Gasfitters Union Building, Melbourne, 1970.

05

03. 04.
Pop-up roofs and clerestory windows provide sunshading while, during daylight hours, also allowing natural light deep into the floor plan.

05.
A slot window to the courtyard in the bedroom wing's ensuite provides light without loss of privacy.

06

07

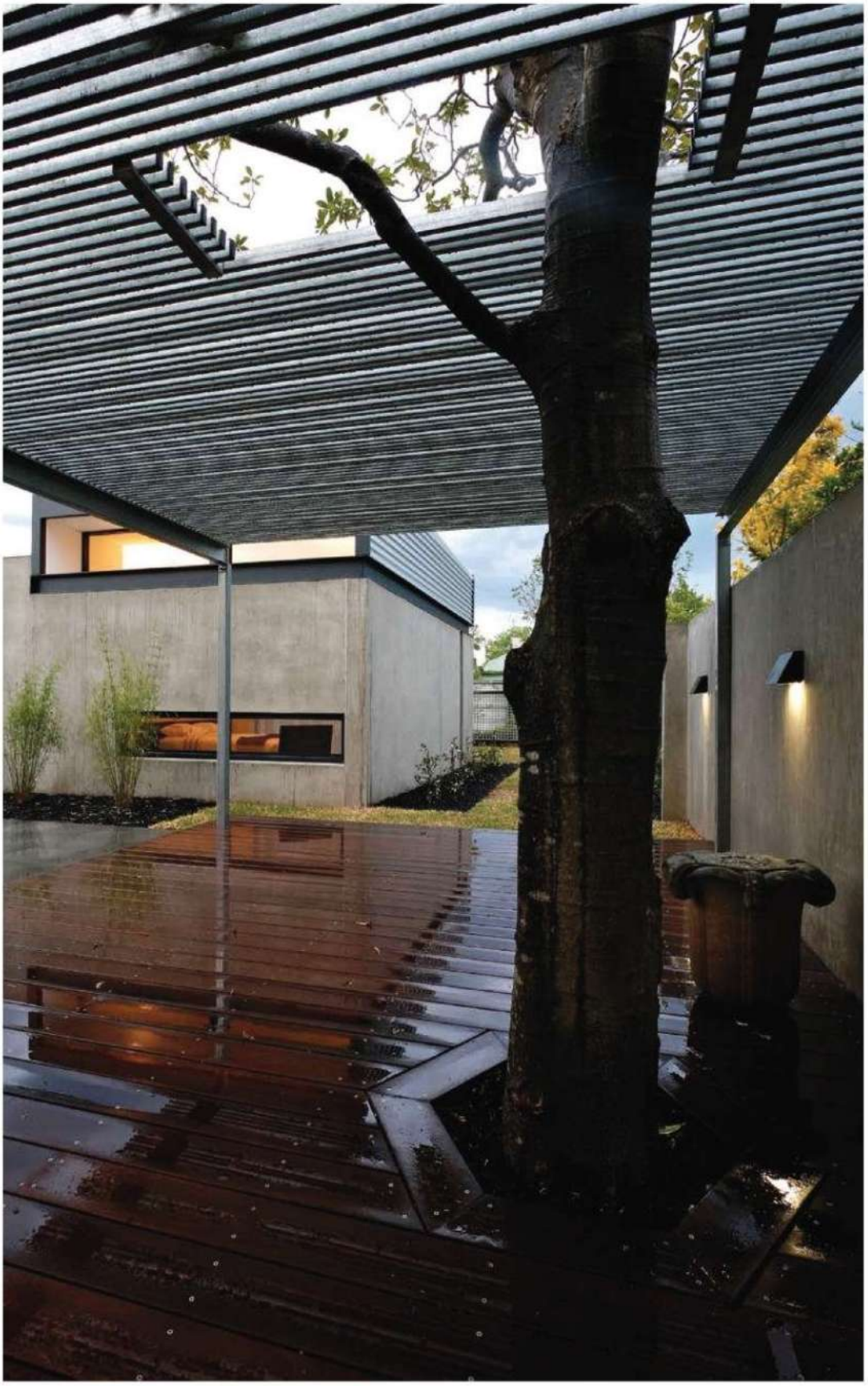
Rendered masonry walls and Zincalume metal cladding are crisply edged with expressed charcoal-coloured steel structural sections. Pop up ceiling sections punctuate the elevations and allow daylight to reach deep within each room. A continuous basalt tiled floor forms a solid base to the white flowing gallery spaces, and the basalt has been extended into the courtyard garden via monolithic seating blocks. The highlight of the house is this central courtyard, with its view of the many components of the building. As Gunn states, "the courtyard defines the external space", which the building then envelopes.

As I leave the house a car cruises by, its driver peering through the fence with a confused gaze. Despite the perplexed reception the building has received from some of the locals, however, it is both reverential and progressive, reflective of a depth of understanding for the area that goes back a long way. In Courtyard House, Gunn Dyring has made a significant contribution to the residential architectural character of Hamilton. **ar**

Reno Rizzo is an architect and director of Inarc Architects Pty Ltd, based in Melbourne. He was chair of the Residential New category in the 2010 Architecture Awards Victorian Chapter.

06. 07. **The two wings of the building are linked by an axial glazed hallway (06) terminated by a red shed door (07).**

08. **Central courtyard, with the bedroom wing visible at rear.**



ARCHITECT: *practice* Gunn Dyring Architecture and Urban Design — *project team* Sophie Dyring, Graeme Gunn, Bruce Rowe, Martin Musiatowicz, Michael Lillis, Ton Vu Project manager Sophie Dyring — BUILDER: Max Murray Builder Pty Ltd — CONSULTANTS: *engineer* Lowe Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd — *environmental consultant* F2 Design — *light consultant* Deuce Design — PROJECT: *size* 260m² — *time to complete* 8 months — *council* Southern Grampians Shire — *council client* Lesley Slorach — *design software used* Autocad, Sketch up, Photoshop, Rhinoceros — MATERIALS: *walls* Unitex Panel skim concrete render on concrete block — *roof* Metal roofing, zincalume — *paint* Charcoal — *paving* Classic Ceramic Cross-cut and sand blasted basalt — *windows* Dulux Charcoal Satin powdercoat — *doors* Dulux Charcoal Satin powdercoat — *glazing* Capral double glazed Sliding Suite — *hardware* Internal sliding: Designer Doorware Neopull, External: Designer Doorware Prisma — *heating/cooling systems* Ducted split system — *ceiling* Plasterboard 13mm — *internal walls* Plasterboard 10mm finished with semi gloss/flat acrylic — *paint* Semi gloss enamel, Dulux Vivid White, Buff It, Maximus — *glass* Dulux Vivid White bathroom Colourback, black ensuite Colourback — *lighting/light fittings* Euroluce Sombrero recessed downlight, Diabolo pendant, Parentisi pendant, Metro wall light; Mondoluce Lucciola ceiling light, Wafer ceiling washlight, Micro Oyo recessed downlight, LED ground lights in driveway — *flooring* Godfrey Hirst Sonic carpet, Classic Ceramic Cross-cut and honed basalt tiles, On Site Biano perlin, travertine tiles — *joinery* Dulux 2-pax charcoal and 2-pak silver clamshell laundry cupboards, New Age Veneers Ashen satin island bench, polyurethane timber veneer — *kitchen appliances* Smeg BBQ; Miele cook top, dishwasher, fridge, oven, microwave, warming drawer; Vola mixer tap, Qasair rangehood; Franke sink — *fittings & fixtures* Hafele mixer tap; Abey ironing board; Miele Stack trough; Duravit washer/dryer, basin tap set; Vola handbasin, mirror, shower shelf, tap set, toilet brush, rail and roll holder; Gebertit toilet pan and cistern, WC button set.

architect
–
Jackson Clements Burrows Architects

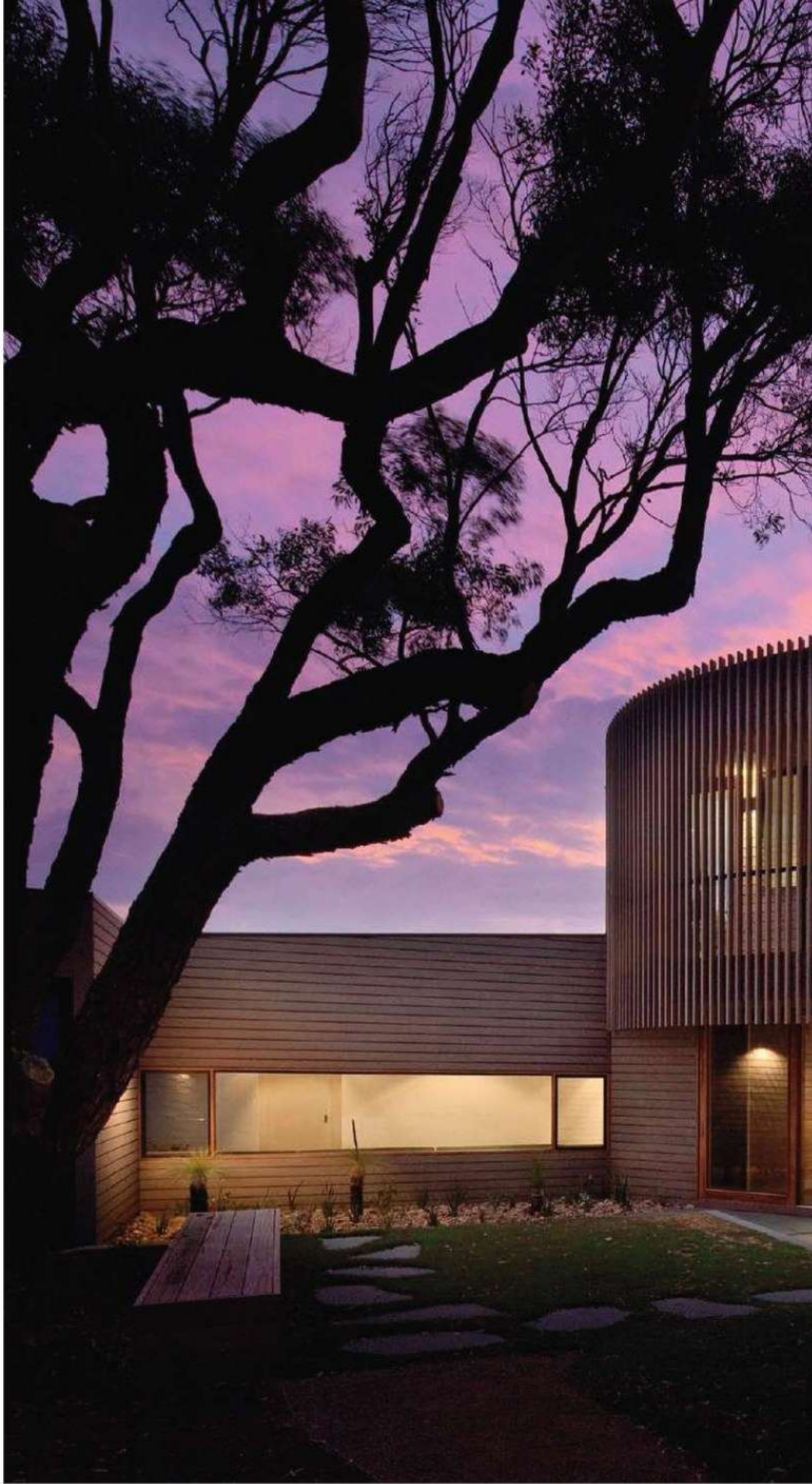
project
–
Henley Street Residence

photography
–
John Gollings

review
–
Martyn Hook

KEY CHANGE

An influx of seachangers is having a radical impact on the cultural and physical make-up of Australia's coastal towns. A new project by Melbourne practice Jackson Clements Burrows offers the promise that a little change, however, isn't always such a bad thing...



01

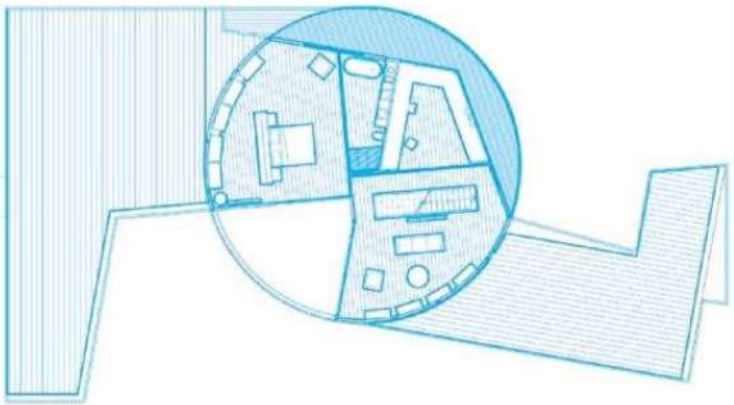
Architect's Statement

Barwon Heads is in a period of significant change. Heritage overlays currently protect older fishing shacks while the less significant built fabric remaining in the seaside town is progressively being redeveloped. Architecture is now significantly contributing to the evolution of this small coastal township.

In this case, a young family engaged Jackson Clements Burrows Architects to design their new permanent residence, which would replace a dilapidated 1950s two-storey house that was beyond repair. A sculptural building form emerged from the client's brief, which jokingly requested a planetarium as an inclusion. In response, we immediately engaged in the exploration of circular forms as a loose reference to the traditional stargazer. The brief was challenged by the inherent constraints of the pure circle and the design concepts eventually evolved to become a series of sprawling spaces nestled under a primarily circular form.

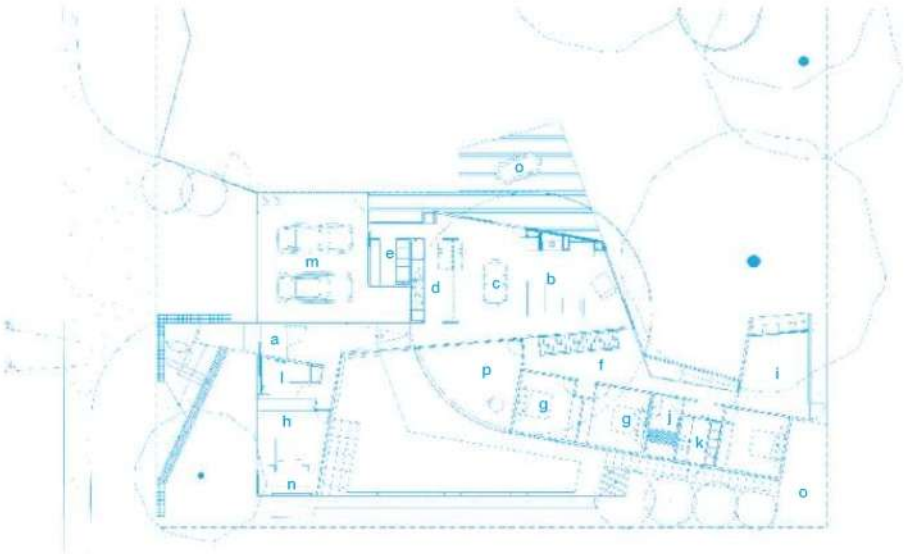
The sculptural form of the building was conceived to immerse itself over time as a natural extension of the surrounding ti-tree dominated landscape. The semi-transparent front fence intentionally blurs the distinction between built form and landscape. The fence departs from the traditional boundary condition by folding and thrusting itself back onto the site to become part of the skin, wrapping the building in a protective layer and then returning to ground to re-engage with the rear boundary. The battened skin provides important solar protection to double-glazed windows and necessary privacy to private spaces in the upper form. Further ESD strategies include solar hot water systems, solar pool heating, rainwater harvesting (for toilet, garden and washing machine use), high performance double-glazing and under floor heating. Air-conditioning systems were not required on the basis that the house achieved a 7.5 star energy rating.

first floor plan

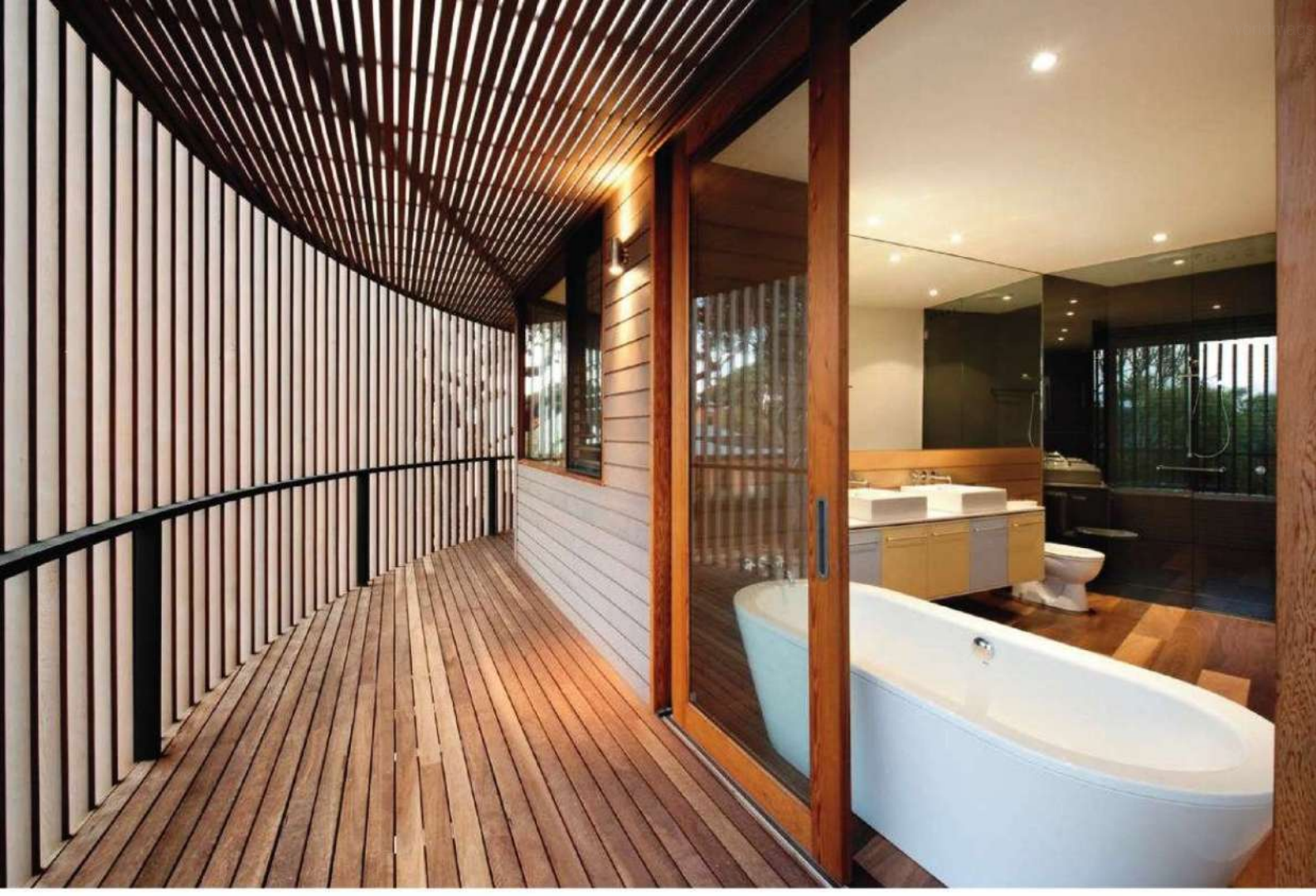


a. master/ bedroom
b. walk-in-robe
c. study
d. retreat
e. deck
f. roof over

ground floor plan



a. entry
b. living
c. dining
d. kitchen
e. scullery
f. hall
g. bedroom
h. guest bedroom
i. rumpus
j. bathroom
k. powder room
l. laundry
m. garage
n. pool store
o. deck
p. two storey void



02

Review: Henley Street Residence

The phenomena of the 'tree change' and 'sea change' lifestyle shift are transforming regional and coastal towns throughout Australia. Cashed-up, retiring baby boomers are being joined by Gen X-ers priced out of the inner suburbs, all heading to the country or down the coast in search of a different, lifestyle-focused existence. This is a fact documented by every second newspaper's property lift-out, but what is rarely discussed is the impact, both positive and negative, that the influx is having on the previously seasonal, usually quiet towns. Former gold rush hamlets, fishing villages, farming towns, holiday spots and coastal idylls are being placed under immense pressure by the sheer volume of new population. Local infrastructure for water, power and sewage is overloaded, tiny regional hospitals and health facilities have to stretch shoestring budgets, emergency services and police have to be reinforced, and, perhaps most critically, the planning department of the local authority is inundated with development applications well beyond the capacity of its available resources. Overworked amateur country councillors are in a difficult situation – caught between a desire to grow in order to raise revenue to make services better, and the risk of over-development destroying the very reason everyone is there. From Daylesford to Katoomba, Apollo Bay to Shoalhaven Heads, Lakes Entrance to Goolwa, there is a significant war being quietly waged between local and 'changer' versus tourist and 'weekender'.

Ironically, and perhaps appropriately, the struggle is particularly public in Barwon Heads, the Victorian coastal town that starred as the location of *Seachange*, the ABC television drama that started it all. The battle of Barwon Heads is focused around the usual concerns – how to develop the shopping strip, whether or not to allow three storey houses – and a particularly long running dispute over how to replace an old wooden bridge that once served as the primary traffic access to the town.

Jon Clements has watched all this unfold; he's a local. His family has been coming to this town for 45 years and, when studying architecture at Deakin University in nearby Geelong, Clements lived in the family holiday house on the river for five years and worked in the local pub. Now, as a partner in Jackson Clements Burrows Architects

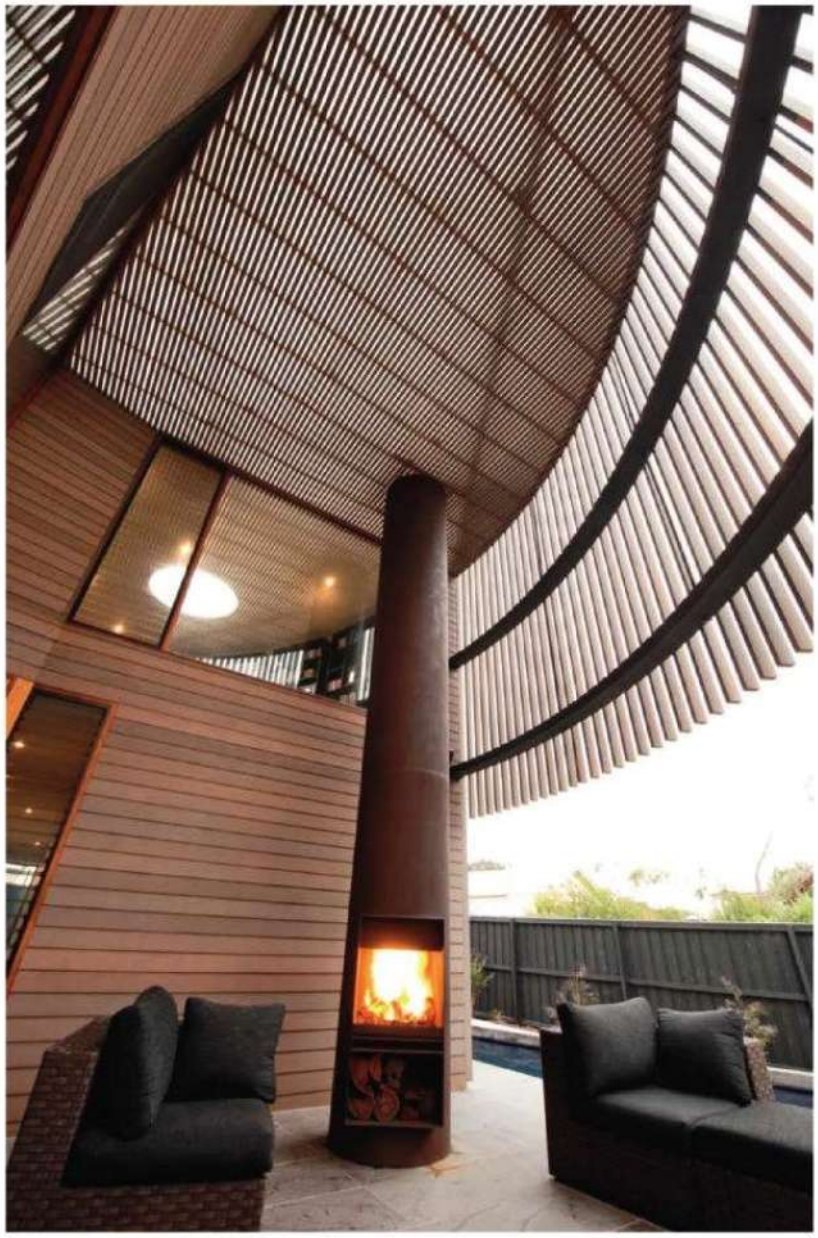
01. 02.
The project's distinctive battened skin provides solar protection and privacy while still allowing for connection to the surrounding environment.

03

03.
A secondary sitting room on the first floor offers a place for quiet repose.

04.
The 'outdoor room' and steel column fireplace.

04



(JCB), he is playing a part in the design of the future of Barwon Heads, with several projects completed and a few more in planning – and they are copping some flak. As Clements explains, the locals have a preference for the aesthetics of Diver Dan's shack and resistance to JCB's modest residential proposals has escalated to the point where they are being blamed for destroying the town.

"The question as to what is an appropriate response to context is not so easy in Barwon Heads," says Clements. "In our opinion, it changes from street to street. The original weatherboard beach house might be appropriate in one street, but it may not in another because the predominant housing stock is from the seventies and made of brick. It's just not possible to say 'a Barwon Heads house should look like this'."

JCB has recently won an AIA Architecture Award for a new house tucked behind the dunes that form the Barwon Heads golf course and it is definitely no faux weatherboard shack. In this context, the architects have used the landscape as the primary reference and have sought to embed the house into the indigenous rolls of ti-tree and

05. 06.
The main living areas on the ground floor boast a beautifully balanced combination of natural timbers and polished concrete floors, an appropriate concession to beachhouse vernacular.

05

06

grasses that cover the sands. "We saw the house as an opportunity to repair part of the landscape," explains Clements. "But also, there was a significant garden that previously occupied the site with a collection of remnant bluestone walls as part of its design. So the house is locked into the contours and located in response to the original stone walls."

The striking form of the house begins with the cylindrical drum at its core. This emerges from a winged plan, which embraces an existing tree. The drum is clad with a veil of regularly spaced timber battens that create a compelling moiré effect as the veil unfolds across the site, taking the dwelling with it to become a permeable open screen at the boundary, in place of a fence.

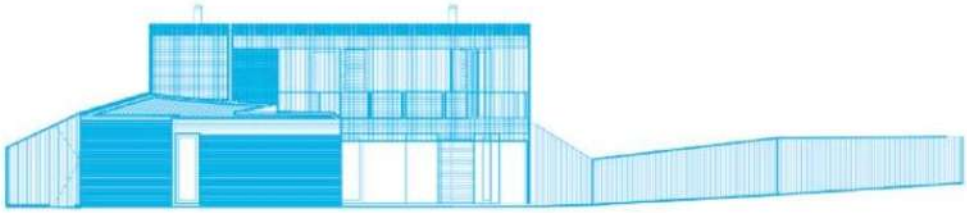
The clients are true Gen X seachangers who made the choice to move their young family away from the city for a different life, but who still commute back to Melbourne several days a week for work. Arguably, the program of the house reflects this position, with vast open spaces that fall out onto the landscape and a pool. Lacking suburban angst, it feels like an over-scaled beach house, with a robust material palette (concrete floors, rich oiled timber) and generous walls of operable glass. The house is big, well detailed and has plenty of space around it.

The ground floor contains living spaces and bedrooms, with the master bedroom, home office and a quiet sitting room occupying the first floor of the drum. The geometry of the rooms shifts strategically in relation to the timber veil, with the battens maintaining their form and the enclosure of the house shifting behind this form to craft balconies, decks and (most effectively) an 'outdoor room', with a column of steel that contains a fireplace hanging next to the pool. In addition to its success as a formal device, the batten veil has also had a surprising effect on the thermal performance of the building, guiding breezes through it and providing shading and privacy without compromising the views to the coast.

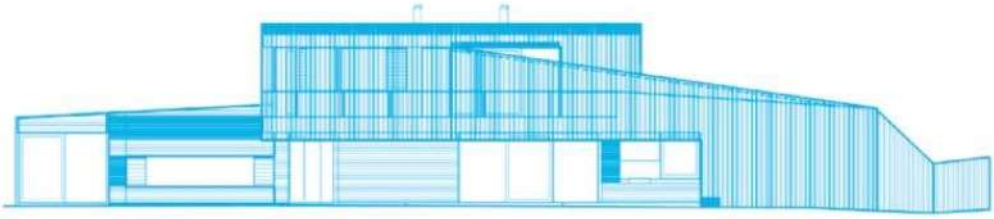
"There is a shift that is occurring," explains Clements. "When this building was going up there was hostile resistance to it, but gradually as the cladding went on, the new stone walls were built and the landscaping finished, the objectors came to understand what we were trying to do." The nature of the "shift" is that with the arrival of new residents comes new ideas and substantial investment in good architecture. Arguably, land is cheaper out on the coast away from the major centres, so greater emphasis can be placed on better architecture and better quality materials. However, it isn't just in improving the lifestyle of one family that this architecture has an impact. As the quantity and quality of new, good buildings gathers momentum, the ability of the community to make informed decisions about what is appropriate for their town will increase – and then everyone, locals and newcomers alike, might begin to appreciate the promise of a little change.

Martyn Hook is the Melbourne editor for Architectural Review Australia, *associate professor of architecture at RMIT and a director of Iredale Pedersen Hook Architects.*

east elevation



north elevation



ARCHITECT: *practice* Jackson Clements Burrows Architects — *project team* Jon Clements, Graham Burrows, Tim Jackson, Chris Botterill, Nick James — BUILDER Peter Morgan Home Builders — CONSULTANTS: *structural engineer* Lambert and Rehbein — *landscape design* Tim Nicholas Joinery Cattanach Kitchens — PROJECT: *size* 370 m² — *time to complete* Design 6 months; construction 12 months — MATERIALS: *walls* Timber frame — *wall linings* Cedar shiplap lining boards — *cladding* Cedar shiplap lining boards — *roof* Colorbond — *guttering* Colorbond — *paint* Cutek — *paving* Bluestone — *windows* Cedar — *doors* Cedar Hardware Lockwood — *heating/cooling systems* Hydronic heating — *deck* Spotted gum — *ceiling* Plasterboard/cedar battens — *internal walls* Plasterboard/cedar lining — *paint* Dulux vivid white *flooring* Polished concrete/spotted gum Armourfloor — *surfaces* Quarella Composite Stone.

architect
–
Kebbell Daish

project
–
Humbug

photography
–
Sonia Mangiapane

review
–
Maitiú Ward

NOT SO BLACK AND WHITE

Is it possible for art to have a genuinely productive dialogue with architecture? A new residence in Mornington Peninsula by Kebbell Daish explores the possibilities of a partnership between the disciplines, where art serves as more than just decorative appliqué.

01

02

PROCESS AND A THING

Humbug is the residue of a process between an architect, Sam Kebbell, and a painter, Peter Adsett. We say residue because it is important to emphasise that the project is both the process where ideas were formed and tested through dialogue, and the result of that dialogue. Humbug is both a process and a thing.

SPACE AND SURFACE

We set out to investigate the space between painting and architecture. The intention was not to apply paint pictorially but rather to think 'in painting' as a disciplinary structure while making architecture and, conversely, to bring architectural thinking to the 'construction of painting'. The connection we pursued was not any representational device common to both; the connection was the experience of space and surface.

FIGURE AND GROUND

The language we used to explore this interplay between space and surface was figure and ground: terms common to both painting and architecture. Figure ground drawings have been, since Nolli's map of Rome in 1748, a conventional architectural technique for understanding built form in context. Figure and ground also provide the perceptual logic of painting. Humbug uses conventions of figure and ground to confuse space and surface.

THE CONVENTIONS

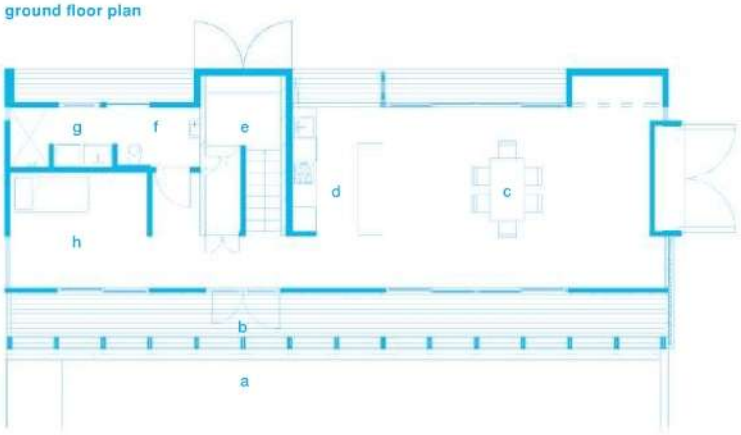
In both painting and architecture, figure comes forward and the ground recedes; figure is the 'work' in question and ground is its context. It is common to consider a painting hung on a white wall in terms of figure and ground: the painting as figure (the object in question) and the white wall as ground (the context for the painting). Painting is frequently the figure on an architectural ground, and paint is frequently the surface in an architectural space.

HUMBUG

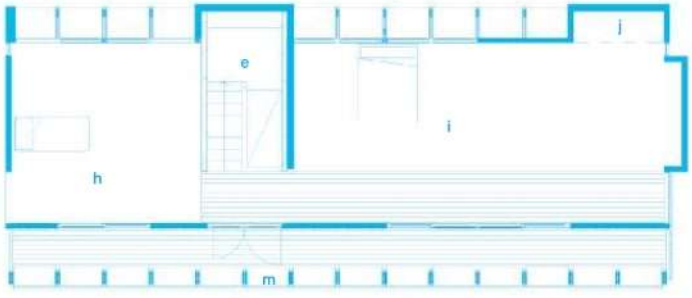
For example (and there are a few), the striped canvas along the front of the house is a direct reference to French artist Daniel Buren, exhibited for the street to see: for a moment, it is the central figure (foreground) and the studio behind it is the ground (context). However, these canvas stripes are in fact deck chairs from which to view paintings hanging in the studio. One literally turns ones back on them to sit down (they literally become 'back' and 'ground') and the work on the studio wall returns to figure. Those canvas stripes are both figure and ground, depending on the reference point.

– Peter Adsett and Sam Kebbell

ground floor plan



first floor plan



a. lawn
b. entry
c. living/dining
d. kitchen
e. stairs
f. bathroom
g. laundry
h. bedroom
i. bedroom/studio
j. wardrobe
m. deckchairs

From the balcony of Humbug, Peter Adsett's house-cum-artist's studio, you can look out across a gently sloping valley of green pastures to St Peter's, the small Catholic church servicing the modest parish Shoreham on the Mornington Peninsula, where his children were baptised. Adsett is a New Zealand-born abstract painter, but settled in Shoreham after meeting his wife Susie, a Peninsula local.

Adsett and I are standing on the balcony, inspecting the unusual façade elements of his new family home, designed by Kiwi practice Kebbell Daish. We're talking about doubt, and the many conversations Adsett has had over the years with his parish priest about its relationship to faith. I get the impression that for Adsett (unlike his priest) doubt, perception and the ability to question are crucial precursors to belief, and to meaning. Unsurprisingly, these notions also figure prominently in his work.

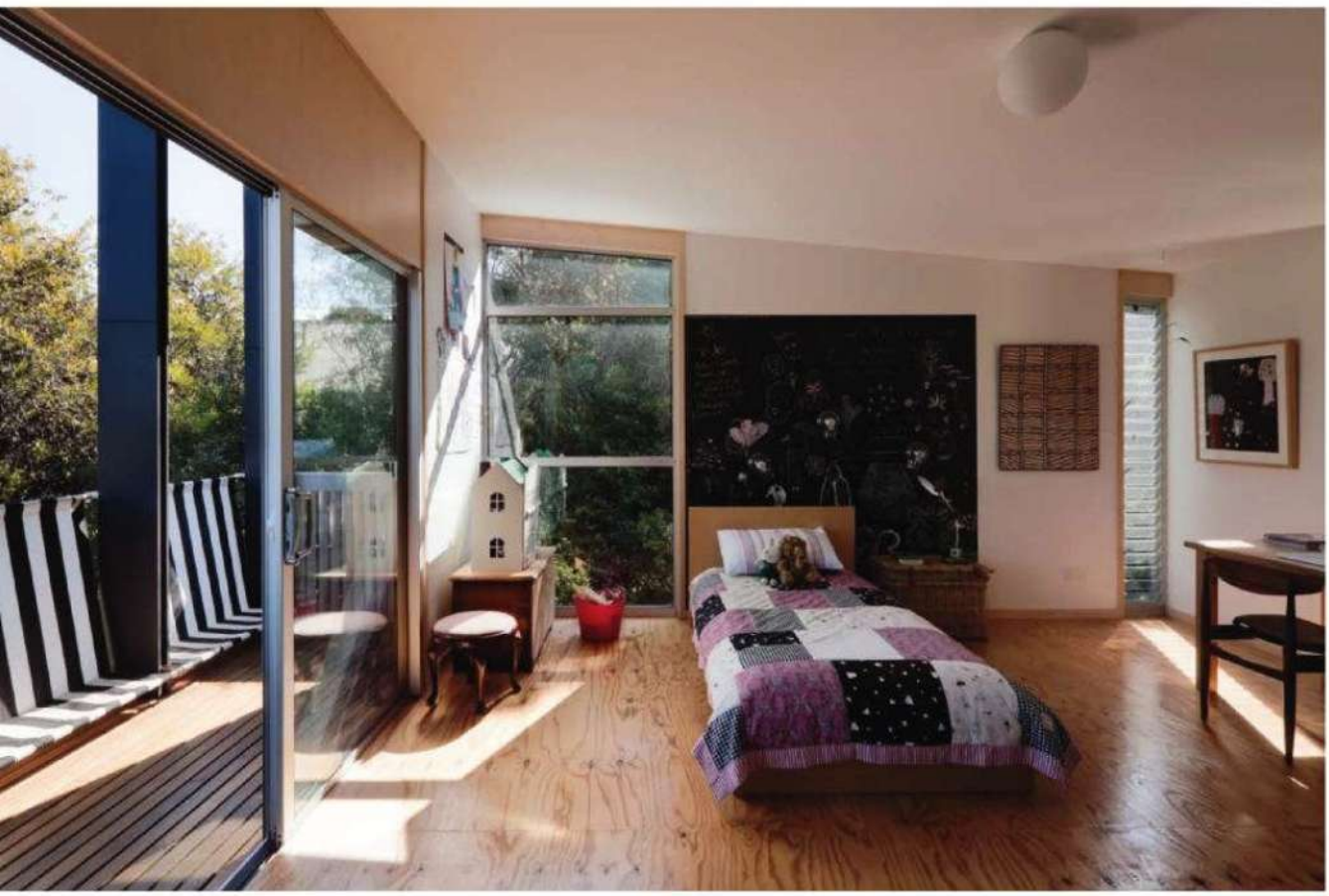
The conversation turns to *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* by 16th century Italian renaissance artist Caravaggio, who is seen by many as the progenitor of modern painting. In the picture, Caravaggio depicts a meeting between Saint Thomas and the resurrected Christ. His finger knuckle deep in the spear wound at Christ's side, Saint Thomas's doubt is etched into his forehead, the wrinkles created by his steeply raised eyebrows thrown into sharp relief through Caravaggio's masterful use of chiaroscuro.

The religious subject matter however is deceptive. If Caravaggio's technique casts his subjects in a dramatic high contrast light bordering on black and white, his intent is much more ambiguous. While Saint Thomas's right hand is being commandeered by Christ in a gesture that seems to indicate not seeing, but feeling is believing, his left hand rests on his hip, forcing his elbow into a kink that presses out impossibly against the very membrane of the canvas. Very few believe Caravaggio could have made such a rudimentary error in foreshortening. The painter, it seems, is leaving room for doubt.

In addition to practising painting, Adsett also teaches it, and describes how he often refers to Caravaggio's work in his classes. Taking one of the old master's paintings, he will ask his students to describe different segments of it. Beginning first with the identifiable human figures, eventually they arrive at a section of the painting where the only way it can be described is as pure black paint. In muddying the waters between figure and ground, and in self-consciously manipulating the disjuncture between the expression of an idea and its interpretation, in Caravaggio's work we find the first seeds of painterly abstraction.

01.
Deep fins on the north east elevation protect from sun while also addressing overlooking issues.

02.
The south west, street facing elevation with distinctive, black and white striped canvas balustrades.



03

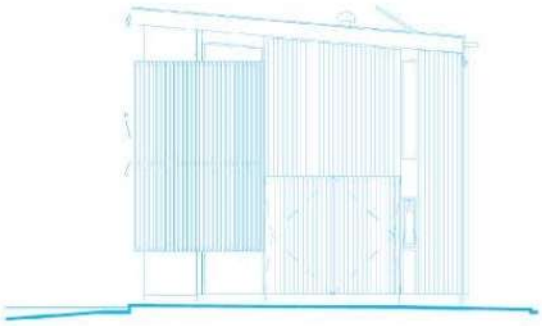
04

03.
One room deep in plan, the house makes judicious use of glazing and a close connection to the outdoors to esnure a sense of spaciousness throughout.

04.
Striped canvas references French conceptual artist Daniel Buren.

05.
Canvas balustrades become inward-looking canvas deck chairs.

east elevation



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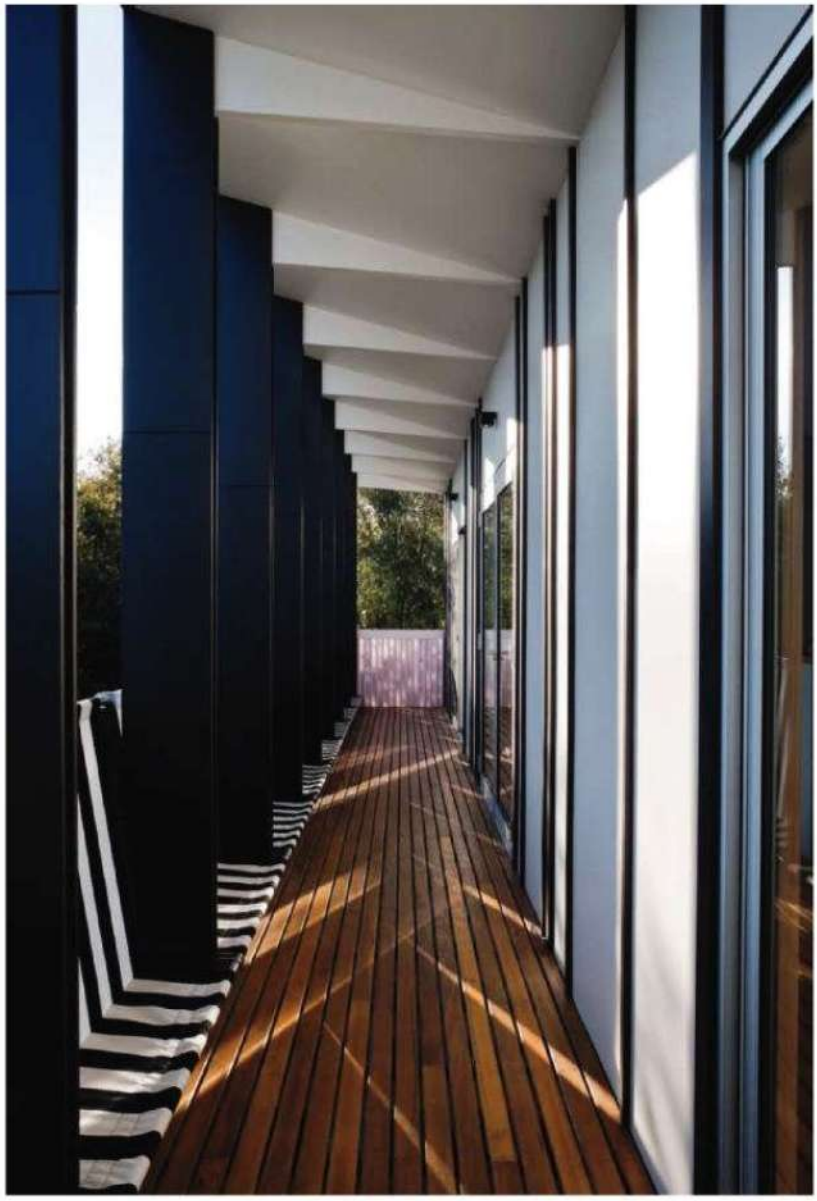
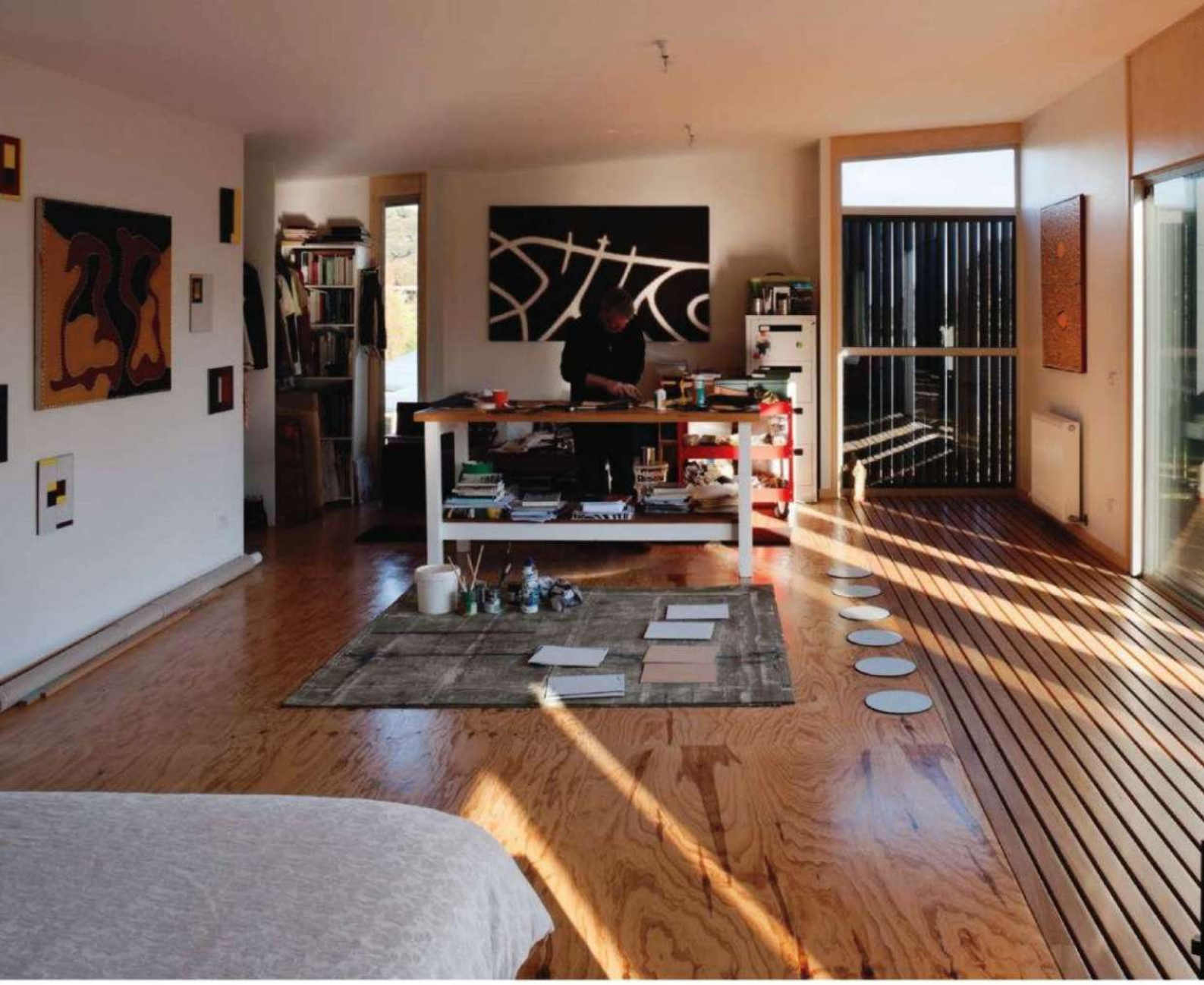


Adsett first met Sam Kebbell, the architect of Humbug, several years ago in Wellington, where Kebbell has his practice. At that stage, Adsett had no plans to commission a building, but Kebbell and he found common interest in a discussion around art's relationship to architecture. That connection established, the dialogue continued, and years later when Adsett found himself with a small patch of land in need of a building, it was Kebbell who he turned to. The pair, of course, saw the commission as the perfect opportunity to put into practice the substance of much of what they had been discussing over the previous years.

"When we started the project, one of the key goals was to try to collapse art and architecture onto each other again," Kebbell describes. "Throughout the 20th century there's been there's been this clumsy dancing between the two. It's so often the case that art is clipped on the front or bolted into the courtyard, and we really wanted to try and integrate the two forms of logic."

The building though also had to serve two very pragmatic purposes – it was to be both the Adsett family residence and an artist's studio for Peter. On approach from the street, the house impresses as all of the above – a distinctly unique take on a fairly conventional residential typology.

From what was originally a sloping site rising up away from the street, a podium has been created, setback from the road behind a buffer of garden beds and sheoak plantings. Utilising sheets of corten steel as retaining walls, the formerly sloping site has been landscaped to create a 12-metre by 12-metre lawn. Behind this, pushed as far to the rear of the block as planning regulations would



06

allow, is an orthogonal two-storey volume that serves as the family's house.

With its prominent garden setting and double-loggia street side, south west elevation, you could read the house as a variation on the Palladian villa. Built simply, it is a trabeated structure with a reverse board and batten cladding. When Kebbell began conceptualising the building, he thought of it first in terms of a fence, which this post and beam, repetitive frame recalls. The south west elevation as a result has a strong sense of horizontal rhythm, which has been enhanced by the use of black and white colour to define the various façade elements. As soon as Adsett saw the design, he was immediately reminded of French conceptual artist Daniel Buren, whose work is concerned with the integration of visual surface with architectural space. Buren became famous for draping striped deck chair canvas across historic, landmark buildings in France, and this connection became the inspiration for the street elevation's most unusual feature – the black and white canvas webbing that serves as both balustrade for the first floor verandah and 'deck chair'. This element is also the most explicit expression of the project's fascination with notions of figure and ground.

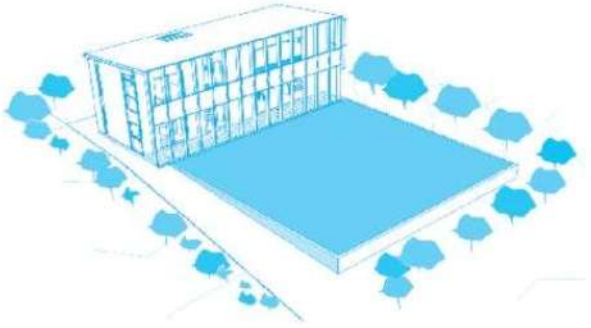
"We realised that the idea of figure and ground is an idea that's common to both art and architecture; they mean different things to each discipline, but there's a lot of commonality," Kebbell explains. "So we used this idea a lot to try to make it ambiguous, so that one particular element wasn't either figure or ground, art or architecture."

On first impressions, it's the balustrade that strikes you as the 'art' component of this project. A bold graphic composition comprised of canvas, which is then framed by the vertical columns of the colonnade, it represents the classic art/architecture relationship, where architecture becomes the ground while the striped canvas, or 'artwork', is the figure; art as decorative appliqué.

Once on the verandah though, that relationship is confused – the canvas balustrade becomes a seat. In a neat inversion of the traditional villa typology however, whereby the verandah becomes a vantage point from which to survey the landscape, the seat doesn't face outwards as you would expect, but inwards into the master bedroom, which also serves as Adsett's studio. "You're looking completely the other way into the house, and

07

ARCHITECT: *practice* KebbellDaish — *project team* Sam Kebbell, Peter Adsett, John Daish, David McGregor, Soo Kim, Francois Breedt — BUILDER: Wainwright Construction — CONSULTANTS: *engineer* Dunning Thornton Consultants — *landscape architect* KebbellDaish — *building surveyor* Napean Building Permits — *quantity surveyor* Workshop Quantity Surveyors — PROJECT: *size* 165 m² — *time to complete* 9 months construction — *council* Mornington Peninsula Shire — *client* Peter and Suzie Adsett — *design software used* Revit.



06.
Artist's studio/master bedroom – verandah decking extends into the internal space, blurring the boundaries between indoors and out.

07.
Humbug is constructed simply but well – ceiling joists have been left deliberately exposed to express these values.

your back is against the canvas; it can't be figure, it can only be ground, but literally back-ground," explains Kebbell. "And so what becomes the figure is the work in the studio, what Pete is doing, which is what the building is all about."

Standing on the balcony with Adsett, several of the building's other ploys in this respect become more obvious. From above, the 12-metre by 12-metre lawn in the middle of the site below us reads as figure, the site becoming the ground – a reading which directly contrasts with my earlier impression of the lawn as a kind of podium, or as Kebbell describes it, "a classical sculptural plinth".

Kebbell and Adsett both talk of how important the process of dialogue was to the final outcome, and of how this dialogue was not a 'collaboration', but a conversation held from two distinct disciplinary positions, each with a clear sense of its own internal logic. The building that has resulted is a rich brew of oscillating ideas, and both profess that the experience has had a transformative effect on their practice – Kebbell, in fact, is hoping to convince Adsett to join him on projects for other clients. To focus on this aspect of the project too much though, is to forget that this house is also a family home. Built humbly but well from plywood, concrete and besser brick, it is robust and simply planned. Sensibly, for what is a reasonably compact house for a family of four (certainly by today's bloated standards), it has a strong and close relationship to its outdoor setting, with permeable floor-to-ceiling double glazing on both the south and north elevations. In essence then, this artwork-cum-work of architecture is also a sensible, humble, simple family home.

Christened Humbug, an allusion to both its stripy exterior shell (like the lolly) and a reference to the Indigenous Australian term for mischief, or trickery, the building plays with our perceptions, piling on possible interpretation after possible interpretation in the interstices between black and white, figure and ground, art and architecture until we're never quite sure what to make of it. This is in many ways its great strength – with limited means at its disposal, it uses playful ambiguity to become more than the sum of its parts. A kind of transcendence, then, found not in the details, but in doubt, dialogue and the spaces between. **ar**

Maitiú Ward is the editor of Architectural Review Australia.

– LIFE CYCLE –
PRESHIL

review
Hannah Lewi

photography
Christine Francis

Over the coming issues, *AR* will present Life Cycle, a series of articles documenting mid-century Australian architecture of note. Teaming up with Docomomo, an organisation dedicated to the preservation of our modernist architectural heritage, the series will examine how these buildings have evolved over time, and their continuing relevance to both the discipline of architecture and the communities that they serve. For our first feature in the series, we visit Kevin Borland's Preshil School in Melbourne. Built between 1962 and 1972, far from being frozen in time, Preshil has grown and matured along with the many thousands of children that have passed through its walls. Nearly five decades after construction began, its principles still set a benchmark in innovative educational design.

The 'tree house', constructed in 1965 – two elevated classrooms separated by a timber deck and an Italian Cyprus.

On a Sunday afternoon in March this year, a group of architects, students and researchers went on a tour of the Preshil School campus in Kew, Melbourne. The tour was organised by Docomomo Australia. To promote awareness, and more importantly a genuine fondness for Australian modernism, for the past three years the Victorian-based Docomomo group has organised tours of modern buildings. We have visited a number of private houses in Melbourne and recently decided that it was high-time some non-domestic sites should be included, hence the tour of the Preshil Primary School campus.

Why this school? Because Preshil is a unique and loved learning environment – architecturally innovative yet suburban, playful and modest – and it remains largely as it was built in the early- to mid-1960s when Kevin Borland's practice was commissioned to design the school hall and other classrooms. In 1972, Borland was awarded the RAIA Victorian chapter Bronze medal for the school campus, which encompassed six buildings designed between 1962 and 1972, including the octagonal school hall and various classrooms such as the elevated 'Long Room' building with a tree growing through the timber deck, and the multi-level and cellular-planned 'Home Rooms' (John Kenny assistant architect, 1972).

Borland remained closely associated with Preshil as architect and parent for many years, and the school has had many other architect-guardians from among its former students or involved parents. It is this local and professional sense of attachment to this school that made me somewhat wary of writing anything about it, as there are many others who could, and have, written more authoritatively on both the buildings and their pedagogy. [01] So a disclaimer perhaps is needed that what follows here is based on what was seen and heard on the day of the Docomomo tour, and hence the impressions of an 'outsider'.

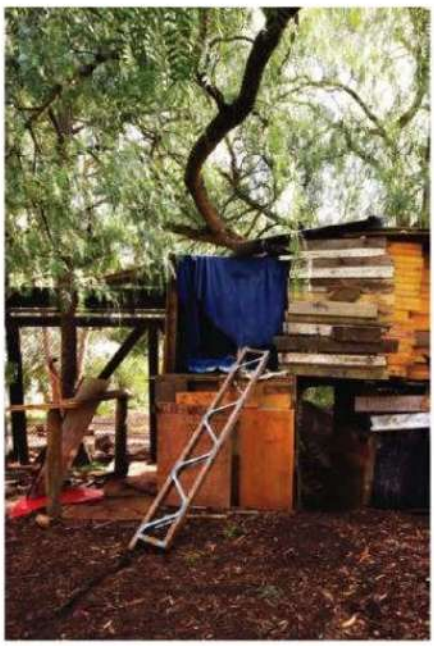
Preshil is a small non-government primary school of around 140 students. It was founded on progressive educational principles with links to the ideas of AS Neill, the Montessori and Reggio Emilia systems, which steer a path towards life-long learning that is essentially child-focused. The assumption is that children are reasonable people who should be fully involved in the decision-aking of the school community and environment. This school philosophy has been described as a 'guided democracy' that is fundamentally non-competitive – which seems, incidentally, increasingly at odds with the current aggressive drive towards transparent national testing and ranking.

How have these educational ideals been born out in architectural innovation? There has been a notable history of the association of exploratory modern architects and innovative school design in Victoria. For example the Koornong School, designed by Best Overend for the experimental educators Clive and Janet Nield in 1939, was short-lived but influential. By the post-WWII era, there was widespread impetus for new architectural and environmental solutions to suit the great social, political and demographic shifts taking effect in Australia and Britain. School design explicitly moved towards the creation of a more 'civilised, humane and progressive atmosphere'. [02] Yet although modern architecture played a large role in shaping new schools, the level of innovation, particularly in government primary schools, was self-limiting because of a pervading view that schools should be well designed and clean, yet not intimidating, monumental or distracting for children. More radical and imaginative ideas could be pursued somewhat more easily in the private than public sphere – with some notable exceptions.

Preshil today still feels refreshingly outside of the mainstream design assumptions that have generated appropriate and modern yet often dull schools in Australia. It is evident that the young

DOCOMOMO

Docomomo stands for the documentation and conservation of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the modern movement. This international organisation was founded in the Netherlands in 1990, inspired by the recognition that urgent attention was needed to document, conserve and promote awareness and appreciation of the architecture of the modern era. Docomomo now has more than 40 member countries, and this international breadth is one of its great strengths and sources of fruitful exchange. Docomomo Australia has active working groups in Sydney and Melbourne, and members throughout Australia. Docomomo Australia has been involved in the ongoing compilation of an international register of significant modernist works, and has spoken out against the destruction or disfigurement of notable modern Australian sites. For example, formal submissions have been made this year on the proposed demolition of Union Hall on the University of Adelaide campus, and the proposed demolition of 10 Murray Street, Hobart, designed by Hartley Wilson and Bolt in 1963 – as discussed by Paul Johnston in AR113, December 2009. As a small volunteer group, what can be achieved by way of advocacy is limited; however, expressions of expert opinions that sit outside of self-interested individuals or government heritage bodies can potentially play a positive role in provoking public conservation debates.



One of several cubby houses constructed by the children at the school.

A mezzanine makes a secret place connected to the classroom, but apart from the general flow of activity.

The library, a second storey addition to the original school building, constructed in 1975.

students feel relaxed and unthreatened by their environment, but also energised and enchanted. The school's imaginative environs were in no small part inspired by Borland's view of the children as clients and active generators of the program. John Kenny and Bernard Brown, who worked in Borland's office and were part of the Docomomo tour, both recalled how they were instructed to learn about design by watching children at play in the school. They saw the buildings they were involved in designing for the campus as extending opportunities for play and learning: external stairs become a ship's prow; a mezzanine accessible only by a ladder, and hardly big enough for children to stand up in, makes a secret place connected to the classroom and yet apart from the general flow of activity.

Frank Moore, the former acting principal of the school, told us that it was not so much the permanent architecture, but rather the many cubby-houses and ropes hanging from trees that made the most immediate impact on him when deciding to teach at Preshil. The school grounds signified risky and inspired vision. Elaborate cubbies constructed out of found bits and pieces are still very much in evidence today and used as child-directed projects in maths, construction and group-work. To our current risk-averse society they are disconcertingly dangerous – and therein holds their charm and value.

The school's imaginative environs were in no small part inspired by Borland's view of the children as clients and active generators of the program.

Much learning does happen outside of the classroom – also a long tradition in the open-air schools of Europe – with chaotic activity occurring not just in designated playgrounds but also under buildings, in trees, and hidden away in the many nooks and crannies of the busy school grounds. Again, the way the school grounds are used seems in contrast to the culture of surveillance pervading many urban primary schools, where children are not permitted to go where they can't be seen. Spaces, both inside and outside, are designed from a child's perspective; they don't fit an adult comfortably, they create places to hide and they collect dust and dirt.

The lively density of play spaces, trees and buildings is partly due to the size of the campus site, which is not much bigger than a large residential block in Kew. The small scale and intricate geometries of the pavilion-like individual buildings, and their arrangement within the loosely landscaped site, contributes to an illusion of space and scale. The analogy of self-contained pavilions or follies in the landscape was a strategy that Conrad Hamann has suggested was being used by a number of architects contemporary to Borland in Melbourne, who were working with additions to 19th century buildings. The Preshil school buildings seem to operate as garden follies to the surrounding larger mansions of Kew.

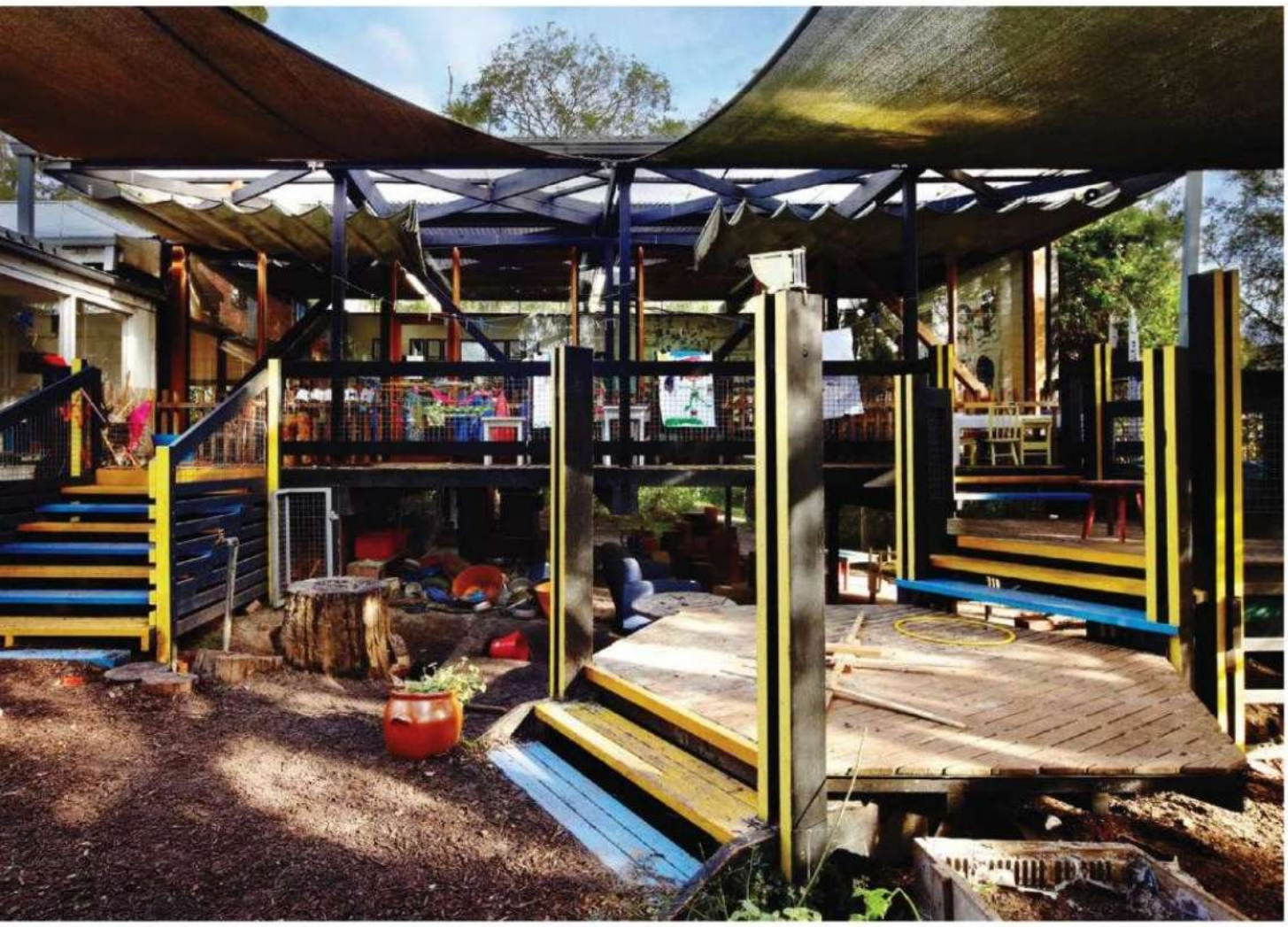
Why is the school of architectural and historical interest today? Within Australian terms, it is a key commission in Borland's much-awarded practice that allowed his work and that of his collaborators to be appreciated outside of the domestic realm. In international terms, some attention is now being given to modern schools and their historical and design value; for example, the modernist open-air schools of the Netherlands and the legacy of the English County Council schools of the 1940s and 1950s have recently been well documented by Docomomo and English Heritage. [03] However, historical documentation to date has included few innovative schools of the 1960s (with the open-planned and community-focused Countesthorpe School by Farmer & Dark, 1967-70, being one

Kevin Borland Hall, which boasts a distinctive octagonal plan.

English exception). Within Australia, very few 20th century schools have either been documented or heritage listed – for instance, the primary schools listed on the Victorian Heritage Register are overwhelmingly 19th century examples. A thorough study of architectural innovation in modern Australian schools is therefore timely, particularly with the consequences of current government stimulus funding to school building and maintenance becoming rapidly evident across the nation.

Perhaps, however, of more importance and value than the historical significance of Preshil is its design currency. Many of the architectural principles and design gestures evident here from the 1960s have today come full circle and are again being espoused as innovative: buildings themselves performing as active teaching tools; flexibility of classroom sizes and use; an emphasis on natural materials and gardens; and a growing sustainable agenda being just some of the ideas currently back into play within both education pedagogy and school design. **ar**

Dr Hannah Lewi is an associate professor in the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne where she teaches architecture history and design. She is the current chair of Docomomo Australia, and is co-editor of the forthcoming book Community: Building Modern Australia, UNSW Press, 2010.



Preshil combines experimental teaching techniques and experimental architecture.

Undercrofts provide extra space in what is a surprisingly small site.

FOOTNOTES

[01] For more definitive sources on Preshil and the architecture of Kevin Borland see D Evans, with H C Borland and C Hamann, Kevin Borland *Architecture From the Heart*, RMIT University Melbourne, 2006; and the Statement of Significance for Preshil School on the Victorian Heritage Register, accessible online.

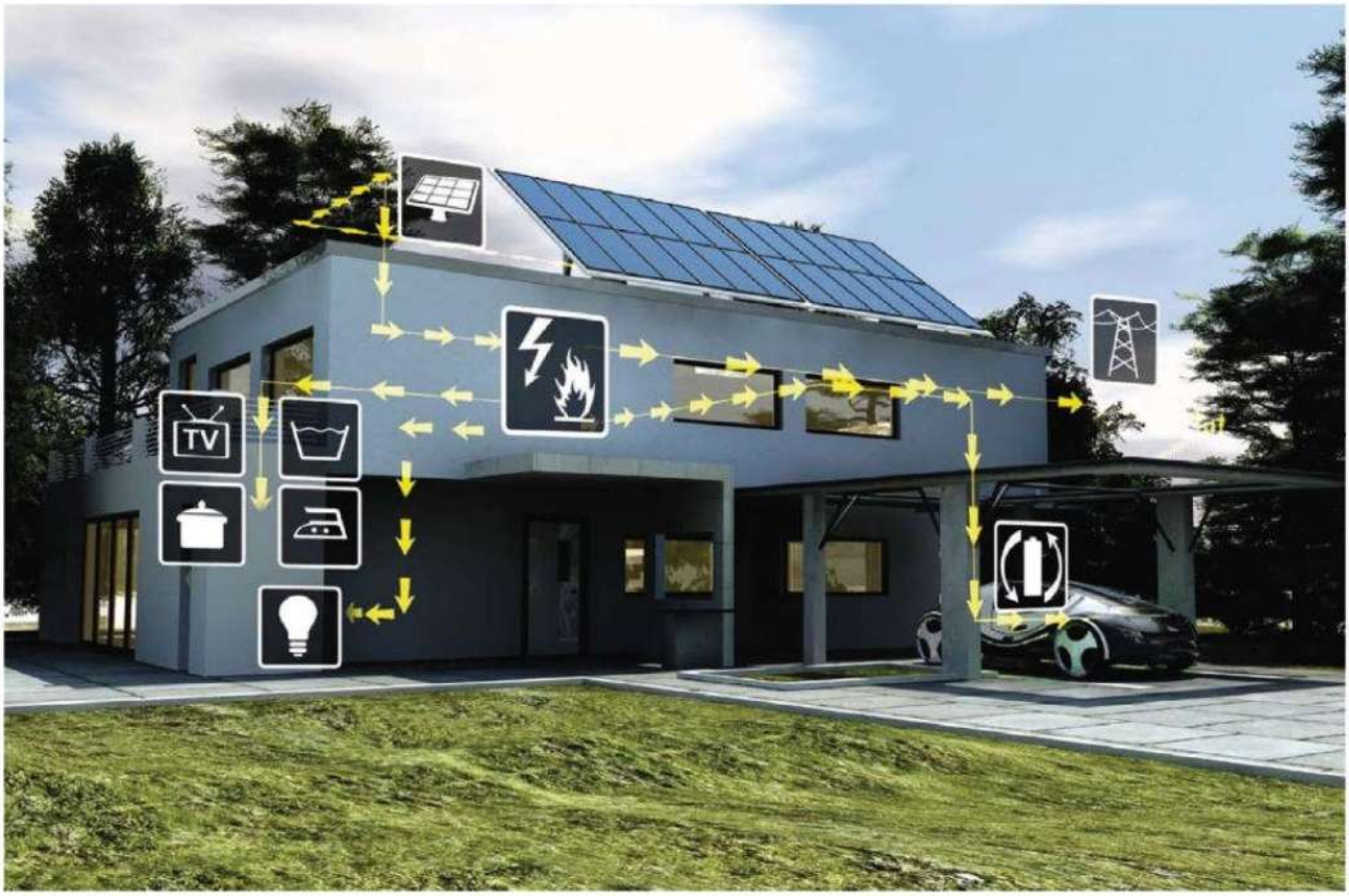
[02] Andrew Saint, *Towards a Social Architecture: the role of school-building in post-war England*, Yale University Press, 1987, p. 40.

[03] Elain Harwood, *England's Schools: History, Architecture and Adaptation*, English Heritage, 2010.

LIGHTS ON, BUT NO ONE'S HOME

text **Russell Fortmeyer**
images **Courtesy Siemens**

Smart grids and smart meters have the potential to radically transform how our buildings operate, whether or not we pay them much attention.



We now have two architectures. The kind we draw, build, kick with our boots, and the new, more profitable kind – the 'architectures' of the internet, software and media platforms. At some point in the not too distant past, some sneaky, slick egg-head in Palo Alto or Seattle decided that the word 'architecture', the sturdiest of timeless disciplines, a critical part of our belief in our own humanity, and so forth, could be adapted to the digital age, could be applied, as it were, to describe structurally heretofore purely conceptual frameworks containing mere electronic information. The key difference between the two, apparently, is the technophiles like to occasionally add an 's' to the end (see first sentence above).

So far, the new has not displaced the old, regardless of the appeal of virtual worlds, and so architecture must contend with architectures. There are at least two ways to think about this. The temptation is to focus on the abstract notion of digital architectures turning our buildings and cities into an interface, a larger platform for interaction with other people, the environment, the great, big world – the city as Facebook – but technology tends to be more effective, and sinister, when it disappears into the background to operate with or without our participation. There is a more prevalent, though perhaps less explicit, architecture at work in our cities in the electrical grid and the control systems we install in our buildings. We

rarely stop to question this architecture until it fails. For all we know, they could be burning cats out in the Gibson to make our electricity – most of us just don't care.

Thus, the urge to install more on-site energy generation in our buildings – whether wind turbines, photovoltaics or cogeneration plants – is in part an effort to eliminate the perceived social disconnect that occurs between where power is produced and where it is consumed. Currently, there is very little feedback between the two points in the electrical grid, but that's something the Australian Government's $100 million National Energy Efficiency Initiative – Smart Grid, Smart City program seeks to redress.

Smart grids relay information at all scales of electricity generation and distribution, from the power plant to the thermostat on your wall. The basic idea is that by embedding information networks into what is currently a dumb pipeline, utility providers can better gauge where and when across the network to supply energy. Australia's energy grid, like every other industrialised country's grid, is inefficient because we must be prepared, particularly during summer months, to generate enough electricity to meet the country's peak demand – even though most of the time we wouldn't need anywhere near that much energy. As we generate more energy at peak times, the cost of that generation rises, thus consumers who convert to smart meters that tell a utility company how much energy they are consuming at a specific time will be hit with new peak demand charges and their overall bill will go up. Sure, it stinks, but it's a much more honest way of pricing the supply and demand of electricity (if you don't like it, stop using power).

Of course, converting the entire country to a smart grid could require an investment of billions of dollars, since there hasn't been much progress made in grid technology since the days of Edison and there are few built case studies anywhere in the world for precedents. Australia's Smart Grid, Smart City project is rolling out first in Newcastle as a test to, in the Government's formulation, "gather robust information about the costs and benefits of smart grids to inform future decisions." It's not yet a formal policy, in other words.

The research studies on smart grids and meters, mostly funded by utility companies and governments, suggest that when users are empowered with the knowledge of what their energy costs at a given time (say, every 30 minutes), they will then make smarter choices about how and when they consume that power. Simple logic dictates that it's best to start the dishwasher at night, after dinner, but it also makes sense from a grid perspective, since overall electricity consumption falls off after working hours. Utility companies would like to take this whole concept one step further and connect your dishwasher and all of its electronic friends to a data network they can control. While Julia goes to Parliament, the utility company could then shut down her dryer between one and two in the afternoon to reduce pressure on the grid.

Such minute control of the white goods of our lives relies in large part on technological convergence – or, simply put, the ability for one thing to talk to another. Monitoring and controlling home appliances, 'demand management', in industrial parlance, would go a long way in smoothing out the peaks and valleys in the electrical grid demand curve. This is not so far-fetched, especially given the prevalence of wireless networks and the relatively low cost of microchips. In California, consumers can opt into a program where utilities can remotely shut down their air-conditioning in the middle of the day to prevent rolling blackouts. Of course, the consumer can over-ride the control, but then with the knowledge they will pay peak prices. In the last year, ETSA Utilities in South Australia has conducted a pilot project on a similar air-conditioning demand management program that proved successful, but only given the backbone of a smart grid. Similar studies were undertaken by ENERGEX, Western Power and Ergon Energy, all focused on managing Australia's newfound love affair with air-conditioning. But while air-conditioning is the big target, shutting down unnecessary consumer power consumption is no small matter, either. ActewAGL estimates that phantom power loads, like a blinking DVD player, account for nearly 10 percent of Canberra's household electricity consumption. That's a lot of wastage, easily requiring an extra power plant or two to supply.

For all this talk about smarts, however, the energy industry faces several challenges in rolling out this transformation quickly. For starters, there are no industry-consensus standards. One smart meter may be dumb compared to another. A US standard has been in the works since 2007, but there's no expectation of a final product any time soon. A 2007 report by the US Government's Federal Energy Regulatory Commission found that of the 20 percent of existing meters installed in the country that qualify as smart, only six percent have the capacity for two-way communication. This is an important point, especially if a utility wanted the ability in the future to turn off home appliances or communicate pricing information through the meter. We don't want to make that mistake here. As part of the demand management trials in Australia, in December 2008 Standards Australia released the AS4755 Demand Response Enabling Device standard (DRED), which the government could effectively use to mandate that air-conditioning systems comply with demand management control protocols. Although not a smart meter, there is a mandate that Australia's smart meters must be equipped to connect and recognise DREDs.

Without standards, the industry is likely to spend billions on unforeseen transitional steps and competing technology. As comparisons, consider the move toward hybrid vehicles, with each manufacturer embracing different battery types, or the proprietary technology embedded in waterfree urinals. Competition is generally thought of as a good idea in our free market economy, but it certainly doesn't prevent the unnecessary waste of obsolescence or, worse, wasted years. While slow development and a seemingly complicated technical nature undoubtedly figure, this uncertainty about the technical implementation of smart systems mostly explains why architects, and the design and products industry that support them, have been slow to join the party.

Jennifer Magnolfi, a senior designer for architectural technology systems at US-based Herman Miller, tells me she thinks that while building control systems have yet to become a new design medium in the domain of architects and interior designers, embedding networks into the built environment will allow more flexibility and smarter use of space. Herman Miller's research has focused on smartening up the basic building blocks of the workplace, be they partitions, desks, projection screens, lights, underpinning such things with a digital architecture that can learn habits and give feedback about how a building is occupied. "Walls that move, rooms that expand and contract, ceilings that become adaptive meeting spaces, all begin to shift the economic equation of managing a space from cost per square foot to cost per time of use," Magnolfi says. "You can then have multiple activities in a single space, making that investment in the space much more valuable because it addresses many more needs."

You can easily start to see how thinking of architecture in terms of time affects how we plan buildings.

Deciding a line of control between architecture and architectures could be as much about ethics and morality as it is about technical limits. There are those who certainly view the work of digital architectures on architecture with some suspicion, so we have an entire hand-wringing discourse at our disposal – Paul Virilio on speed and the 'disappearance' of architecture, Jean Baudrillard on simulation, Michel Foucault on surveillance. All are brilliant stuff, but in lesser hands, they become generators of extreme paranoia. Thinking about architecture as only a digital interface is a cool idea, it gives us the ability to use the super-smooth, hyper-immediate language of technology to gloss over the crude realities of the discipline and freshen up a discourse that always teeters on the edge of dusty art history or technical numbness. But it does not displace the thing itself, nor does it remove the end user from a position of accountability.

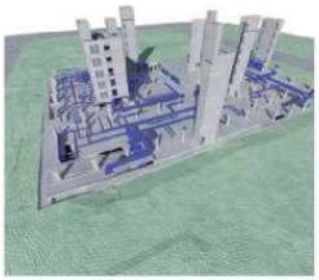
I suppose that's another way of saying that the use of smart grids and smart meters is no guarantee we can make dumb people, or dumb buildings, smart. **ar**

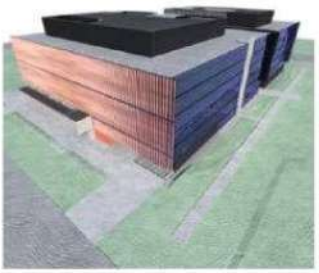
Russell Fortmeyer is a senior consultant with the Sustainable Technologies Group in Arup's Sydney office. He writes frequently about architecture, technology and sustainability and is a former editor at Architectural Record.

BUILDING INFORMATION MODELLING IN EVERYDAY PRACTICE

In the final column in our introductory series on Building Information Modelling, Dominik Holzer provides some advice for firms interested in taking the plunge into this burgeoning area of architectural practice.

text
Dominik Holzer
–
imagery
Courtesy the practices





BIM model extracts from office development, Canberra. Architect: Fender Katsalidis Architects; services engineers: Norman Disney and Young.

Rounding off this year's series of articles about Building Information Modelling (BIM) in *AR*, this text will discuss the changes practices are confronted with when getting BIM-ready and implementing BIM successfully on projects. In previous editions of this column, I positioned BIM in our architectural workflow and explained the principles behind 'integrated project delivery' and 'optioneering'. Here, I focus on how to make the transition from a predominantly CAD-based working method to a BIM-enabled practice.

What steps need to be taken to move from a traditionally structured design practice to a fully BIM-enabled organisation? What are the main hurdles along the way? Can we measure a practice's BIM maturity?

Moving to BIM necessitates drastic changes in common work processes inter-organisationally as well as intra-organisationally. Changes related to staffing, training, project team configuration and project infrastructure impact previously established processes and they may even affect the entire business model of a practice.

Many of us will recall the transition from manual drafting processes to CAD about 20 to 25 years ago. There are some evident parallels between this transition and the move from CAD to BIM, but there are also fundamental differences. In both cases, the search for increased efficiency was/is one of the main drivers but, whereas the efficiency gains made by architects and engineers who moved from manual to CAD predominantly benefited their own practice, efficiency gains derived by moving from CAD to BIM follow more complex paths.

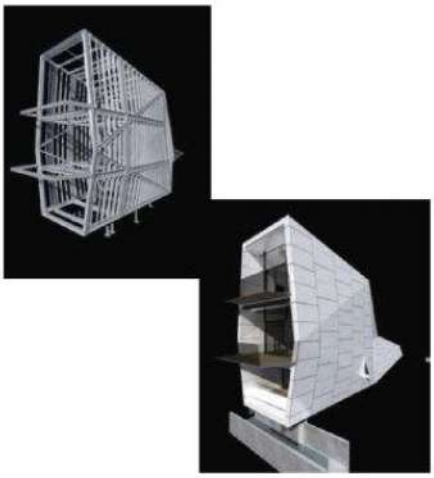
BIM does not simply try to replicate the CAD processes more effectively. BIM is about an entire process change that involves nearly all activities we engage in, across the whole design team and during the entire building life cycle. Ultimately, in order to get BIM-ready, we need to consider a wide range of criteria that deal with the technical, cultural, epistemological, organisational, legal, and business related aspects within an architectural practice ('lonely BIM'), as well as across the entire project team ('social BIM').

HOW DOES A PRACTICE GET BIM-READY?

At the outset of a transition to BIM, a firm must change its ICT infrastructure. Next to the acquisition of BIM software, new hardware and network infrastructure is required to get going with BIM. In most cases, hardware configurations that were sufficient for operating CAD tools will not be able to handle the processing-heavy modelling context of BIM. Depending on the size of a firm and the type of project, BIM data traffic needs to be matched with network speed and storage space. Overall, this signifies substantial upfront cost that needs to be taken into consideration on the path to BIM.

Those firms who believe that buying and installing BIM software and undergoing training is all that is required to become BIM-ready will be quickly disabused of this perception by reality. Despite the availability of extensive training programs for BIM tools in Australia, deriving basic or even advanced working knowledge in BIM is not always enough to establish a high quality context for its operation in everyday practice. When working in BIM, we need to define new responsibilities, and possibly even new roles, which include the setup of office BIM standards, the management of BIM models, the creation of specific BIM model content for libraries and families, and protocols for the coordination of multi-disciplinary BIM models. In many cases, it will be difficult to fulfil all these roles in-house and additional specialists may need to be employed to increase a firm's knowledge level. Most software vendors include a service for onsite start-up support in their training and implementation agreements that assist their clients with their first steps in BIM over a period of several weeks and months.

On a project team level, at least one member must have good BIM model management skills for the purposes of coordinating those contributing to the shared model. For quality assurance (QA) purposes, those who supervise a firm's QA guidelines need to work in close collaboration with those developing the firm's BIM standards as well as those who set up the custom libraries and families.



Renderings of the architectural and structural BIM model for the Moorilla Pavilions, Tasmania. Architect: Fender Katsalidis Architects.

As reported in previous editions of this column, successful BIM requires making decisions earlier on in the design process. Designers need to agree how to progress design and documentation with stronger involvement from other collaborators, such as the engineers, the quantity surveyors or the contractors. It is therefore important to establish a new dialogue and provide decision makers with direct access to the BIM model (even though they may not wish to manipulate the model themselves). This is an important step in order to make them understand that changes to the documentation output cannot always be accommodated with the same immediacy as with 2D documentation; modelling in BIM relies on a more intricate set of dependencies.

A major part of the increase in efficiency BIM facilitates stems from its capability to automate (to a degree) the creation of plans, sections and elevations from the 3D model; hands-on fine-tuning of documentation output is often not easily accomplished. Many architects and engineers regard the production of high quality documentation sets as a craft – a craft that may be lost when standard documentation is generated in a 'black box' process by BIM software, leaving it looking anaemic and lacking in finesse. Some practices accept a decrease in the quality of their 2D output for the benefit of increased efficiency; others spend a lot of effort customising the look and feel of the BIM documentation output so that it lives up to the quality of their pre-BIM efforts.

On a cultural level, when BIM gets introduced to a practice some staff will find it easier than others to embrace the new possibilities it has to offer. One has to consider those who will be taken out of their comfort zone and who will be anxious about the changes BIM may bring to their work. Depending on their position in the practice, some staff will not want to get directly involved in the generation of BIM models. Those project architects used to being able to open up a CAD file to review and finalise changes will find it much more difficult to get direct access to the documentation output in the context of BIM models.

HOW BIM-ENABLED ARE YOU?

Measuring the BIM maturity of a firm is a somewhat elusive concept, but there exists a definable set of criteria that allows us to understand the most fundamental factors that describe 'BIM-readiness'. The most advanced attempts to define BIM maturity in Australia can be found in the work of Bilal Succar who, with his BIM-consultancy 'Change Agents', has set up a BIM Maturity Index that defines stepping stones on a firm's path to BIM. The illustrations provided by architects and engineers in the current and previous editions of this column demonstrate the outstanding work undertaken in Australia by firms who have made great progress in their implementation of BIM so far. Still, a major hurdle in the technology's propagation is the fact that there is no uniform uptake across the Australian building industry.

Many in the industry acknowledge the benefits of BIM, but engaging in projects using it does not automatically provide a business advantage. Even those who embrace BIM as their new modus operandi are not always certain about the consequences for their return on investment and their contractual obligations. Currently, those who are the predominant contributors to the production of BIM content (the architects and the engineers) run the risk of doing a lot of work upstream, while profiting others (such as the contractor and the client) downstream. Contracts regulating responsibilities and rewards are often still tailored towards pre-BIM project deliverables and they do not consider the extra effort of coordinating building information upfront.

A solid implementation of BIM needs to go hand in hand with an open discussion about the contractual implications of BIM, which should ultimately influence the way clients and contractors issue expressions of interest and project briefs. This discussion needs to address the remuneration of those parties who ultimately do the work and who carry the responsibility for the correctness of the BIM information produced. Last year National Guidelines for Digital Modelling were published that provide firms with sound background knowledge about the basics of moving to BIM, but there remains more to be done.

The Australian Institute of Architects will be well advised to increase their efforts in order to provide the increasing number of firms (both architects and engineers) who want to go down the BIM track with clear guidance, support, and possibly even rigorous standards that help them on their way in the years to come.

In the meantime, let's continue to increase our knowledge about this new and promising method of project delivery and keep the good work coming. **ar**

Dr Dominik Holzer is founder of the architecture, engineering and construction industries think tank AEC Connect and a practice director at BVN Architecture. Dominik also teaches at RMIT and UTS.

Bligh Street, Sydney: Section through the BIM model, perspective render of the internal atrium and a recent construction photo taken in the atrium. Architect: Architectus + Ingenhoven Architects; builder: Grocon; client: DEXUS Property Group/Cbus Property.

OBSERVATORY

Monash Architecture Design/Make Studio Semester 1, 2010

text Diego Ramirez-Lovering
photography Courtesy Monash University

A new built work from Monash Architecture's Design/Make Studio merges the celestial and the terrestrial, translating solar phenomena into spatial experience.


01

PEDAGOGIC OBJECTIVES

As creators of social space, architects benefit from the capacity to observe and gauge a constructed architectural outcome in relation to its intended, or unintended, occupation. This provides valuable insight into the relationship between design intent and realisation: between material and spatial conjectures and their known and tested outcomes. These observations will often inform the way subsequent projects are conceptualised and executed.

Architecture students, however, seldom get the opportunity to test their designs in this manner, as work remains in the speculative realm within the confines of the academy.

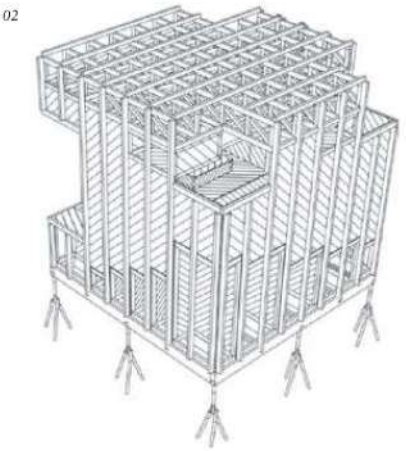
The Design/Make Studio projects at Monash Architecture pursue a pedagogy based on developing these insights, focusing their attention into the relationship between what is designed and what is built. They serve as conduits to discover, reveal and test ideas in relation to their material execution. This approach is underpinned by the belief that the learning process is best served by the exposure to the intense negotiation of the complex, often contradictory, sets of determinants and aspirations that shape architectural production. These projects, then, aim to foster a critical understanding of this process of negotiation.

These engagements, however, require knowledge not only in the world of representation but also in the world of making things, of materials and construction. As such, students are guided in pursuing the full-scale construction of projects they have designed. The first result of this studio was the Kinglake outdoor community centre completed in 2009 in response to the Black Saturday bushfires (refer *AR113* Summer 2009/2010). The work presented here constitutes the second in the design/make project cycle.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Conceived in the spirit of 20th century installation and land-art, such as Robert Morris' solar projects, or those seeking atmospheric effect such as the works of James Turrell, the Observatory follows the lineage of works marking celestial events. The project consists of a 4 x 4 x 4 metre timber pavilion located on a grassy, gently undulating field in close proximity to student housing in the Monash University Clayton Campus. In contrast to a sundial, which renders time by casting a shadow, the Observatory proposes the inverse, marking time by casting light through carved apertures in the volume onto the floor. The formal and tectonic logic is derived from an attempt to capture the sunlight during the equinox and solstice solar events. The project conflates two different domains: celestial movements intersect terrestrial material conditions, with the aim of translating solar phenomena into spatial and constructive strategies. An architectural logic developed in such a way can mediate abstract geometries and constructed material.

A singular space built from a singular material, the project uses a 500 x 1000 millimetre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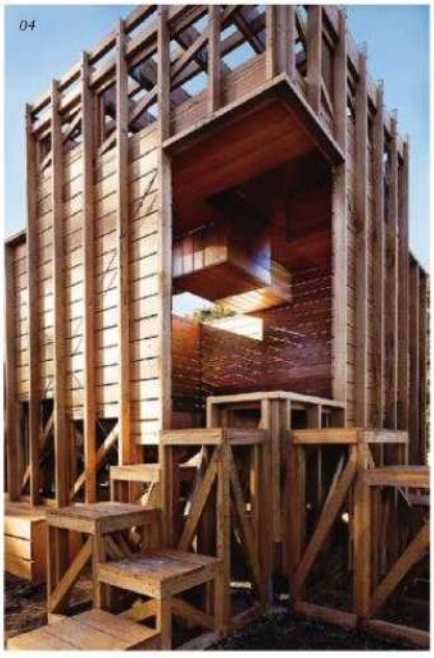
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module to define structural elements, volumetric disposition and openings. Internally, the stepped topography of the floor and ceiling surfaces are punctuated by beams of light, which create an animated spatial dialogue between user and space and prompt a range of patterns of occupation. Scaled to accommodate a group of 15-20 people, passers by wander into the structure and occupy the space in different ways: for quiet study and contemplation, or as a platform for conversation and active socialisation.

The structural members are meticulously expressed on the exterior of the building, set in stark contrast to the project's smooth interior. This formal language focuses the viewer's attention onto the internal play of light on form, as well as heightening awareness of the passing of time.

DESIGN PROCESS

The project was designed and constructed over three-and-a-half months by 15 second- and third-year students. The group was initially divided into teams who produced a range of designs in response to the brief. One design was selected and further developed through a process of drawing and modelling. Drawing and modelling were conceived as constructive acts, prompting students to understand how this process has an impact on the way in which the project would be made. Students engaged in an intense period of prototyping, learning about structural capacities, material tolerances, production sequences and construction methods.

The Observatory project would not have been possible without the tireless efforts, well beyond the call of duty, of the students and the studio leaders, Damon van Horne and Jeroen Hagendoorn. We are particularly grateful to the sponsors and consultants who provided funds, materials and services in support of the project. **ar**


05


06

GREEN BLING AND GADGETS

With sustainability now a mainstream concern, more and more buildings are proudly wearing their green colours on their sleeves. As Tone Wheeler describes, however, for many of these projects it's less about results, than it is a bit of razzle-dazzle.

text **Tone Wheeler**

Is there a style for green architecture, what does a green building look like, and is there an agreed set of forms that differentiates green from the more ubiquitous brown? To date, most writings on green design, in these pages and elsewhere, have been about the theory and practicalities of sustainable buildings, rather than style, but as the field matures, issues of identifiable form and features come to the fore.

I suspect that there would be a resounding no from green architects in response to the question, but a review of recent zero energy houses or green star buildings may belie that answer – all boast a series of common identifiable elements that could be said to constitute a 'green style'. For houses, these may be dramatic shading devices, often adjustable, over sun-oriented glass together with tiny, often square, windows that provide for minimum heat loss/gain elsewhere in the building. Roofs are pitched for solar panels and mechanical vents are added to the skyline. For larger buildings, the same elements are upscaled: sun shading becomes a leitmotif over the larger expanses of usually sophisticated, often double-envelope glazing, services are detached more prominently in the overall form, and the skyline has a profusion of mechanical exhausts. The solar panels are usually hidden on flat roofs, but may also migrate to the external walls (see Solaire in 'The Green Paradox', p36, *AR*114).

Cité de Refuge. Photo: Tone Wheeler

While the architects would argue that these are all logical and practical responses to environmental conditions, I suspect that the relationship between the emerging green technologies and 'green style' is similar to the issues that arose in the early days of modernism. Le Corbusier's recipe for modern buildings in the 1920s (ribbon windows, pilotis, roof garden, open plan etc, all in white) were grounded in ideas of functionality, but quickly became a 'style' as they were used even in ways not at all related to function or use. The extent to which technology was acknowledged in the writings of the time placed it in a secondary role; nevertheless, the forms were heavily dependent on the new techniques of reinforced concrete, expansive glass and mechanical ventilation. As Reyner Banham showed in his seminal book *The Architecture of the Well-Tempered Environment*, the impact of technology on form was often both causal and hugely influential: there could be no high-rise buildings without lifts and telephones, no deep plan floors without fluorescent lighting, and no curtain wall without air-conditioning.

The last of those issues arose in one of Le Corbusier's buildings of the early 1930s, where the chicken-egg relationship between technology and form is beautifully illustrated. The Cité de Refuge in Paris had been designed with two of Le Corbusier's 'inventions' in mind: 'respiration exacte' and the 'mur neutralisant'. The former was a form of air-conditioning, which had been demonstrated by Willis Carrier at Grauman's Metropolitan Theatre in Los Angeles in 1922, and was first used in an office block in Texas in 1928. In 1932, when the hostel was being designed, there was no commercial system available to service the small rooms and what mechanical ventilation was available was beyond the budget, so it was deleted. The second idea was a form of ventilated double-glazing, with warm or cool air circulating between the panes to keep out the external temperature variations. In this it is more akin to the double-envelope walls of current green buildings than traditional double-glazing; many European and American commercial buildings are now fitted with twin-glazed walls that can control natural and artificial ventilation and even offer a service space for equipment and maintenance. Here, Le Corbusier was exceptionally far-sighted, but unrealistic. Even conventional double-glazing was beyond the budget; so only unshaded single-glazing was installed.

NIDA. Photo: Max Creasy

The building opened to much acclaim in the winter of 1933, but by the summer the following year it was uninhabitable. So, with his customary chutzpah, Le Corbusier created another invention: the 'brise-soleil', or egg crate-style sun-breaker to shade the glass in summer, but allow the winter sunshine in. Others later fitted it to the Cité de Refuge, but Le Corbusier went on to deploy it to great effect in many other buildings: the Unités, the Carpenter Centre (where it was superfluous) and Chandigarh (where it wasn't).

Which brings us back to contemporary sustainable buildings in two ways: prosaically, the sun-breaker is a very common element in green designs, but more poignantly, the idea of the display of technology is central to green style.

For most architects, the key driver in fashioning green buildings is the desire to use the structure to assist in passive thermal comfort, which I have referred to as 'building conditioning' (see p122, 'The Third Wave of Sustainability', *AR*109); thus reducing the reliance on air-conditioning (promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gases: the E2G2 equation). The hallmark of innovative 21st century technology is a return to 'building conditioning' of the 19th century and earlier, leaving the late 20th century as the high point of profligate energy use in architecture, so beautifully documented by Banham.

Surry Hills Library. Photo: Alex Cheek

The problem for many form-driven architects is that a return to that traditional approach doesn't always mean a return to the desirable forms of the past that they would like to use. In residential architecture, simulation programs have shown that insulation and total glazing area are far more important determinants of performance than the solar-oriented glass so beloved of passive solar houses of the 1960s to 1990s. On commercial buildings, maintenance and durability issues can make external sun shading, in any form, but particularly the sun-breaker, untenable – and it may have been rendered obsolete by the huge advances made in doubled glazing with high performance coatings. And air-conditioning has greatly improved: if not chilled beam technology, then absorption chillers that can run on waste heat.

What if the technology was to make the building a much better performer without any visible external (or internal) evidence, just as you can't tell a hybrid or electric car from a petrol/diesel one, except by the badge on the rear right-hand side? This could cause a crisis in confidence for designers who not only want to be green, but also want to be seen to be green.

Ecolinc. Photo: John Gollings

One response has been to cover the building with gadgets, such as solar thermal and solar PV panels, wind turbines and water tanks. These are all external technologies that 'plug' into the building's systems, but don't actually shape and define the built form. In many cases this 'loose fit' approach (see p114, 'In Praise of Slow Building', *AR*111) makes sense as the technologies can be upgraded when required without a major impact on the 'long-life' building underneath. Even more so for PV panels that need to 'run cool' with air circulation underneath, which makes the embedded panels on buildings like the aforementioned Solaire look like built-in redundancy.

When the technologies start to take over the building fabric in this way we might call the effect 'green bling': the use of devices, both externally and internally, to dramatise the form and draw attention to its green aspects. This seems to be the apotheosis of the green movement of the past 25 years, where sustainability is not just one of the guiding principles but is the only one. Beloved of politicians, who put far more faith in building efficiencies to address climate change than is warranted, it is no surprise that the two 'bling in extremis' buildings in Australia have been commissioned by the local authority in our biggest cities.

At the heart of CH2, the offices for Melbourne City Council, is current thinking on 'passive' commercial space: high thermal mass in exposed concrete ceilings that are cooled naturally by use of diurnal temperature differences, supplemented by mechanical cooling at night and chilled beams during the day. Many of the other innovations (such as showers and changing rooms for cyclists, reduced car parking and charging for electric vehicles, and loose fit technologies for future change) are just good sense, rendering the building a great success and very enjoyable to work in. But it is the external bling (bright yellow air exhaust turbines on top, plastic shower towers for evaporative cooling to the south, 'green screens' of plants on wires between balconies on the north, giant movable recycled timber shades to the west) that has caused much controversy. Rob Adams, director of design and culture at Melbourne City Council, will cheerfully admit that these are experiments, sanctioned by the client, and that not all work, but that this trialling of ideas is exactly the risk that government should support. Not everyone sees it this way – the AIA passed over giving the building its sustainability award in 2007 – but beneath the bling is an excellent building.

> What if the technology was to make the building a much better performer without any visible evidence? This could cause a crisis in confidence for designers who not only want to be green, but also want to be seen to be green.

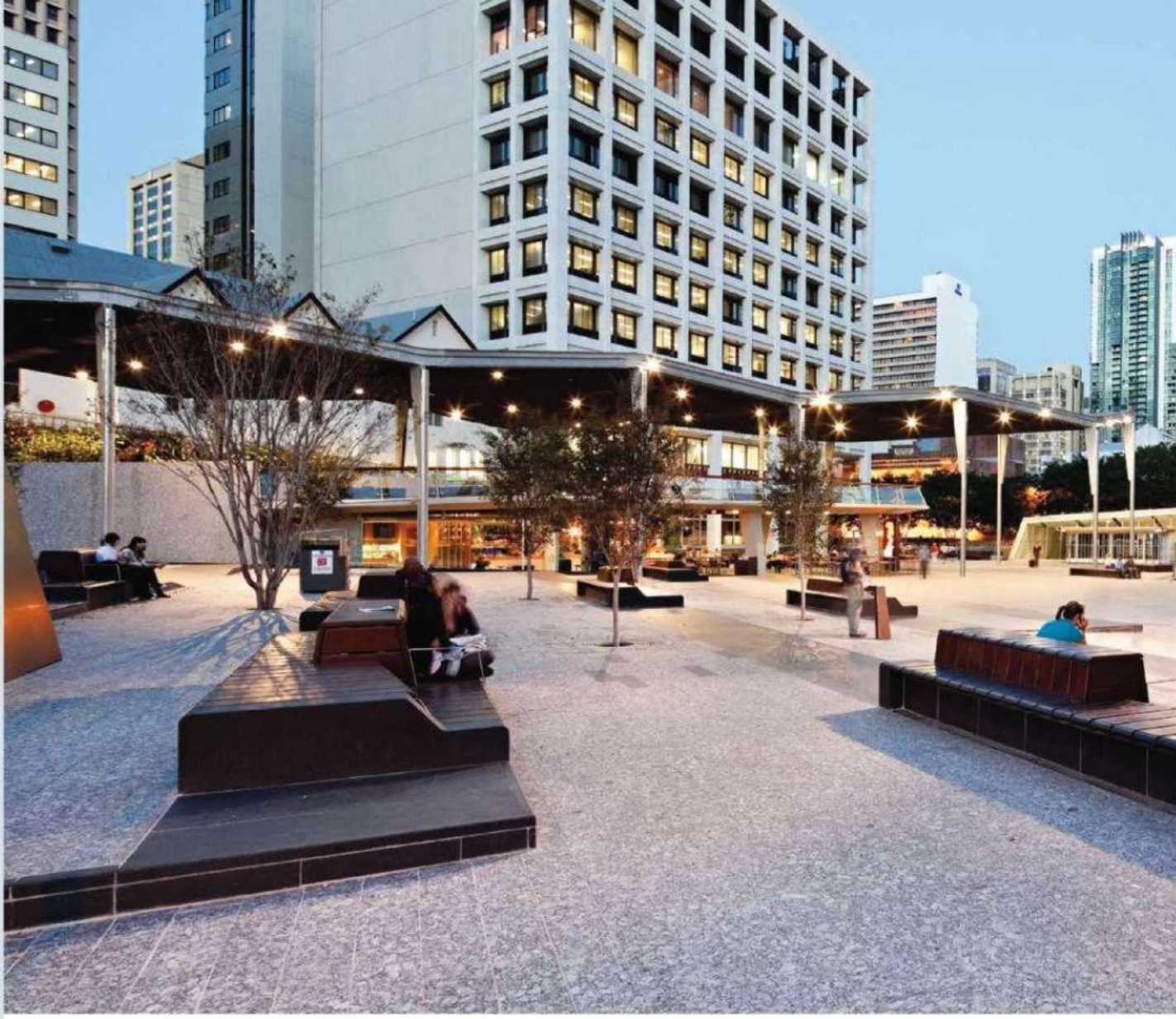
More troublesome for some critics though is the latest green flagship from the City of Sydney, its Surry Hills Library and Community Centre (SHLCC) by FJMT. Replacing an existing modest library in a shopping strip, it has been controversial from the start, with the childcare requirements moved from another site, making the building uncomfortably big and forcing the most-used space, the library reading room, underground. Its scale also overwhelms the adjacent pocket park, which it shades and fails to engage by having the entry on the other side. But these are mere quibbles compared to the external bling that appears to have doubled the budget and quadrupled the per-square-metre cost rate in comparison to other suburban libraries.

The east façade is composed principally of composite timber-aluminium louvres, reputedly shipped around the world for their manufacture. Mechanically controlled, at first glance they seem to be the very epitome of green: good adjustable shade. But they serve to shade two areas: an external veranda and the outdoor space for the childcare centre. Hardly spaces or orientation that require such a costly and dramatic structure to reduce the internal heat load requirements. To the south is a structural glass façade that extends above the roof to catch breezes and funnel them through the glass ducts to the basement for treatment, whence they are returned to the building via the same glass ducts. Unfortunately, the effect is more visually oppressive than technically impressive, even despite the green plants trapped inside to improve indoor air quality. On the roof are the now obligatory solar PV panels, and a small green roof, but perversely they cannot be seen from anywhere, even on the top level, which seems a missed opportunity for a building that was held out as such a showcase. Far from being the signpost for the way forward, the Council now seems to be backing away from this expensive approach to achieving green ends to more measured designs.

Not that we need a 'no-bling' approach: there are plenty of buildings that wear their green credentials in subtler, or in some cases, humorous ways. Think of Lyons' Ecolinc – Science Technology Innovations Centre in Bacchus Marsh, where the fritted glass and angular roof shapes not only control the sun, but do so in the quintessentially Melbourne, painterly way. Or their proposal for the new AIA HQ on Exhibition Street, where the east façade has fixed white blades with ragged edges that look like pages torn from a notebook. The NIDA Building near the University of New South Wales by Hassell has more of a Sydney, tectonic style, with a giant veranda over the street façade and the natural ventilation from the foyer represented in the flowing forms that start at the base of the stairs and burst through the roof. Green ideas, but more jade than emerald.

Most of the discussion on green issues has followed two themes: the need to address the issues of E2G2 for climate change, and the technological ways of meeting that challenge. The rhetoric surrounding these two themes has been so strong that some architects have taken on the challenge of pushing a third idea: sustainability as the key form maker. To date, however, some notable experiments have ended in not much more than green bling. **ar**

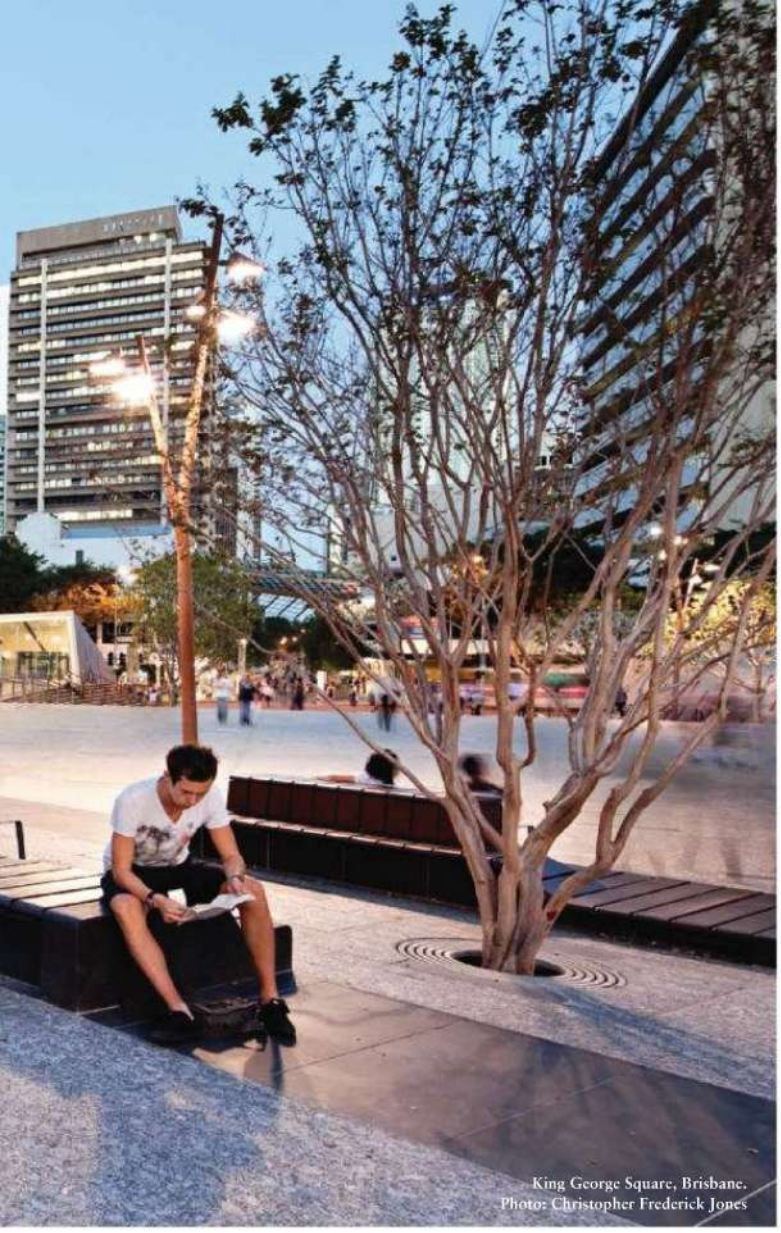
Tone Wheeler is an architect, author, educator and consultant with an abiding interest in environmental architecture and sustainable design. Tone founded the architectural practice Environa Studio 20 years ago and has designed individual and multiple housing projects, commercial buildings and urban design schemes, all with a strong emphasis on social and environmental concerns.



HARDSCAPING

text **Torben Dam**
photography **Brett Boardman, Christopher Frederick Jones**

A burgeoning interest in urban and architectural porosity and the blurring of indoor/outdoor space has seen the importance of well-designed hard landscaping grow. Torben Dam examines some contemporary approaches to this ancient but increasingly significant aspect of design for the built environment.



King George Square, Brisbane.
Photo: Christopher Frederick Jones

In pragmatic terms, hardscaping is the use of paved areas to substitute vegetated land in locations where functions and foot traffic prevent the vegetation's recovery. In any urban situation, then, we either accept clouds of dust and mud puddles as part of life, or outdoor surfaces must be paved. Pavement is linked to people's use of outdoor facilities, and outdoor life depends on sealed surfaces.

Hardscaping is, however, not only a matter of function – it is also a spatial consideration.

In the Säynätsalo Town Hall in 1949, Alvar Aalto introduced the concept of closely relating indoor space to outdoor space. Here, a little square surrounded by buildings creates a room within the landscape. In the 1960s, the second wave of the modern movement embraced this idea and the total area of hard landscapes has grown ever since, with more square kilometres of pavement added to the urban fabric every year.

Modernist modular paving systems included street furniture, tree plantings, beds, canals etc. The post-modern period increased the interest in pavements, which offered texture and patterns that allowed layers and fractions of historical paving details to interfere with each other or clash. This interference and overlaying of historical layers and fragments was prized by many post-modern projects for its multivalent effect. Natural stone, traditional stone setting and hoggin (a mixture of gravel, sand and clay) became the preferred post-modern materials. The increase in the use of natural stone was also related to innovation in diamante cutting equipment, which made natural stone available at reasonable prices. Renewed focus on central business districts and historic city centres added to the interest in early industrial paving traditions, with precast concrete and tarmac falling out of favour.

Now, in response to contemporary challenges in the design of urban space, we might see a need for hardscaping design to transform again. Three recent Australian projects – Federation Square, Melbourne, King George Square, Brisbane and Glebe Foreshore, Sydney – furnish examples of how traditional and more current approaches to hardscaping are coping in the context of the 21st century city.

FEDERATION SQUARE, MELBOURNE

Lab Architecture Studio and Karres en Brands

Melbourne's Federation Square combines natural stone and materials with technology. Situated above the railway track serving the neighbouring Flinders Street Station, next to the Yarra River and the CBD, the site consists of a U-shaped collection of buildings enclosing a square. The pavement slopes more than four metres from east to west, while from north to south stairways connect pedestrian circulation from the city centre to the river.

In a distinctive move away from precisely cut, regular natural stone (a move also seen in the Amsterdam Arena and in Købmagergade, Copenhagen), Karres en Brands employs a colourful punch line in Federation Square. Pavement neighbouring the site is made from flags of Melbourne's distinctive local bluestone. The plaza at the centre of the site however is composed of dice-shaped Kimberley sandstone from north-west Australia, with a cement mortar joint. Artist and writer Paul Carter collaborated with the project architects on *Nearamnew*, a paving design with poetic text inscriptions. Fragmented voices of historical and fictional characters can be deciphered in nine locations around the site, relating the history of the site and poetic visions of the Federation ideal.

The Kimberley sandstone clearly differentiates the site from the local bluestone found elsewhere throughout the CBD. Flowing patterns and the natural colours of the sandstone underline the gentle sloping, but it is not the material, rather the grading that makes the strongest impact in Federation Square.

KING GEORGE SQUARE, BRISBANE

Urbis JHD with Architectus

King George Square details the hard landscape that is basically the roof of an underground building – the Inner Northern Busway. Brisbane City Hall defines the space to the south side and surrounding buildings across Ann and Adelaide Streets form the spatial enclosure on two other sides. Terrain slopes approximately five metres down from Ann Street to the northwest towards Adelaide Street on the southeast. The floor consists of the two streets and the 80 square metre natural stone paved area.

The project boasts fine details, good accessibility and open space. Stone is mostly light greyish, diamante-sawn slates and pavers, while a sitting area steps towards Ann Street with beautiful carved basalt stones, and a ramp leads people down to the CBD across Adelaide Street. All trees pop up through the paved surface.

The natural stone detailing in this project is fine and accurate. Functionally, concerns about crowds of people and the Inner Northern Busway resulted in a 100 percent hard landscape. Buildings and trees provide shade, but the local climate still fluctuates. Partly as a result of this, this full-scale approach to hardscaping has met with some opposition among the local community, and questions have been asked as to whether it is genuinely sustainable. Issues such as the urban heat island effect have to be solved in the paving scheme or it's time to role back the hard landscape towards a better balance with vegetated ground cover.

GLEBE FORESHORE WALK, SYDNEY

James Mather Delaney Design

The Glebe Foreshore Walk runs along the foreshore of Sydney Harbour from Pyrmont Bridge Road to Rozelle Bay, connecting newly formed spaces, ecological habitats and items of cultural heritage with existing stretches of parks and retrofitted industrial sites. The connection is a clever and subtle reading of the landscape, as illustrated by the paving – a new layer of tarmac and precast concrete blocks protects against future flooding, and helps to reflect the cultural components of the site – tarmac and precast concrete marks our time, sandstone the cultural heritage. The flexible precast concrete elements do more for the sense of local sandstone than large new hard surfaces and when the new edge bends, narrows or breaks, attention is alerted to site qualities, historical layers, ecological habitats etc. As the French landscape architect Alexandre Chemetoff says, "Do less to obtain more" and straightforward materials such as tarmac and precast concrete do just this in the Glebe Foreshore Walk.

Strategies in hardscaping have continued to change since Alvar Aalto reintroduced the design of the outdoor space. We have seen one approach evolve based on technology, where innovation adds to the materials and construction methods available to the designer. Under this approach, no one material is necessarily privileged over another and natural stone isn't seen to have any extra credibility. Another strategy is to role back the idea of extensive hard surfacing, with only a minimum of paving to serve circulation – the concerns of this strategy often relate to climate change, water-sensitive urban design, ecological habitats or cultural heritage. The focus is on materials that are contemporary – precast concrete and tarmac fits fine in this strategy. A third tendency actively seeks out the originality and character once found in traditional natural stone, now in Europe discovered in in-situ concrete and in hoggin. The vocabulary here is early industrial paving – so clay pavers and mastic asphalt line up for reintroduction.

Glebe Foreshore Walk, Sydney.
Photo: Brett Boardman

Hardscaping is the result of problem solving and of a design work, rather than an ideology in itself. Solving essential problems in the urban landscape result in different paving strategies, where the baseline at the outset is the vegetated ground. Materials change because designers strive to find originality, either by using technological innovation or by copy editing traditional references found worldwide. Finally, some designers choose anonymous materials because the importance of a site lies elsewhere, not in the hardscaping.

Torben Dam is associate professor, landscape architecture, at the University of Copenhagen and co-author of the book European Landscape Architecture – Best practice in Landscape Detailing *(Routledge, 2007).*

» Eventually everything connects – people, ideas, objects. The quality of the connections is the key to quality per se. «

— CHARLES EAMES

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manufacturer Kingspan Insulated Panels Pty Ltd **features** William Ross Architects shed new light on Kingspan's architectural wall panels at the new club rooms for AFL powerhouse, the Kangaroos. At night, cleverly placed blue lighting transforms the white and silver panels into the world's biggest Kangaroos' jersey. The aesthetics, coupled with the high thermal performance of the panels, mean the Roos' digs are now fit for premiership contenders. **available from** Kingspan **dimensions** 80 millimetres depth, 1000 millimetres cover-width and up to 5000 millimetres length. **materials/finishes** Mini-micro ribbed finish in white and silver coin. **for more information** Helen Flood, marketing manager, Kingspan Insulated Panels Pty Ltd **phone** 02 9673 5069 **email** helen.flood@kingspan.com **website** www.kingspanpanels.com.au

HUNTER DOUGLAS COMMERCIAL SEYCHELLES FABRIC

manufacturer Hunter Douglas Commercial **dimensions** The fabric can be used for roman shade, roller blind or panel glide applications. Available in up to 2.8 metre widths, this fabric can cover large, modern windows. **materials/finishes** Hunter Douglas Commercial Seychelles Fabric uses iridescent and organic yarns, to create a luxuriously soft and shimmering fabric to complement modern buildings and current interior design trends. The tonal backing also means that where the reverse of your blind becomes visible, for example in roller blind applications, no more stark white fabric will be revealed – allowing the blind to perfectly complement the exterior façade, as well as the interior design. The new tonal backing is available in each of the six colours – Essence, Angora, Champagne, Empire, Willow and Drizzle. With functionality top of mind, Seychelles Fabric has been treated with Sanitized Antimicrobial Protection, reducing the development of bacteria, odour and mildew. It has also been treated with DURAGUARD Fabric Protector, which effectively repels most stain-causing agents with its proven water-based, preventative formula. The 100% Polyester Jacquard Weave is naturally low in Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). Seychelles Fabric is suitable for use in Class 9 buildings, such as hotels, theatres, conference centres and entertainment venues. **for more information** Hunter Douglas Commercial **phone** 1300 733 078 **website** www.hunterdouglascommercial.com.au

HAWA-PUROLINO 80

manufacturer Hawa **features** HAWA-Purolino 80 is, as the name suggests, a puristic designer hardware system for glass sliding doors with concealed suspension for surface mounting to walls, ceilings or integrated ceiling installation. Its running gear is completely integrated in the top track. Based on HAWA Puro 100-150, this hardware system also combines fascinating aesthetic appeal with a high degree of functionality. **available from** Häfele Australia **dimensions** Maximum door weight: 80 kilograms, minimum door width: 700 millimetres, glass thickness (laminated): eight, 10, 12, 12.7 millimetres, glass thickness (toughened): eight to 12 millimetres, height adjustment: three millimetres **for more information** Häfele Australia Pty/Ltd **phone** 1300 659 728 **fax** 03 9212 2001 **email** info@hafele.com.au **website** www.hafele.com

MIELE DA 6000 W CABRIO WALL DECOR RANGEHOOD

manufacturer Miele **features** Featuring state-of-the-art performance and innovative design, this flagship rangehood is designed to be fully integrated into the wall of a kitchen. The motorised, integrated canopy gently opens and automatically extends above the cooktop when in use. It also features LED atmospheric lighting and high-end electronics, with solid-state touch controls on glass. RRP $10,999 **for more information** Miele **phone** 03 9764 7130 **website** www.miele.com.au

STORMTECH PS SERIES

manufacturer Stormtech Pty Ltd **features** Stormtech has added a new style of stainless steel grates to its existing range. The PS Series features a slot-perforated 316 marine grade stainless steel grate, which can be combined with a UPVC or stainless steel channel. **available from** plumbing suppliers **dimensions** 38mm or 65mm width, 40mm or 25mm depth **materials/finishes** 316 marine grade stainless steel **for more information** Stormtech Pty Ltd, 11/10 Central Ave, South Nowra NSW 2541 **phone** 02 4423 1989 **email** info@stormtech.com.au **website** www.stormtech.com.au

PORTFOLIO

VIBRANT COLLECTION

manufacturer PGH Bricks & Pavers **features** The Vibrant collection stands out for its palette of fun and funky colours, giving a whole new perspective on bricks and the way they are used. Finished with a full ceramic glaze, these bricks are perfect for internal or external use. The collection consists of seven unique colours – cosmic, fizz, paris, wasabi, rhapsody, tango and watermelon, or create an eye-catching mosaic by using a combination of all. Available in all states except WA, Tas and NT. Go to www.pghbricks.com.au for our selection centres and the location of PGH distributors. **dimensions** 230mm x 110mm x 76mm **materials/finishes** Full-glazed brick **for more information** Michelle Gissel, PGH Bricks & Pavers, Triniti 3, 39 Delhi Road, North Ryde, NSW 2113 **phone** 13 15 79

ICON STAINLESS STEEL HARDWARE

designer Architectural Window Systems **manufacturer** Architectural Window Systems **features** Fully integrated range of 316-grade stainless steel hardware for aluminium windows and doors. The ICON range of stainless steel hardware offers superior weathering performance and outstanding durability along with robust architectural styling. Developed for use with Vantage high performance window and door systems, ICON offers a square-edge, rectilinear look that complements the Designer series. **available from** Vantage and AWS Commercial Window and Door Manufacturers nationwide **dimensions** Various **materials/finishes** 316 Grade Stainless Steel **for more information** Architectural Window Systems, 76-78 Jedda Road, Prestons NSW **phone** 02 8783 7611 **fax** 02 8783 7633 **email** techsupport@awsaustralia.com.au

IL BAGNO ALESSI ONEVOLUTION

designer Stefano Giovannoni **manufacturer** LAUFEN **features** Teaming up with Alessi, who has asked Stefano Giovannoni to design a new product line, Laufen has extended Il Bagno Alessi One. New shapes and ingenious functions for ceramics and wellness make this one of the most complete bathroom ensembles created on an industrial level. **available from** www.bathe.net.au **materials/finishes** Ceramic **for more information** Bathe **phone** 1300 133 320 **email** sales@bathe.net.au

HAPPY D WASHBASIN

designer Sieger Design **manufacturer** Duravit **features** All items in the Happy D range bring to mind the distinctive shape of the letter D – and are a real lucky strike when it comes to form, function and affordability. Duravit is a leading manufacturer of complete bathroom solutions, offering a wide choice of bathroom ceramic, bathroom furniture, accessories, bathtubs and wellness ideas for residential and commercial sectors. Duravit now has a subsidiary set up in Australia, so architects can now order direct from the manufacturer. **available from** 2/19-21 Bourke Road Alexandria NSW 2015 **for more information** Gary Dart, Duravit Australia **phone** 02 8070 1889 **fax** 02 8070 1898 **email** gary.dart@duravit.com

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Architectural Review Australia

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PLATFORM

PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

project Joint Contact Centre (Zillmere) – Queensland's First 6-Star Green Star Building
project architect Project Services, Department of Public Works, Queensland Government
featured product Kingspan 1000 RW, Trapezoidal Roof and Wall Systems, 60/100mm, in Sandalwood

On completion, the Queensland Government's new Joint Contact Centre (JCC) at Zillmere in Brisbane's north became the State's first 6-Star Green Star office building. The high thermal values of Kingspan insulated panels were a vital enabler of the design. The thermally efficient roof and façade are courtesy of Kingspan's KS1000 RW insulated panel installed on the roof and walls. Architects at the Queensland Government's Project Services sought to create a living, breathing green building and had a particular focus on incorporating proven systems in a new and novel way. The JCC includes an integrated water management system for collecting, treating and reuse, photovoltaic cell technology to reduce dependence on the electricity grid, and an air conditioning system with thermal storage. The inclusion of chilled beams meant that warm air from the sub-tropical environment could not leak into the building. Kingspan panels were chosen as the roof and wall cover required a high insulation value and no, or very low, leakage at joints. Panel installers, Queensland Roofing Systems, aided the snug fit of the panel joints with butyl tape and silicone. To test the final result for air tightness, builders Glenzeil utilised large fans and measured pressure levels as air was continuously pumped in.

project Caxton Roma Pedestrian Link
project architect EDAW Australia
featured product Pic-Perf
from Locker Group

The Caxton Roma Pedestrian Link was designed in an effort to manage pedestrian traffic between Suncorp Stadium and Brisbane's CBD. The bridge was designed by EDAW Australia, as a space that was to be populated at all times. To achieve this, EDAW required artwork to be integrated into the anti-throw screens, without compromising views of the surrounding environment. The solution was Locker Group's Pic-Perf. To create the image-based façades, the architects used 52 Pic-Perf panels, installed by Beenleigh Steel Fabrications. The typical size of the panels was 4523 millimetres by 1175 millimetres and each one was folded prior to installation. Working closely with EDAW, Locker Group supplied multiple image proofs to provide a realistic representation of the panels prior to manufacture, allowing the client to see the detail instilled in the perforating process. Light plays a significant role in the appearance of the panels as the day progresses, constantly changing the pedestrian's perception of the landscape. The Pic-Perf panels not only create a stunning visual element, they also provide shade and security, and an inviting safe haven for pedestrians.

NEWSFEED

NEWS

IDEA10 WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The Interior Design Excellence Awards of 2010 have been announced in Sydney, where Woods Bagot and NH Architecture took home three major awards for the night: Overall Winner (for Hilton South Wharf), Institutional (for Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre) and Hospitality (for Hilton South Wharf, again). Following suit with a major contribution to Melbourne's Docklands precinct, Hassell added another accolade to its mantel for the ANZ headquarters — a massive yet thoughtful piece of interior design, emblematic of today's holistic approach to developing effective work environments. Dreamtime Australia then took the limelight for their retail work on Sydney's Victor Churchill (Fine Family Butcher). In the Residential category, the recent work of Multiplicity (for Westwyck Unit 4) made a strong statement, proving a 'green' residential project isn't limited to the Sustainable category alone. In Multi-Residential, Burley Katon Halliday were rewarded again for their aesthetic appeal that remains highly regarded within the realm of domestic interior architecture (Chippendale Apartment). BVN Architecture also added to this year's larger green factor, winning the Sustainable category for "the greenest and most efficient work environment of 2010" (Goods Shed North, Melbourne). But perhaps the two most coveted awards of the year went with much merit to a senior class — the prestigious Gold Medal awarded to Sue Carr as a career achievement recognition and Jeffery Copolov deemed Designer of the Year for his 2010 work with Bates Smart Architects.

www.idea-awards.com.au


01


02

NEW GREEN STAR RATING TOOLS

The Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) has announced the development of two new rating tools: Green Star – Communities and Green Star – Public Building PILOT. The Green Star – Communities tool is intended to aid in the delivery of more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable communities. Designed to facilitate greater connectivity in new developments by encouraging the creation of better pedestrian infrastructure, cycling tracks and public transport hubs, it is envisioned that these features will help reduce the environmental footprint of new communities, with marked reductions in water and energy use and in cutting greenhouse gas emissions. The project has the support of state and territory Government Land Organisations (GLOs) Australia-wide. The GLOs have agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding to support the development of the tool, and for its use in future development projects. The GBCA is also seeking expressions of interest from building projects to participate in the testing process for the council's new Green Star ratings tool for public buildings. The new rating will be applicable to buildings including law courts, museums, art galleries and places of worship.

www.gbca.org.au

01.
Hilton South Wharf, by Woods Bagot/ NH Architecture.

02.
Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, by Woods Bagot/NH Architecture.

03.
Epping to Chatswood Rail Link, by Hassell.

2010 AIA NATIONAL ARCHITECTURE AWARDS ANNOUNCED

2010 marks the 30th birthday for the national awards, introduced in 1961, and this year saw a total of 33 awards and commendations across 12 categories awarded to projects in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, and offshore in Singapore, Thailand, Japan, Tanzania, Indonesia and India. Australia's top annual award, the 2010 Sir Zelman Cowen Award for Public Architecture, this year went to the Epping to Chatswood Rail Link, Intermediate Stations in Sydney by Hassell. In a triple win for the firm, Hassell also received the Emil Sodersten Award for Interior Architecture for the ANZ Centre in Melbourne, and a National Commendation for Urban Design for the Adelaide Zoo Entrance Precinct in Adelaide. As jury chair Melinda Dodson remarked, "while the 2009 jury worried about a lack of expenditure on public urban design projects, in 2010 the opposite was true." Continuing, she said: "Most notably, Mayor Clover Moore and the City of Sydney have demonstrated a commitment to the public realm." Five projects commissioned by the council picked up major awards. Surry Hills Library and Community Centre in Sydney by Francis-Jones Morehen Thorp (fjmt) received a National Award for Public Architecture and a National Award for Sustainable Architecture. Pirrama Park at Pyrmont Hill by Thalis Architecture + Urban Projects/Aspect Studios/CAB received the Walter Burley Griffin Award for Urban Design, while the equally well-frequented Paddington Reservoir Gardens by Tonkin Zulaikha Greer with JMD Design and the City of Sydney received a National Award for Urban Design and National Award for Heritage. Australia's top award for international architecture, the Jørn Utzøn Award for International Architecture, was awarded to The Met, by Singapore-based practice WOHA.

www.architecture.com.au


03

COMPETITIONS

2011 VISION AWARDS

The Vision Awards program, organised by Viridian, celebrates and promotes the innovative use of glass in commercial and residential applications. The awards recognise environmental stewardship as well as creative innovation, with four categories:

- Energy efficiency & glass innovation (commercial design)
- Energy efficiency & glass innovation (residential design)
- Creative use of glass in interior applications (commercial design)
- Creative use of glass in interior applications (residential design)

The winner of each category will receive prize money of $5000. Awards are presented on 15 April 2011 at the AIA National Architecture Conference. Projects must have been completed between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2010. Deadline: 31 March 2011

Prizes: 1st place: $5000; 2nd place: $2000; 3rd place: $1000

www.viridianglass.com.au/visionawards

EVENTS

TOTAL IMMERSION SUMMER SCHOOL

Total Immersion Summer School is an architecture studio program for undergraduate architecture students, held in 2011 for the seventh time. Held at Pittwater YHA, North of Sydney, the program is 'Total Immersion' – participants walk, talk, eat and sleep architecture. Attendees experience quality time with some of the best teachers and architects in Australia. The principal tutors for the program are Richard Leplastrier, Peter Stutchbury, and Lindsay Johnston. Special guest tutors are yet to be announced at the time of going to print.

www.ozetecture.org

RICHARD ROGERS' BARANGAROO 'MASTERSTROKE'

text David Neustein

Richard Rogers has built a reputation for transforming cities through bold vision. In a project whereby the notion of what constitutes genuine 'public' space is contested, however, the public value of that transformation is likewise open to question.

"We like to be in the sun, sit on the doorstep, and meet people. This is what cities are about." Born in Italy, Britain's second most famous architect clearly dislikes sitting in the shade. His skin is a deep terracotta, evidence of a summer spent beneath a Tuscan sun. An audience has gathered to hear Lord Richard Rogers talk about his contribution to Barangaroo, the planned development of Sydney CBD's western harbour edge. Rogers, however, knows how to work a crowd: he won't be discussing his controversial Barangaroo hotel design until the very end of the talk. Accordingly, the first half of the presentation is fairly dull. "Cities are the only sustainable form of inhabitation," he preaches, supported by a predictable set of images and statistics.

My boredom lifts as Rogers moves on to discuss his architectural practice. Having partnered separately with luminaries Lord Norman Foster and Renzo Piano, Rogers is today co-director of Rogers Stirk Harbour+Partners (RSHP), a large office with a progressive business model.

While the subject of the talk is cities and society, the subtext is technology. In the Sixties and Seventies, Rogers was instrumental in taking British High Tech to the summit of world architecture. Created in collaboration with Piano and engineer Peter Rice, the Pompidou Centre in Paris captured the energy of Cedric Price's un-built Fun Palace, with a masterful cage of expressed steel. Going it alone, Rogers followed up on the Pompidou's promise with Lloyd's of London. An aggressively modern tower, Lloyd's revolutionised the London skyline. Rogers' unsentimental aesthetic has softened over the years but he is still bursting with enthusiasm for technology. "A contemporary building is more like a robot than a Greek temple," he says. The comparison of extremes is revealing.

A lengthy reflection on the Pompidou is perhaps the high point of Rogers' talk. He both demystifies and mythologises his most famous project. I had been taught that it was Rogers and Piano who had the chutzpah to propose demolishing Les Halles to create the Pompidou's forecourt. Instead, Rogers reveals that the demolition occurred before the design competition took place, in an effort to displace the area's prostitutes. On the other hand, I had not realised that the architects' brilliant competition drawings daringly contained a strident anti-Vietnam mural. In any event, the experience of the Pompidou has defined Rogers' career. In the spirit of High Tech, it identified him as genius and pragmatist in one. But while he dwells on the Pompidou, he avoids any mention of his ill-fated Millennium Dome.

The long-awaited discourse on Barangaroo begins with earnest praise. He tells us: "Sydney is arguably the most beautiful city in the world, the way the sea comes right up to the buildings," before quickly adding, "you don't appreciate what an amazing city it is!" In one cunning stroke, Rogers has managed to both flatter and chastise us. What is implied is that he, the prodigal architect, will be the one to help us finally appreciate our own city. We are shown a series of sketches of Barangaroo and, having been told that the key aspirations for city development are "intensification of the city," and "building on derelict land," here we see Rogers' ideals in action.

Of course, to perceive this vision, a little squinting is necessary. Rogers describes the ground floor podium, where Barangaroo's towers touch down, as "all public space". But it is not public space at all. It is a large shopping mall. This is all well and good, unless you happen to fall into the unfortunate proportion of the public that has no cash to spend. Equally unconvincing is the notion that jutting a flash hotel into Sydney's greatest truly public space, its harbour, is a gesture that equates to "a city for all creeds and classes, rich and poor."

I am looking at an image depicting a series of canals, which bisect the Barangaroo site, when it all becomes clear. These canals have nothing to do with Sydney, its harbour or its public. They have been copied and pasted from London's Canary Wharf development. Previously home to England's largest concentration of council housing, Canary Wharf today boasts one of the highest earning constituencies in Britain. In his designs for the Pompidou, Millennium Dome, and other projects in Berlin and Shanghai, Rogers has envisioned the large-scale erasure and reconstruction of urban areas. He champions the masterstroke – a decisive move that promises to instantaneously solve the problems of the city. This approach delights developers, such as Barangaroo's Lend Lease, because staged construction costs far more than building the whole lot overnight. But there is no place in this strategy for the slow and gradual growth of grassroots, authentic local culture. It seems Barangaroo is destined to be another Docklands.

Rogers ends his talk by proposing that universities combine planning, architecture and landscape architecture in a single degree. But the audience has just seen the pitfalls of this kind of sweeping approach to design. We need more specificity, less generalisation, more conservation of industrial fabric and fewer canals. From sunny beginnings, Rogers concludes on a cloudy note. "We as a profession are our own worst enemy," he says. This has certainly been the case with Barangaroo. Our architectural community continues to suppress criticism of the development, fearful of upsetting those in power. Rogers' last slide is therefore a fitting one: an image of an illegal climber, dressed as clown, hanging off a Pompidou truss. "Who here will challenge me?" Rogers seems to ask.

David Neustein is the Sydney editor of Architectural Review Australia *and teaches in the architecture program at the University of Sydney.*

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