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## Architecture Bulletin Spring–Summer 2017

Front cover: In 2010, more than 5000 people gathered in front of the Sydney Opera House to be photographed nude for Spencer Tunick's installation *The Base*. Tunick's provocative works can be seen as an update on the long tradition of the nude as artistic medium. Photo: Nick Moir / Fairfax Syndication

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# provoke

## President's message



The previous issue of *Architecture Bulletin* on housing affordability has been receiving a lot of positive feedback from members and others who have had a chance to read it. It seems that genuine public discourse in architecture and the built environment is sadly at a low, and publications like the *Bulletin* are valued.

The Australian Institute of Architects play an important role in generating public discourse through our publications, the regular events at Tusculum and our broader advocacy role, including the annual architecture awards. Behind the scenes our committees, in particular the Built Environment Committee, are constantly reviewing and commenting on draft policy documents that will influence the outcomes for the built environment going forward. As the peak body of the profession, government and authorities rely on our advice and respect our opinion. We may not always agree with policy makers, however our role as *critical friend* is motivated out of a genuine desire for the public good and better design of the built environment. In a world where active lobby groups push for self-interest over everything else, the Australian Institute of Architects is often the lone voice constantly pushing for design excellence.

This current issue of the *Bulletin*, *Provoke*, has quite a different and more polemical take on public discourse. Perhaps the next phase of provocation could be seen to be actual disruption. In the business world, disruptive innovators are revered as the future leaders who change the way that society operates. Airbnb, Uber, Tesla and of course Apple gave us services and products that we did not know we needed. Disruptive innovation should also be the realm of architects. Critical thinking and dreaming is part of our DNA and can be applied to everything that we do.

Returning to the affordable housing topic, the architect-led Nightingale and Baugruppen models fit this idea of disruptive innovation by architects and is perhaps one of the most positive social changes that our profession is leading. I am looking forward to the first round of NSW models to follow these initiatives.

But there are others. Architects can and have been active participants in construction innovations, environmental innovations, material innovations and spatial innovations. Disrupting the everyday is what we do best, and with better collaboration with universities, practitioner architects can bring extra rigour to their research.

I attended the NSW Country Division Architecture Awards in Coffs Harbour and was mightily impressed with the quality and range of work nominated. I hope to see many of these projects making their way into the National Awards program and urge the Country Divisions members to resubmit their projects for the 2018 Awards. We do not see enough of the great work being done in Regional NSW as Sydney is always the focus of attention due to sheer weight of numbers and finances. NSW is more than just Sydney, which was reflected in the number of regional projects that received awards this year, including the Sulman Medal for the Orange Regional Museum by Crone.

Andrew Nimmo  
NSW Chapter President  
@NSWChapterPres



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## A word from the Executive Director

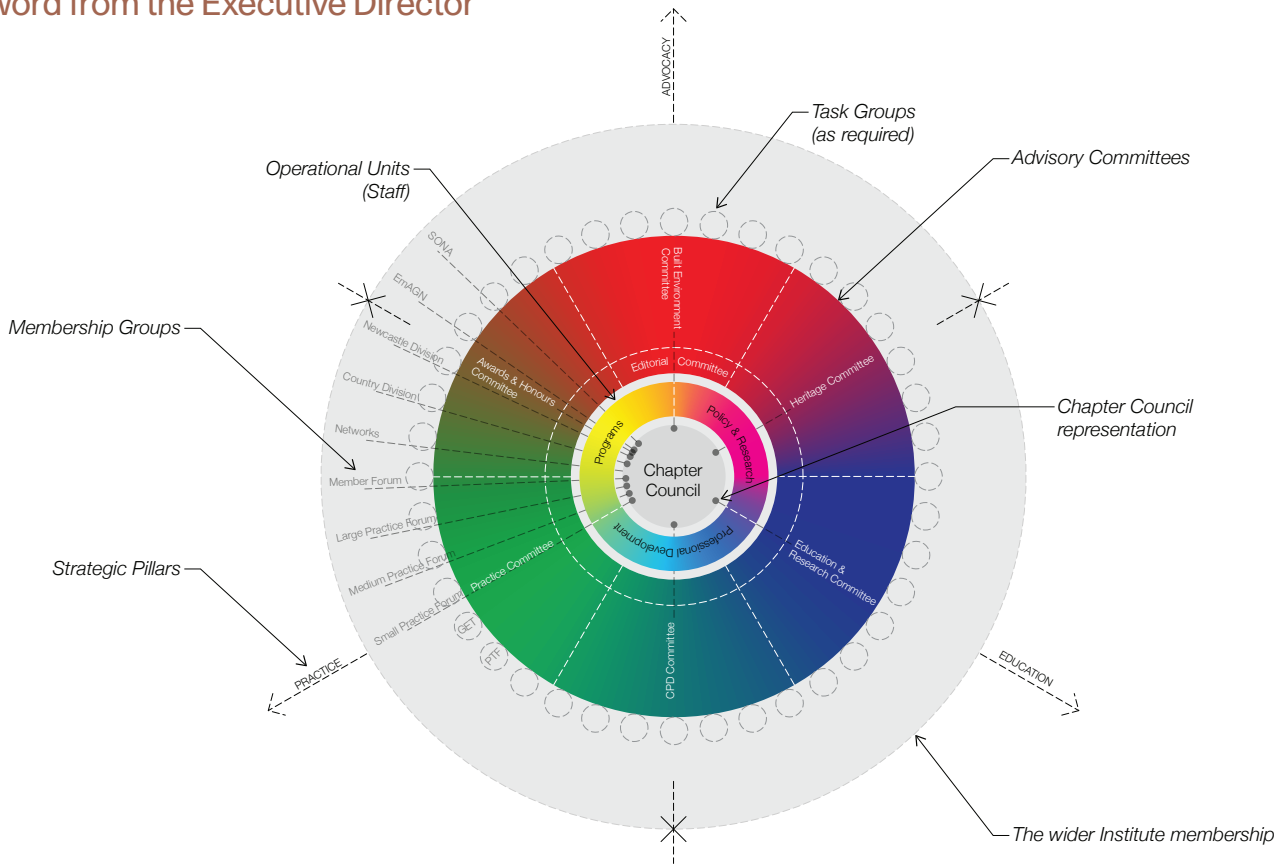


Illustration: Joshua Morrin

### Vers une Institute (NSW Chapter)

At some point during the genesis of this issue of the *Bulletin* it was suggested that we ought to lob the provocative statement 'the Institute needs reform' into the mix.

I took it as a rhetorical statement, rather than a necessarily provocative one. And while it probably is true, and nobody would shy away from the challenge, it is at the same time a bit too easy to cast aspersions on a broad and somewhat amorphous body like the Institute.

As it is, we didn't include the topic. Not because it's a discussion that anyone is afraid of having, or even an issue that anyone would necessarily dispute, but because the reform of the Institute is something that is already well underway – and this reform is driven by your elected members.

In the previous two years, the organisation has radically reshaped its key governance model in two fundamental ways. First, from a membership-based, fifteen-odd National Council to a re-energised, best-practice model which charges an Executive Board with the financial and risk-based decisions, and engages the elected membership in the sphere of strategy and policy. Second, with a revised and modernised constitution. Neither of these are small acts, and the organisation has enacted both in the space of two years. All of these are necessary structural precursors to the more functional programs and services with which most members see and engage. The work continues, with equally essential improvements in our financial structures and reporting, human resources capacity, IT infrastructure and marketing and communications also underway. Moreover, by the time this edition goes to print, there will be a new three-year strategic plan in place.

For NSW, in 2017 much of this change has been behind the scenes, as we recalibrate the way we work to align with the critical areas that the membership has identified, particularly in the areas of advocacy, education and practice. More of this will become apparent as we progress into 2018, through the programs we run and services we deliver on behalf of members.

The key, however, remains our governance framework. While for many this term will recall something arcane, opaque and complex, we are working to make the processes and systems both robust and transparent. For the first time in a while, we have reviewed (and now illustrated) the structure of the relationship between our membership, the various representative committees, your elected Council, and our staff team, who together bring expertise in programs, professional development, and policy and research. This work has all been undertaken with and through your elected Chapter Council.

As a priority, the review of the Chapter's committees has identified the need for seven key advisory committees:

**Built Environment** – to inform and support the Chapter's representation on issues related to improving the design of the built environment in NSW – including policy, major projects and the affairs of the building and construction industry – so that the Institute is a relevant and respected contributor in the public sphere

**Heritage** – to inform, support and promote the Chapter's representation on matters related to our architectural heritage, so that the Institute is a relevant and respected contributor in the public sphere

**Awards & Honours** – to promote the design and professional excellence of Institute members through the Chapter's awards and prizes programs, and individual nominations

**Education & Research** – to ensure that pre- and post-graduate education and training is relevant, accessible and of the highest standard, and enhance the opportunities and outlook for the profession by promoting the role of architectural education and research in practice

**Continuing Professional Development** – to inform, support and promote the Chapter's CPD program to provide members with the highest-quality content to assist their ongoing professional development

**Practice** – promotes and continually improves the standards of practice and service provided by Institute members and the circumstances under which they are engaged

**Editorial** – to ensure that the content and editorial direction of *Architecture Bulletin* informs, supports and promotes the Chapter's advocacy agenda

By year's end we will have consistent Terms of Reference for each of them. We will then be reaching out to the membership for involvement in these committees through an EOI process in the first quarter of 2018.

Next year, the work will continue in providing a similar level of clarity for our membership groups. This is added to the Small, Medium and Large Practice Forums that have been reinvigorated during 2017.

The reform is already underway. Its success will require steady, patient work – which should come as no surprise to architects.

What it now needs is your support in enlivening it with your expertise.

Joshua Morrin, Executive Director, NSW

### Policy

#### Parramatta North

The heritage precinct on the Parramatta River north west of the Parramatta CBD includes some key colonial buildings: Cumberland Hospital, the former Female Factory (1821) and the Norma Parker Centre (1844).

Most of the precinct is included in two separate listings on the State Heritage Register; an application has been made to the Commonwealth Government for national heritage listing.

The precinct was rezoned two years ago to allow for future retail, commercial, recreation and community uses and the construction of 2700 dwellings. New buildings are proposed to vary in height, with lower heights closer to the heritage precinct and river. The average height of new buildings is less than six storeys. Two- to twelve-storey buildings will front the Parramatta River. Buildings up to 24 storeys are proposed for development lots to the east of the heritage precinct.

In a joint submission with the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects NSW Chapter responding to the development control plan and the initial development application, the Institute emphasised the heritage significance of the precinct as a whole. The future development of the site must therefore be based on the conservation, interpretation and enhancement of its heritage significance.

#### Complying development in greenfield areas

Complying development needs to increase substantially from its current level of 32% of total NSW development to achieve the Premier's Priority Target for Faster Housing of 90% of housing approvals within 40 days by 2019.

The draft greenfield code is based on the Housing Code. It covers two-storey housing and granny flats and setbacks consistent with the Code, but there are some key points of difference, such as a control based on lot width, not plot area, and standard front and rear setbacks for all lot widths.

Green cover is considered important; the document encourages the planting of street trees. The government is also providing 5,000 free trees for property owners.

In its submission, the Institute considered that there needs to be a site cover control and that street trees should be mandatory. The current Housing Code controls should also apply, with additional controls for building length and front fences.

#### Wickham masterplan

A draft masterplan released by Newcastle City Council in March aims to build on the strategic shift of the commercial core of the city centre to Newcastle West. Wickham is evolving from a fringe semi-industrial area into a mixed use urban neighbourhood with a new focus as the new Newcastle transport interchange.

In its submission, the NSW Chapter's Newcastle Division recommended the preparation of a Newcastle specific housing design guide to ensure a minimum consistent standard of housing design. A Wickham Design Ideas Competition would also encourage new ideas on the area's design possibilities. The worst result would be a dense high-rise dormitory suburb.

#### Powerhouse Museum

The NSW Government intends moving the Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences from its Sulman Medal-winning adaptive reuse of the 1899 Ultimo Power House to a new building on the banks of the Parramatta River.

In a *Sydney Morning Herald* op-ed, the NSW Chapter President Andrew Nimmo proposed two arms of the museum. The Ultimo building would continue to display its impressive collection of engines, aeroplanes and vehicles, complemented by a new branch of the museum in Parramatta. The government's business case for the move, including consideration of a continuing cultural space in Ultimo, is expected at the end of the year.

#### Better Placed

The August launch of the NSW government design policy marks a turning point for the NSW built environment. Built around seven objectives, the policy advocates the importance of good design in creating better places and spaces, supports industry and government to deliver good design and enables effective design processes to be established and supported in the planning system.

*Better Placed* not only describes the design process itself. It will form part of the terms of reference supporting the delivery of design excellence processes, including design review panels and design excellence competitions.

Welcoming the release of the policy, NSW Chapter President Andrew Nimmo said: 'The new policy will help to deliver a higher quality of new development and great places as we meet the challenges of an increasing population'.

Murray Brown, Policy Advisor

Murray has retired after working at the NSW Chapter in policy and advocacy from 2008, including four years of organising CPD. We wish him all the best in Canberra

### Newcastle Division

Construction in the Hunter region is booming with over \$3bn in developments approved in Newcastle alone in the last five years. The cities of Lake Macquarie and Maitland are also experiencing substantial growth. While some of these developments have generated controversy, it has also provided a great opportunity for the local architectural profession.

One result for this development is the changing nature of, and development pressure on, many suburbs, particularly those close to the inner city. Newcastle City Council recently prepared a draft masterplan for the suburb of Wickham, adjacent to the Newcastle City Centre. Wickham is being impacted by the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy, which advocates a strategic shift of the commercial core of the city westwards and the development of a new heavy rail terminus and transport interchange in the area. Newcastle City Council sought comment on the draft masterplan. We believe it is important that the Institute be involved in such discussions. As such, the Newcastle Division worked with the NSW Chapter and prepared a submission in response addressing issues including housing, design, public transport, traffic management, cycleways, pedestrians, community facilities and character. We hope that the Institute can continue to assist Council in developing the masterplan. Thanks to local committee member Jodie Dixon for facilitating the response together with Murray Brown from NSW Chapter office.

Peter Kemp, Newcastle Division Chair

### Emerging Architects and Graduates Network

A recent transition has occurred on the EmAGN NSW Committee with four new members joining the team. Welcome Ben Coulston, Gemma Savio, Jamileh Jahangiri and Samuel Butler. We are very excited to have you on board!

EmAGN would like to thank outgoing committee members Cara Doherty and Nicholas Gonsalves for their invaluable contribution to the committee. Best of luck guys on your adventures overseas!

Congratulations to EmAGN NSW Co-Chair Joseph O'Meara on the birth of his daughter Ashlee, and also committee member Kirstina Sahlestrom on the birth of her daughter Rey.

EmAGN would also like to congratulate everyone who recently passed Part 3 of the Architectural Practice Examination and registered as an architect in NSW. One of the recent initiatives which we are pursuing is for a tiered graduate membership fee to allow for a more gradual transition between student and architect Institute fees. Watch this space.

In the lead up to the end of the year, EmAGN NSW is organising some exciting events including the launch of the Value series, the gender equality discussion series and an architecture and culinary tour of Cabramatta. Keep a look out for these upcoming events!

EmAGN NSW Committee



- 1 SuperStudio 2017 First Prize winners (centre) – Justin Pak, Justin Wohl and Yim Hoi Fung Ivan (UNSW) – with the jurors
- 2 Dress wasn't necessarily evaluated in the competition, but best team outfit went to the team from the University of Canberra. Our design studios should be filled with more colourful characters!



A clever idea, presented clearly, is a very persuasive thing. This is an important lesson and one that architects best learn when young. There is another: that sometimes the bigger the problem, the less time one should give oneself to propose an answer. SuperStudio, the Institute's annual student competition, tests both of these.

SuperStudio 2017 was, as usual, a contest of ideas. Thirteen teams from NSW and ACT this year contested for the best project produced in response to a nationally-consistent brief: a defensive territory.

The responses to the brief were diverse and stimulating: a Bondi seawall and the provocation-by-parody to 'make Sydney great again'; ZIP-NEY, a proposal for an aerial infrastructure and an alternative to vehicular traffic congestion; and even digitally-activated gargoyles employed to assist in policing the streets of Sydney.

Fantastic though these ideas may be, there comes a point when ideas need to become interested in rude reality, and where it might be important to acknowledge that architects don't alone possess the answers. Our homeless, for example, are probably not the best field for romantic experiments, however well-intentioned.

Three prizes were awarded. Third, to a kind of playpen of digital abandonment in Martin Place; and second, to a well-executed field of rectangular prisms in Hyde Park, recalling Eisenman's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. The winning scheme was an inventive and playful reimagining of the concrete defensive bollard as a kind of mushroom column, wrought with tensile elements that reimagined these too-frequently sinister protectors of public space with a musical quality. Here was a clear presentation of a concise idea, where the focus was no longer on the problem, and where architecture was the provider of the solution. A worthy winner.

Joshua Morrin, Executive Director, NSW

We thank the University of Sydney for hosting this year, and Dr Dagmar Reinhardt for helping organise the event.

It is important that our students continue to enjoy the support of the profession, and to this end we welcomed the support of our jurors and mentors:

2017 SUPERSTUDIO JURORS

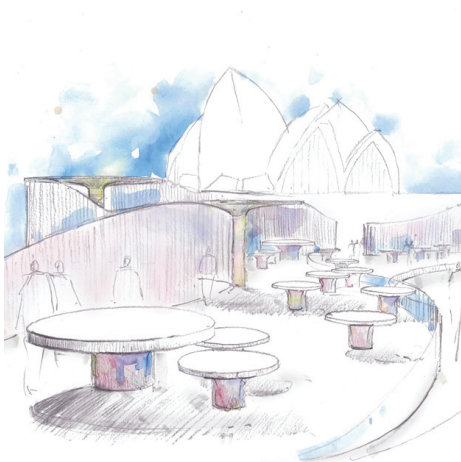
Vaughn Lane (Jacobs)  
Fraser McKay (Bates Smart)  
Dr Dagmar Reinhardt (University of Sydney)  
Ariana Rodriguez (Crone)  
Shane Smede (EJE Architecture)

2017 SUPERSTUDIO TEAM MENTORS

Yuliya Chistyakova (Mirvac Design)  
Ben Coulston (Terroir / University of Queensland)  
Jamileh Jahangiri (TKD Architects)  
Georgia Jamieson (UTS Program Management Office)  
Matilda Leake (Bates Smart)  
Chloe Rayfield (TKD Architects)  
Gemma Savio (savio parsons architects)  
Hannah Slater (Neeson Murcutt Architects)  
Ksenia Totoeva (Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Architects)  
Dmitry Troyanovsky (Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Architects)

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Tessa Goodman (Awards & Prizes Officer, NSW Chapter)  
Jacques Chevrolet-Breton (SONA representative, University of Sydney)



FIRST PRIZE Diaphanous  
Yim Hoi Fung Ivan, Justin Pak and Justin Wohl (UNSW)



SECOND PRIZE A conversation  
Claire Jo, Jinlong Li and Jeremy Yip (UNSW)



THIRD PRIZE Urban + Terrorism = Urbanism  
Estefano Bonfante (University of Sydney), Akshay Salunkhe (University of Sydney) and Winten Xu (UTS)

# 2017 Country Division Architecture Awards



Residential Architecture – Affordable Housing (Under \$350,000)  
 The Joint  
 Joint Modular  
**WINNER, Affordable Housing**  
**WINNER, James Barnet Award**

It was with great pleasure that I undertook the role of Jury Chair for this year's NSW Country Division awards. I am a passionate advocate of our awards system and believe it plays an important part in our continued promotion to communities of the best of regional architecture.

We used the Award Force platform for entries again this year, making it easy to make submissions, and also providing access to entries for jurors during the judging process.

The awards were well supported with 35 entries across eight categories. All entrants are also considered for the James Barnet Award for outstanding work by a Country Division architect, the Termimesh Timber award for innovative use of timber, and the People's Choice award, which is open to all through online voting.

The jury was impressed with the quality of entries and diversity of projects. Judging took place at the Country Division seminar at Goonoo Goonoo Station in Tamworth on 4 August. The awards were announced at the annual regional conference in Coffs Harbour on 5 October. Congratulations to all the entrants.

Sarah Aldridge, Jury Chair

**Jury:**

Sarah Aldridge (Jury Chair), Space Studio  
 Shaun Carter, Carter Williamson  
 Genevieve Lilley, Genevieve Lilley Architects  
 Janne Ryan, Ideas Curator



Public & Commercial Architecture  
 Ballina Marine Rescue  
 DFJ Architects  
**WINNER**



Heritage  
 Sampson House  
 Source Architects  
**WINNER**



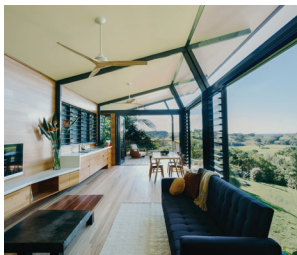
Residential Architecture – Houses  
 Carlyle Lane  
 Harley Graham Architects  
**JOINT WINNER**



Residential Architecture – Houses  
 Escarpment House  
 Takt  
**JOINT WINNER**



Residential Architecture –  
 Alterations & Additions  
 Courtyard House  
 Davis Architects  
**WINNER**



Small Projects  
 Hidden Studio  
 Harley Graham Architects  
**JOINT WINNER**



Small Projects  
 Possum Shoot Shed  
 DFJ Architects  
**JOINT WINNER**



Heritage  
 Bangalow Farm House  
 DFJ Architects  
**COMMENDATION, Heritage**  
**WINNER, Termimesh Award**

Commendation for Public and  
 Commercial Architecture  
 iAccelerate Centre by ADM Architects  
 Ocean Shores Soccer Club by DFJ Architects

Commendation for Heritage  
 Bangalow Farm House by DFJ Architects

Commendation for Residential Architecture –  
 Alterations & Additions  
 Sampson House by Source Architects

Commendation for Small Projects  
 Green West House by Source Architects

Commendation for Vision Award  
 Coffs Coast Wildlife Centre by Regional Architects



### BKA Architecture

BKA Architecture announces the appointment of three new associates – Kristy Simpson (Newcastle), Radhika Toshniwal and James Kim (Sydney) and one new associate director Bruna Souto.

BKA feels we could be approaching the end of the current residential development boom. Two contrasting residential projects are nearing completion:

140 Apartments – Cliff Road, Epping

40 Student Housing – Barker St, Kingsford

Both projects attempt to go beyond the solutions which tick the boxes associated with the requirements of SEPP 65/ADG as well as meeting the numbers contained in the LEP related to FSR, height and other requirements.

In most cases the criteria above will 'FILL' the envelope available negating potential variation, articulation and depth. Hence 'standard' and 'repetitive' solutions have prevailed recently with the only variations in façade material selection.

While the ADG elevates the standard of residential apartments – it does also working within a LEP framework, reduce creativity and rely heavily on the ticking of boxes producing standard solutions.

### Mirvac Design

Australian cities are being disrupted. The rapid pace of change is a major challenge in achieving connected, thriving communities. Neighbourhoods are being raised from their suburban slumber through increased density, site amalgamations and an increase in mixed use. While most professionals agree that this is needed, how do we adapt our approach and ensure this rapid change is beneficial for all? How do we bring communities along the journey rather than ignore their objections? Integrated masterplanning with walkability, connectivity, amenity and thriving public spaces as essential objectives is key to public acceptance to create more equitable cities.

Customer research has informed our view of what future neighbourhoods must contain. People value community, amenity and a sense of place. A collaborative approach from all sectors is required. In many cities a lack of coordination between agencies providing the necessary infrastructure to achieve these goals is sorely apparent.

Focus on the inner and middle rings of cities with projects such as Harold Park and Marrick and Co. in Sydney is delivering well connected and sustainable places responding to heritage and existing communities. Revitalisation of the Australian Technology Park will establish it as the innovation hub of the future. Placemaking is core to our approach, embedding it within its surrounding precinct, disrupting the outdated concept of a Business Park to truly become a connected and thriving place.

David Head, Senior Urban Designer, Mirvac Design

### Cox

Cox Architecture is pleased to announce the appointment of several new directors across the practice – in Sydney, Adelaide, Canberra and Perth.

In Sydney we welcome Alex Small, Ramin Jahromi, Satvir Mand, Lachlan Abercrombie and John Ferendinos. We also welcome in particular Perth based Emma Williamson and Kieran Wong of CODA, who are now merged with Cox Architecture. Cox Architecture is a singular design focused practice consisting of six Australian studios – as we are indeed 'one' practice, the movement of ideas and creativity between our studios can be fluid. These appointments both strengthen and diversify the ownership of the practice, shaping a large practice 'model' based on a broad 'partnership', founded on a shared ethos. These appointments positions us well for a dynamic and changing future.

We congratulate our new partners and look forward to further appointment in Melbourne and Brisbane in the coming months.

### Crone

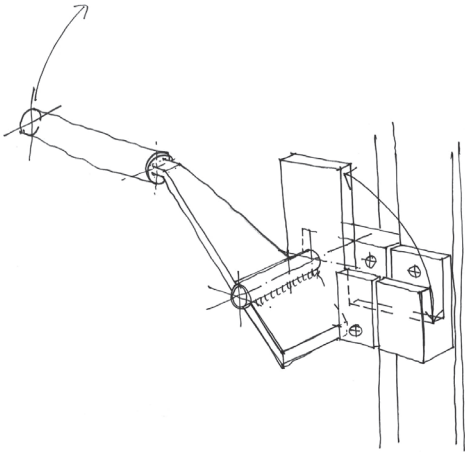
Architecture practice, Crone is proud to announce the promotion of seven key employees to the position of senior associate and associate. This vibrant, young studio, recent recipient of the Sulman Medal for Public Architecture at the 2017 NSW Architecture Awards, recognises employees with a diverse range of skills in design, management and technology thereby ensuring the continued growth and future success of the practice.

Stephen Harris, with some 30+ years' experience in architecture, has been promoted to senior associate as has Ashley Dennis, one of the lead designers on the medal-winning Orange Regional Museum.

Crone is equally pleased to acknowledge the contribution of Maria Guardala, Sally Hsu, Warren Meyer, Ariana Rodriguez and Andrew Woodward in promoting each of them to associate level.

Maria has been instrumental in maintaining Crone's QA standards; Sally is an integral member of the high-profile Wanda Vista Hotel development at Circular Quay; Warren's knowledge and experience in BIM and Revit ensures the firm remains at the cutting-edge of technological design; Ariana brings a wealth of international experience to Crone's masterplan and large-scale residential developments while Andrew's involvement in managing the delivery of the David Jones Elizabeth Street retail redevelopment, in collaboration with Singapore-based firm Benoy has been invaluable.

Crone, one of the early adopters and members of the Champions of Change, is an equal-opportunity firm aiming to promote and improve equality and diversity within the practice through gender, age, culture and skills-set in order to create a collaborative studio where knowledge is shared and a healthy work/life balance is maintained.



### Allen Jack+Cottier

The millennia of learned muscle memory and the physiological development of our hand's highly complex combination of muscles, bones, tendons and nerves is indispensable to the quality of our thinking in design and architecture.

Computers are machines built on logic and algorithms, able to calculate at speeds that are multiple times those of a human mind. That magic enables us to illustrate what once were unimaginable, complex ideas and organize thought into tangible products, systems and built form.

Nonetheless, speed of production that comes with CAD is not a substitute for the slow hand speed of thinking/drawing that enables careful consideration. In fact, slowing down, even to a state of ennui allows us to dream.

Lines that now appear so quickly drawn in a CAD program, leave less time for contemplation and logic. Looking at a screen for a long time, puts our brain into an Alpha state. We zone out, plugged into music on the headphones.

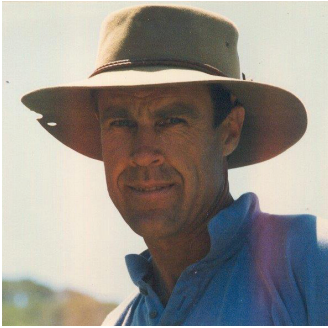
Outside influences dissolve and we zero in to a symbiotic relationship with our tech.

This may suit the new economy of low fees, high production, increased work hours and more stress, but we risk devaluing what we do and produce. Slowing down a little, rediscovering the art of design through drawing can only *add* to the value of a design, not to mention the designer as an individual and humankind as a whole.

Matt Brindley, Senior Associate, AJ+C

Sketch by Peter Ireland for a bespoke doorhandle for Haig Beck – the arm of the lever couldn't impinge on the view.

# Colin Still: a remarkable architect



By any measure, Colin Still was a remarkable architect – productive, creative and likeable, as much at home on the sea, as on land. Colin’s graphic skills were extraordinary whether manifest as architectural drawings, paintings or prints and he leaves a rich legacy of completed projects which deserve to be better known.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Colin since the early 1960s, when we were both studying architecture at Sydney University. Even as a junior student, Colin produced drawings that were remarked upon when displayed in the ‘crit’ gallery. It surprised no-one when Colin went on to graduate in 1966 with the University Medal and RAIA Silver Medal, as the outstanding architecture student for the year, as well as numerous other awards. Shortly afterwards Colin went to Harvard University where he was awarded the degree of Master of Architecture.

Upon his return, Colin resumed his work in the Special Projects Section of the Government Architects Branch producing a broad range of highly acclaimed projects. Colin’s skill at rapidly producing drawings, alluringly coloured, quickly won the loyalty of a diversity of clients. His projects from the 1970s include a building for State Brickworks in Blacktown, restoration and additions to Grafton Court House and Police Station, as well as the massive task of masterplanning and providing the architectural input for the new Flemington farm produce markets. Perhaps the most outstanding project from this period is the sculptural and spatially rich Alexander Mackie College of Advanced Education in Oatley, now the Oatley Senior Campus of Georges River College.

Not generally known is the fact that Colin produced concept plans for all the potential Olympic venues in a detailed feasibility study for holding the Olympic Games in Sydney in 1988, which the Wran Government ultimately decided not to pursue.

Key buildings from the 1980s include the State Sports Centre in Homebush with its powerfully expressed steel structure and membrane-roofed entrance, major additions to the Australian Museum in College Street, and the dramatic large pre-stressed beam structure of the NSW Government Furniture Factory at Wetherill Park. Many of Colin’s projects from this time received RAIA Merit Awards but perhaps his finest work of the 1980s was the Orange Regional Gallery and Library, which was awarded the Sulman Award in 1986.

Colin also designed some distinctive private houses. The flowing spaces of his family home in Victoria Street, Watsons Bay, enriched with his works of art and collected decorative



items, was emblematic of his welcoming and unpretentious personality.

Part of the culture of Special Projects was the Friday night talks and drinks, to which Colin would contribute not only architectural imagery but also the most delectable sashimi, caught by Colin at dawn that very morning. His skills in this pursuit are legendary.

With the election of the coalition government in NSW in 1988, the process of progressively dismantling the Government Architects’ Branch commenced and Colin moved to the office of Cox Richardson, where he was a partner from 1994 to 2003. Once again Colin had the opportunity to be involved with a rich array of projects, both in Australia and abroad. These range from the Nuclear Reactor at Lucas Heights, an unrealised scheme for the Papua New Guinea High Court, the Lake Macquarie Art Gallery, buildings for the CSIRO as well as many other buildings and studies in Australia and Southeast Asia.

Colin’s first foray into high-rise structures was the luxurious Rivergate apartment complex in Singapore in a richly curvilinear garden setting adjacent to the river.

COX director, John Richardson describes Colin as ‘a magician with colour who really knew how to use black ... Everything he turned his mind and hand to was a work of art, Colin’s particular work of art ... when Colin drew the section, the building became alive’.

Colin died at home in Watsons Bay on 7 August, aged 74, after a protracted battle against cancer. His funeral with a congregation overflowing into the garden was held at the lovely St Peter’s Church, Watsons Bay, overlooking Colin’s favourite fishing grounds. His life was then celebrated at a splendid wake at the Watsons Bay Game Fishing Club attended by friends and architectural colleagues – including many young architects who he mentored – all enriched by knowing Colin.

Colin is survived by his widow Irene, a skilled architect and illustrator in her own right, as well as gifted children Ben and Nina, and four grandchildren to whom his friends extend their deepest sympathy.

Andrew Andersons

1 Alexander Mackie College of Advanced Education in Oatley, 1980. Image courtesy State Library of New South Wales – IE2661749

# Migration and modernism: direct connections to Europe

A new book highlights the significant number of European-trained modernist designers working in Sydney in the post war years. Editor and curator Rebecca Hawcroft looks at the surprising stories behind the careers of two of Sydney's unsung European modernists

Graduates of architecture, engineering and design were well represented in the more than 200,000 Europeans who came to Australia in the wave of migration associated with World War II. While only two graduates of the Bauhaus were known designers in Australia, artist Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack and printmaker George Adams (born Georg Teltscher), a significant number of graduates of the universities and applied arts schools of Vienna, Zurich, Prague and Budapest spent the majority of their working lives in Sydney.

Architect Hans Peter Oser (1913–1967), graduated in 1936 from the Technical University, Vienna, having worked in the office of Peter Behrens. Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier had earlier worked for Behrens. Oser then held the position of chief draftsman in the practice of Josef Hoffmann and Oswald Haerdtl, central figures in the Vienna Werkbund and teachers at the School for Applied Arts, Vienna. The young architect's time with the firm included assisting in the design of the Austrian Pavilion at the 1937 Paris Exhibition. After the German invasion of Austria in March 1938, Oser, one of Vienna's many Jewish residents, was forced to flee the country. With wife Herta, he arrived in Sydney in December 1939.

Oser successfully navigated the difficult transition between a European architectural career and re-establishing himself in Sydney in the 1940s. As early as 1941, Oser's work was featured in the Australian media and he held a wartime position as chief architect of the NSW Housing Commission.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the war Oser formed his own practice and during the 1950s gained a considerable reputation, as

**'George Korody enquired about registration as an architect with the NSW Board of Architects, but like many émigrés was deterred by the rigorous examination required. Korody instead turned to furniture design'**



demonstrated by his inclusion in the 1952 exhibition *Architecture Today and Tomorrow*, alongside Harry Seidler and Arthur Baldwinson.

In 1956 Oser formed a partnership with French-born, Sydney-educated architect Jean Fombertaux. Highly skilled designers, they produced some fine examples of late-International style architecture. Examples of their work include the still prominent William Bland Centre, Macquarie Street (1960), Toohey's Limited Administration Building, Mary Street, Surry Hills (1960) and the North Shore Synagogue, Lindfield (1958). The firm's fitout of the BOAC Travel Centre, Castlereagh Street (1963), one of Sydney's most sophisticated modern spaces, and was included in the Royal Australian Institute of Architects' 1971 survey *444 Sydney Buildings*. After Oser's untimely death in 1967, aged 54, the firm continued as Fombertaux Rice Hanley.

George Korody (born Kóródy György) (1890–1957) arrived in Sydney in 1940 aged 50, having left behind a successful career as a designer, architect and educator in Budapest. A number of his Budapest projects were published, including in the British *Decorative Art: The Studio Yearbook* and his 1939 design of the Vilmos Lipscei Fashion Salon remains one of Budapest key modernist interiors. Korody travelled to Sydney with the official role of holding an exhibition for the Hungarian Society of Applied Arts, however due to the war the exhibition did not go ahead. Deciding to stay, Professor Korody became a well known figure in the Sydney design scene.

A graduate of the established Royal Joseph Nador Technical University, Budapest, Korody enquired about registration as an architect with the NSW Board of Architects, but like many émigrés was deterred by the rigorous examination required. Korody instead turned to furniture design and in 1947 joined with the Sydney-born travel agent and Europhile Elsie Segaert in the furniture business Artes Studio. As chief designer, Korody produced a distinctive range

of austere furniture featuring Australian coachwood, woven cane, strongly angled legs and black vitrolite glass. Drawing on a functionalist vocabulary infused with Hungarian folk traditions the Artes range was unique in Sydney. Although similar to Pierre Jeanneret's c1955 Chandigarh designs, Korody's work for Artes appears to pre-date them.

Korody was a prominent member of the Society of Interior Designers of Australia, and also wrote articles outlining his philosophy for design. In 1950, Dutchman Dick van Leer joined Artes and began importing iconic 20th-century designs from firms such as B&B Italia and Herman Miller. Korody died in 1958 but many of his designs continued to be sold through Artes, which remained a bastion of modern style for more than three decades. In 1979, surviving partner van Leer sold the business, which was eventually rebranded and continues to operate as Space Furniture.

Oser and Korody are two figures within what was a diverse and active community, although few of its members are known designers. Through an object-rich publication, this project tells the stories of Sydney's émigré designers and the forgotten connections to European modernism they brought to post-war Sydney.

Rebecca Hawcroft

*The Other Moderns: Sydney's Forgotten European Design Legacy*, edited by Rebecca Hawcroft, NewSouth Press

The exhibition *The Moderns: European Designers in Sydney*, Museum of Sydney (22 July – 26 November 2017) was also curated by Rebecca Hawcroft

Note

- 1 Teddy Quinton, 'Postwar modernism in Sydney', Bachelor of Architecture thesis, University of Sydney, 1997, p85

Repose dining chairs, 1953. Designed by George Korody for Artes Studios. Photo: UP and Hotel Hotel 2017



# TENSILE KEY TO SUSTAINABLE GREEN WALL AT WARRINGAH MALL

As a specialist supplier and installer of tensile architectural solution from structural cables and rods to tensioned mesh, Tensile Design and Construct's recent projects have grown its reputation as a specialist in the burgeoning green wall movement.

One such project, comprising the redevelopment of Westfield's Warringah Mall in Brookvale, Sydney, leveraged Tensile's expertise and products in the creation of 14 metre high columns of plants. Scentre Group, which owns and manages Westfield shopping centres, has worked with Tensile on a number of such projects, as Tensile Managing Director Peter Bottero confirms. He adds that a key outcome of Tensile's involvement in the project was the creation of a sustainable green wall that's responsive to micro-climates throughout the centre and can be grown, maintained and updated over time.

'The brief at Warringah Mall was to utilise 17 columns scattered throughout the development,

totalling a combined surface area of around 500 square metres, to provide a mix of both green facade and green wall,' he says.

'We worked closely with green wall and roof expert Fytogreen, which provided the green wall panels, plant selection and irrigation system. Since the columns in the mall are all circular, each side has its own aspect and micro-climate. The difficulty of selecting a planting palette for this is then compounded by the various built elements that further influence plant selection through shading, reflective surfaces and heat gain, while being under the ETFT solar panel roof.'

The solution to these challenges has proven beneficial, he says.

'The Fyto panels are suspended on a set of Jakob stainless steel cables and are able to be removed and replaced with ease. By hanging the system off the columns, we removed the need for any secondary structure, meaning the panels were able to "float" in mid-air.'

'Each column was then encased in Jakob Webnet mesh to provide a

further substrate to green climbers that will grow out of the ground level planters and some of the Fyto panels over time.'

Tensile also provided further cable systems to the shopping centre car park's façade.

'Over time this will create a really eye-catching aesthetic effect, with the natural green foliage going a long way in terms of softening the hard concrete exterior and utilitarian nature of the car park,' Bottero says.

'We've found a responsive approach to the creation of a green wall and green facade provides excellent outcomes to Tensile's clients. The benefits of a broader planting palette mixing instant impact and sustainable growth over time make for a workable and visually rewarding solution.'

# PROVOKE

This is an issue full of issues. We have invited a range of contributors to take opposing sides of a variety of topics ... from the value of architecture to methods of practice to questions of social and gender equity. These are important issues that the profession cannot ignore – and yet, architects often retreat from this type of discourse. Perhaps, working in a small industry, we fear reprisal and reputational risk. Or harbour memories of opinions derided in university critiques and client presentations. Or we are just content to let our buildings do the talking.

By creating positions of black and white, we have forced our contributors to take a position on these issues. Some authors present well-

researched, well-considered arguments; others embrace hyperbole and humour to make their point.

We chose to keep the contributions anonymous. This allows each author to speak freely on their topic, but more importantly, keeps focus on the content of (and not the characters behind) these contributions.

Our core mission is, of course, to provoke. Not just to irritate, but to promote greater participation in issues of high consequence to us all.

David Tickle  
Editorial Committee Chair

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## CONTRIBUTORS

MELONIE BAYL-SMITH is director of Bijl Architecture and adjunct professor at the UTS School of Architecture. Her career choice may be attributed to her architect uncle who bought her technical pens as birthday presents

SOPHIE BOND is a Sydney-based architect at HASSELL. She has worked across a range of commercial, workplace and cultural projects, and believes in a multidisciplinary approach to architecture and planning

CALLANTHA BRIGHAM is the city transformation manager at City of Parramatta and a member of the NSW Chapter Council at the Australian Institute of Architects

ANGELO CANDALEPAS is a Sydney-based architect. In 2017, Candalepas Associates won the Aaron Bolot Award for residential architecture (multiple housing) and an architecture award for residential architecture (alterations & additions)

LUCY BURKE-SMITH is an architect with over 13 years' experience in the conservation and management of heritage listed places and precincts. Following over ten years' experience in government she has recently joined the Australian studios of the international architecture and heritage consultancy practice Purcell

CLINTON COLE is director of CplusC Architectural Workshop, as well as a nominated architect, design director and construction supervisor

MONICA EDWARDS is a senior associate at SJB Architects. She is also a representative on Chapter Council; a co-chair of both the Gender Equity Taskforce (GET) and the NSW Chapter Education Committee; and the Implementation Leader Chair for the Champions of Change.

CHARLOTTE EVANS worked at Sam Crawford Architects from 2014 to 2017, where she gained valuable experience working across residential and public architecture. She currently tutors first and second year design at the University of Sydney

GLENN HARPER is a senior associate and head of urban design at PTW Architects. He was also the recipient of the 2015 Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship. @brutalist\_project\_Sydney

MICHAEL HARVEY studied architecture at the University of Sydney, graduating with First Class Honours and the Ethel M Chettle Prize in Architecture. In 2017, his photographs were featured in *#KissingSydney*, an exhibition about social media at the National Trust, Sydney

MELINDA HOWARD is an architectural project manager for CplusC Architectural Workshop, specialising in end-to-end architectural and project management services on complex single residential developments

PHILIP GRAUS is an architect and urban planner based in Sydney and was a director at Cox Architecture between 1998 and July 2017, chairing the practice over 2015/16. In 2012, he wrote *Home, Evolution of the Australian Dream* with Philip Cox and Bob Meyer

JENNIFER MCMASTER is a director of Trias, a small-scale architecture studio in Sydney. Jennifer is the recipient of the MADE by the Opera House Scholarship, the Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship, the Bluescope Lysaght Prize, the Ruskin Rowe Prize, the Archiprix International Prize and the NSW Design Medal, awarded by the Australian Institute of Architects

SAMYUKTHA PILLAI is a graduate of architecture at HASSELL where she is currently involved in designing the Ribbon Hotel and Residences. She has also worked for the UN Habitat in Somalia designing public buildings as part of UN's peace building program; in post-disaster reconstruction projects in the Philippines; and in masterplanning for building resilience to climate change in Malawi

JOHN PRADEL is a founding director of SJB Architects who has seen the business traverse the shift from small to large practice over a 20-year period. John is a specialist in apartment design, with strong capabilities in directing large project teams responsible for delivering complex, mixed-use developments. He is also a Champion of Change

MATTHEW PULLINGER is an award-winning architect and urban designer whose interests lie in the design of the city and urban centres. A past NSW Chapter President, Matthew has worked on strategic projects at all scales and in public policy supporting good design in the built environment

PHILIP THALIS is a founding principal of Hill Thalix Architecture + Urban Projects and has 30 years' experience in the design of public space, urban design, multiple housing, infrastructure and heritage adaptation. In addition to practice and teaching at UNSW, he is an Independent Councillor on the City of Sydney

According to his Twitter bio @davidtickle\_ DAVID TICKLE is a city designer, walker and optimist, prefers film trailers to actual films, and is also head of urban design at HASSELL

EMMA TOWNSEND is an architect with over 15 years' experience across a diverse range of transport, education and commercial projects. She is a leader within HASSELL Sydney's urban transport sector, with a passion for complex transport infrastructure and transformative urban design

IMOGENE TUDOR joined Sam Crawford Architects in 2015, bringing with her over 10 years' professional experience in residential and public architecture gained working with award winning architectural practices in both Sydney and Melbourne. Imogene was the recipient of the 2017 Dulux Study Tour and in 2013 was awarded the Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship

# The Opera House is good for Sydney

## CHECKLIST:

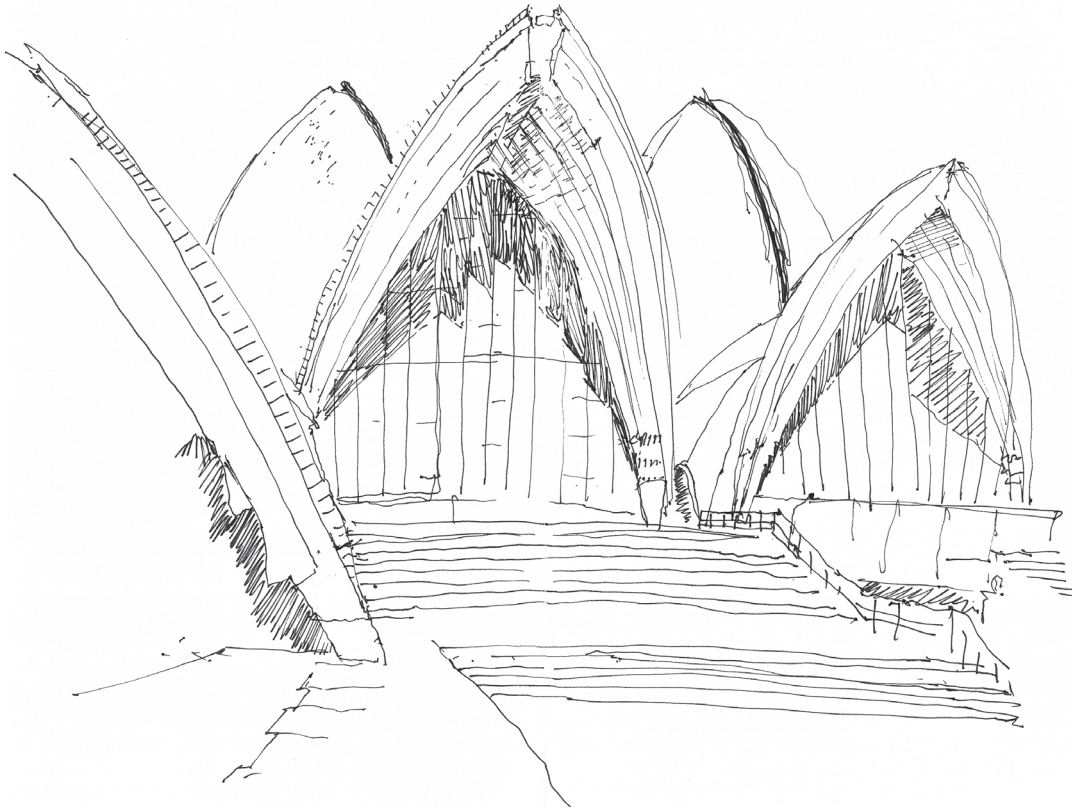
What makes a really good building?

- Iconic / World famous / Instagrammable
- Conceptual clarity:  
can be drawn (and redrawn endlessly)  
by anyone, from Ken Done to a 5 year old
- Available in Lego™ version
- Wins loads of awards, even from  
architects who are usually just  
jealous of other architects
- Makes normal people think about architecture
- Demonstrates the transformative nature  
of architecture as well as how  
effectively architects can get screwed  
by the process of architecture
- Takes pressure off entire architectural  
industry because no matter how hard  
you try, you'll never design a building  
that good and all you need to do is  
max out the views from your building to  
that building and then everyone is happy

Leg Godt\*

\* not their real name

# The Opera House has been bad for Sydney



THE bridled scorn of so many talented architects is the Sydney Opera House. What an easy place Sydney would be if it were not ever built. History's footfall distances us from the bitter events of the building's past.

The Opera House has caused so much scorn, so much division and a conscious intention to remove architecture from the centre of things. One building should never have been allowed to absorb all the interest in our place. One building should never have been allowed to encourage debate against the relevance of architecture in a city.

The Opera House, despite its brilliance, is always ignored – always put to the bottom of the heap and still offered to custodians who do not know what architecture is, leaving the front of our city with a white party tent and pot plants for decades.

The Opera House has shown us up to be very provincial and fundamentally aesthetically illiterate. It has demonstrated that even the greatest architecture will be ignored here and our culture is so uneducated that it can relegate a great building's interiors and conservation to almost anybody. To date, there have been half a dozen architects that have engaged in the pursuit of its improvement and all that can be said is that they haven't quite yet managed to destroy it. The latest array of 'award-winning architects' could be considered 'slightly mismatched' to themselves let alone the design ethic of the building. On the one hand, there is a picture of robust order and geometry within the building; on the other hand, there is possibly a new interest in the dissemination of geometry, the hiding of geometry or the

'Easy it is to imagine, the world without the Sydney Opera House. We would not live such hypocritical lives: on the one hand taking our visitors down to see it as something of a cultural offering, on the other hand, never looking after it ourselves'

making of something anew – or something that nobody knows. So little is spoken of this selection process; so disinterested are we as to the results.

Custodians of cultural artefacts are usually the best people we have to take care of our buildings. If this is true, the Opera House shows us all up for who we are. Here we have it. It is like putting TS Eliot to dine with a potato farmer. The result is always awkward and dumbfounding and deeply embarrassing for anyone that knows better. That said, Eliot may write a great poem about potato farming that can change the world. There is no such metaphor ascribable to architecture.

It is equally alarming to see how no school of architecture in Sydney can boast any study of the building. I challenge all the schools to prove that any student has been offered formal training on the subject since the building was built. We are more likely to read about Corbusier than Utzon. It can be said, on the contrary, that there has been a conscious effort to not teach about it at all. The silence in this pursuit is deafening. The building has demonstrably been of absolutely no didactic use to date.

The Opera House opened in 1973. No Sulman Medal was awarded between 1970 and 1978, except 1975, when the jury of the Institute had the temerity to offer it up to the Art Gallery of NSW extensions. A whole generation of architects would extol the virtue of the Art Gallery extensions in the face of never having given the Opera House the Sulman. How strange, from the position of a younger person, to have desperately lauded such a prosaic example in the face of it all. Perhaps, like the early Sulman medals, those decisions were political ones; perhaps the authors needed to be on the jury; and Utzon could never have given himself that award as he was not here. A rising culture of ignorance should by now set us off on a fury – but alas. And sadly, it was Colin Madigan chairing a jury in 1992 that gave it the Sulman retrospectively in an event that hardly noticed this weird history.

And more:

1. The persistent ignorance of an architect's work has formed a lasting legacy which has put our profession into irrelevance. The message sent is that 'no one cares about the subtleties in architecture in Sydney'.
2. A book could be written about the nasty political moves of horrible people in government office in the late 1960s and 1970s and this is our legacy.
3. The Opera House commenced the cessation of all competitions for buildings for almost 40 years. The next international competition for a building to be constructed was in 1994 for the Pyrmont Housing – and that was carefully marked with a commercial mandate.

The Opera House sits at the end or the beginning of our city; it is like a barnacle of memory that we should care about but we do not. The recent removal of the pavers and their reinstatement shows how ill-informed we can be even about technical pursuits – the Trust has allowed yet another part of the building to be repaired in a sea of ignorance and neoprene packers. If this is the standard for the Opera House then what of the rest of our work?

When Renzo Piano wanted his building in Macquarie Street to 'speak with the Opera House', people in Sydney were shocked. To an outsider this would be obvious. To us, this was unheard of. Perhaps it was poetic justice that Renzo pulled down the most important work of one of the architects instrumental in the political mess surrounding the Opera House. It can be said that a confounding mess is the result every time.

The tourists come and go, and yet the state government would like to never create a study in the amount of money that the Opera House brings as a consequence of tourism. Perhaps this is the last scornful idiocy. The very mercantile and mercenary propositions that have resulted from the disdain of its cost and lack of utility could be easily quashed by the statistic that architecture and cultural artefacts 'bring money' to cities. Perhaps we should wait a few more generations when the present 'race to the bottom' has destroyed it further. Then the next generation may see virtue in putting it back together. But what would they put together? It was never together to start with. So all we have is a half-made thing, a large impressive object that hypnotises tourists and raises values of the houses in the eastern suburbs that view it. It is a hope that future generations can harvest something from this, but we can show, demonstrably, that to date, no one in our profession, educational faculties or various levels of government has sought to harness its full cultural worth. This too shows us to be ignorant. It is like having the Ottomans in charge of the Parthenon again; they used it to store their artillery and allowed the Venetians to ironically bomb it. We give that job to our profession now with the latest interior commissions; akin, as it seems, to asking Pollock to renovate a Picasso – culturally misjudged.

Easy it is to imagine, the world without an Opera House. We would not live such hypocritical lives: on the one hand taking our visitors down to see it as something of a cultural offering, on the other hand, never looking after it ourselves.

The building has brought out the worst of our culture for so many reasons. It marked the time when the decline of the prestige of architecture as a profession here commenced. We don't deserve it. If it were never built, we could very well have a city like Melbourne – one with no singular work of greatness and where mediocre work, at least, is permeated in a safe collective delusion.

Quincy\*



# Is ambition better than experience?



Senior Project Architect (SPO): OK, if we are going to argue about ambition being better than experience, we need to get a few things straight. In this debate, you are Donald Trump and I am Hillary Clinton. I am Peter Zumthor and you are a recent grad who's just finished a kitchen renovation for her parents and is trying to get it published on *ArchDaily*. I will be gentle with you, listen to your perspective and nod encouragingly. I might even have a few words of wisdom to impart along the way!

Recent Grad (RG): OK thanks, I'll try to pay attention but I've been up all night setting up my website and working on three competition entries. Who is Peter Zumthor? And thanks for asking about my parent's kitchen. I've attempted a reinterpretation of domestic labour by de-gendering the space, freeing women from the kitchen, dismantling the patriarchy with good design ... anything's possible. LET'S MAKE ARCHITECTURE GREAT AGAIN!

SPO: Great ... *again* ... Did you know that up until relatively recently architects received their architectural training as part of an apprenticeship? Indeed, many of the *great* architects have spent significant portions of their career gaining experience and training with more experienced architects? Frank Lloyd Wright was apprenticed to Louis Sullivan. And Mies Van der Rohe to Peter Behrens. These architects, as individually talented as they were, understood the benefits of experience as the foundation of truly great architecture.

RG: But can experience and training in what has already come before and what is already known lead to the avant-garde? Did FLW end up producing the work he did with experience and no ambition? Ambition is the driving force that unshackles architecture/architects from a continuous repetition of the same and propels it into new and unknown territory. In a world that is evolving and changing so rapidly, should we not be reaching and speeding towards the future, instead of letting the past slowly push us on and on (and on)? Experience allows for a known and safe trajectory, ambition on the other hand, can blast off in a million exciting directions.

SPO: It is all well and good to blast off into unknown directions, but to think you can do this propelled by novelty alone is pure folly. It is a false assertion to claim that the avant-garde comes from ambition rather than experience. It perpetuates the myth of the 'single genius' architect and seeks to minimise the reality that architecture is crafted slowly and carefully with many skilled hands, honing something joyous out of messy complexity. As much as we might like it to be, architecture is not poetry or art that can seemingly arrive into the world fully formed. The realities of building demand an engagement with the mundane universes of regulatory and material constraints, gravity, money, safety, etc. Without the necessary experience to navigate these mundane waters, a building will never get off the ground. The avant-garde doesn't look so impressive while it languishes on the drawing board.

RG: It sounds as though for all your experience, you've lost that intangible idealistic quality that we must strive for. I would say this can only be reached through ambition and not experience. What about the ambition to conquer the mundane? We would get bogged down in this murky water you speak of without ambition. It is this which pulls us through, not experience. I'm talking about ambition as desire.

You have argued for the sanctity of experience which has only revealed the implied privilege given to it. In placing expertise over ambition, you are arguing to maintain the status quo. And if the status quo is maintained there is no room allowed for not only new built forms but for new models of professional practice and modes of doing architecture and design across a larger scale. If the status quo wasn't pried open with ambition, would we have seen women entering the workforce? I think this is where the 'single genius' architect you mentioned comes from – they are taking a seat that has already been set for them. We wouldn't see a debate or constructive engagement without a desire to break the status quo.

And how can you say architecture is not poetry?!

SPO: OK, I concede that ambition can motivate to challenge the status quo, but I must insist that architecture at any scale – a kitchen reno to a new city plan – requires experience for its execution. But please do tell me more about how you're going to smash ceilings, bring revolution to the streets and break new ground. I'll just quietly get on with the job of making great architecture. Poetry and all.

RG: I'll just remind you again who actually won the election ... LET'S MAKE ARCHITECTURE GREAT AGAIN!

Don\* (RG) and Hillary\* (SPO)

# Committees are the answer



**PROVOCATION:** Sydney does not have a holistic cultural strategy – rather an ad hoc series of ‘business plans’ and ‘visions’ by individual institutions. Why don’t we develop public expert strategies for our cultural institutions rather than treating them as political footballs or commercial enterprises?

## Global market drivers

‘World’s best practice’ used to mean that. Market drivers underpinning globalisation have reduced this to mean ‘the same as everywhere else’. Cultural institutions are not immune, building ‘trophy’ or ‘icon’ buildings serving political, commercial ends or even well-intentioned philanthropic ends. Guggenheim Bilbao and the Fondation Louis Vuitton come to mind. The latter has a great restaurant and stunning viewing terraces – not of the art but the building’s surrounds! Gehry, the museum’s architect, was inspired by the funding philanthropist’s ‘dream’ in developing the form of the building. Really? Is this how an authentic cultural institution is developed?

With respect to urban context, iconic projects are promoted as city catalysts attracting tourists and visitors. While many have attracted large amounts of visitors, this should not be the driving factor.

In its eagerness to achieve global city status, Sydney’s cultural institutions aspire to similar aspirations. Look no further than the relocation of the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta bolstering the state government’s focus on Western Sydney (seats), or the Art Gallery of NSW’s iconic SAANA-designed Sydney Modern soon to intrude onto Sydney’s Domain.

Both projects appear to proceed in the absence of a broader *cultural strategy*, or cohesive public process informed by relevant experts. While the Sydney Modern is the result of an international design competition,

judged by highly-esteemed (mainly architectural) jurors, what *cultural strategy* guided the brief that includes a large commercial conference facility and extensive ‘observation platform’ that double the land take of the institution?

What holistic strategy underpins the removal of most of the Powerhouse collection from its growing cultural and education precinct in Ultimo? Even the Chief Executive of Museums and Galleries NSW has questioned the wisdom of such a move. The public consultation process comes after a ‘business case’ that has already decided the relocation. An extended business case is currently being prepared by the state government agency Property NSW. Without a logical and transparent process, one could be forgiven for thinking a political and commercial imperative to move to Western Sydney, as well as gain ‘highest and best’ use from a government piece of real estate, is the real driver.

‘This isn’t good enough – a rigorous open process should guide the development of our public cultural institutions. Is such a thing possible in a global market context? The Berlin State Museums developed a *cultural strategy* guided by an expert position paper, public debate, a museum precinct masterplan as well as design competitions for buildings and the precinct’

### Develop a cultural strategy!

This isn't good enough – a rigorous open process should guide the development of our public cultural institutions. Is such a thing possible in a global market context? It seems to be in Berlin where, in contrast to Sydney, the Staatliche Museen Zu Berlin (Berlin State Museums) developed a *cultural strategy* guided by an expert position paper, public debate, a museum precinct masterplan as well as design competitions for buildings and the precinct. While Berlin is very different to Sydney, both have similar imperatives to expand cultural institutions more broadly throughout their city – addressing growth in Sydney's case, and reconnecting a city split in two in the case of Berlin.

A brief look at the Berlin case is instructive:

1. In 1999, Staatliche Museen Zu Berlin had the task of bringing together the city's 16 museums and collections distributed amongst 25 buildings throughout the city. The first step was to develop a *position paper*. This set off an intense and controversial discussion amongst experts as well as in the media, engaging the broader community. The paper underpinned a cultural strategy linking museums buildings and collections.
2. A masterplan was then developed bringing together collections separated by the Second World War and Cold War, acknowledging the evolving culture, history and politics of the city. As a result, the architectural design of individual buildings and location of collections were informed by broader cultural and urban considerations guided by expert bodies.
3. Concurrent with the masterplan, there was an architectural design competition for the Neues Museum, centrepiece and linking element of the museum precinct. The finalists varied considerably, from Grassi's conservative winning proposal to Gehry's more radical intervention. The expert panel was not in agreement with the winning scheme by Grassi. An intense period of discussion ensued as the masterplan progressed. The competition highlighted challenges rather than the solution.
4. A commission of experts including representatives of the museums and preservation bodies focussed on the Gehry and Chipperfield entries. As the discussion progressed, the runner-up Chipperfield was considered the strongest. As a result, Chipperfield with the conservation expert Julian Harrap was commissioned to develop the scheme and respond to the masterplan. The masterplan framework underpinned the final choice of scheme.

### Conclusion – lessons for us

The Berlin process resulted in the institution being far more than the sum of its parts illustrating the importance of developing cultural buildings in a broader context. In the case of Sydney, we would do well to develop a cultural strategy underpinned by a well-considered position paper that could constructively take forward Sydney's current debate regarding the Powerhouse Museum, the Art Gallery of NSW and more broadly, cultural facilities for Western Sydney. Doing so would engage the broader community informed by a multidisciplinary range of experts, as appears to have worked in Berlin.

Alex Lloyd\*

#### HAVE YOUR SAY

Public survey for the Art Gallery of NSW expansion:  
[www.research.net/r/KXMZKLX](http://www.research.net/r/KXMZKLX)

Public consultation for the New (Powerhouse) Museum at Parramatta:  
<https://new.maas.museum/consultation>

EOIs for positions on NSW Chapter Committees will be open soon ...  
your opportunity to be part of the answer. More info: <http://bit.ly/2z19x32>

# Committees are *not* the answer

Dear Ed,

The Committee has convened again to discuss this question. We have continuing concerns around the phrasing of the issue, which page of the *Bulletin* it will appear on and the standard of the sandwiches provided at the said meeting. We have determined the best way forward is the formation of a Working Group and a Reference Panel, both pending a stakeholder engagement process and several rounds of ministerial review. Probably looking at 18–24 months to resolve this. Hoping this works with your deadlines.

All the best,

CANTACT (Committees Are Not The Answer  
Committee Tribunal)

# Architecture is potentially *not* all about the 1%

WORKING for the elites, we put our client interests first and in that process also take part in depleting natural resources, actively fostering inequality and bluntly ignoring people who live in the built environment. Amongst tight deadlines and rash construction programs, we barely have time to produce drawings of quality. We do not have time, scope or money to explore options for the greater good of the society. And so architecture cannot be for anyone other than the 1% who put pay in our pockets.

Even if you believe some architects think beyond the wellbeing of their clients, it is important to note here that the law forbids architects from feigning expertise in areas outside of their sphere of knowledge. While we would never produce a structural drawing or a geotechnical report, we somehow dare to presume that we are experts in politics, economics and human behaviour in urban and social constructs. This is where the argument stems from that architects should participate in disaster reconstruction, slum upgrading, urban regeneration or in addressing social issues. Those few architects who step outside the regular profession of architecture and step into working on sensitive projects and environments listed above, risk doing more harm than good. The fragile context of such projects also means that any harm done will reverberate much longer after the architect has left the scene.

We are not engineers. We are not scientists. We are not builders and therefore contrary to our popular belief, we also do not bring practical solutions to any issue. It is inevitably true that good design is much more than aesthetics. Unfortunately, architects are also not good at good design. The problem begins right from our university education. Architectural pedagogy focuses

heavily on the virtue of beauty, vague adjectives and post-rationalised design narratives. It disregards, in most cases, the social impact of design on the built environment and the practicalities of constructing a building. With almost no realistic understanding of the complexities of the built environment, we enter into practices who merely use us for our skills in CAD software. To keep the 1% happy, we willingly devalue ourselves and the profession. We expect our employees to put in hours and hours of unpaid overtime work so we can stick to the unrealistic deadlines imposed by our clients. We generate an environment in the practice that does not encourage our employees to think, to be creative, and to question the urban, social and environmental imprints of our design.

Architecture is and will always be for the 1%, but that doesn't have to be a grim fact. In any given context, the law of the vital few acknowledges that the 1% we work for, has a much larger capacity to influence change than the other 99%. If architects are good at something, that would be in pitching our ideas and in winning projects by selling the dream. After revamping our education system and the way we practice, what if we could spend 1% of our time in selling an altruistic vision to our projects? And influence our clients to engage specialists in economics, anthropology and climate science in building projects with real value to 100% of the world's population. Maybe one day we can influence our clients to not just care about our project's immediate context but to even produce quality housing for the most vulnerable of the earth's population, addressing climate change and so on.

Anonymous 1

# Architecture is all about the 1%

Unfinished mathematical equation to support the business case for an irrelevant profession:

1% of the population who are architects  
work with 1% of the population  
who are clients of architects  
to deliver 1% excellence  
in 1% of buildings  
which form 1% of the built environment  
concentrated in 1% of Sydney  
servicing 1% of the needs of the population  
experienced by 1% of people ...

Anonymous 2

# Forget the building: focus on the city

## On Sirius



'What kind of culture refuses to value its own treasures?... a culture which destroys its own treasures will end with no culture at all.'  
– Elizabeth Farrelly<sup>1</sup>

SYDNEY is blessed with many cultural 'treasures', not least its wealth of heritage buildings. The city's heritage places reveal much, not only about the lives, hopes and aspirations of their builders but also of those who have campaigned for their protection. Elizabeth Farrelly's warning that the destruction of such treasures will end in the destruction of culture, and perhaps even result in the demise of the city itself is stark. The controversy surrounding the fate of Sydney's brutalist Sirius building suggests that we haven't learnt the lessons of the Green Bans of the 1970s which fought against threats to Sydney's heritage fabric and integrity. Such a failure to learn from past lessons is perhaps an indictment on our elected representatives but is also a reflection of the emerging armchair activism of our time, possibly in equal parts.

Sirius stands today as a representation of a social housing model reflective of an equality which stands in opposition to so much of the international politics of our day. Located between The Rocks and Millers Point precincts, it also stands at the heart of the districts saved by the community activism of the Green Bans, a series of crippling union strikes, which sought to protect working-class residential areas from developers' interests. What we see today are similarly short-sighted plans for large-scale demolition and redevelopment of the site, favouring short-term economic return rather than long-term cultural and social values.

The plight of the Sirius building has been much publicised. Nominated for listing on the State Heritage Register by a Council of experts appointed by the NSW Government, listing was subsequently denied by the Minister responsible for the care and protection of NSW's heritage.

The fate of Sirius and its single remaining long-term resident is unsecured. In August this year, the State Government remained determined to disregard the long-established assessment process by filing a notice of intention to appeal the Land and Environment

High Court's ruling that former Minister for Heritage Mark Speakman had 'side-stepped the required assessment'. In October, the NSW heritage minister Gabrielle Upton also decided not to heritage list the Sirius building.

In terms of heritage, this building is not more significant than its city. Indeed, the precinct around Sirius has equally been recognised for its heritage significance through the listing of the Millers Point Conservation Precinct. The two are intrinsically linked. The debate for the retention of Sirius does, however, present the argument that the city is at risk when one of its recognised treasures is disregarded and the cultural values which define the wider city are threatened in turn.

There is a real risk that, if permission to demolish is granted, the disregard exhibited for the cultural and social significance of this heritage place will prove a catalyst and precedent for a dilution of the values and fabric of The Rocks and Millers Point more broadly. For example, there is every chance that to maximise returns from the divestment of Sirius, developers will seek to increase the building height to exceed that of the current building envelope. Such a move would contravene the intent of the controls established by the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority Scheme of building height envelopes, established following the Green Bans to ensure the setting and context of the nationally significant precincts of The Rocks and Millers Point. Moves to circumvent these controls seem likely since it is already being tested across other divestment sites throughout The Rocks.

Our politicians tell us this development opportunity is of more value to the city than the building. This Sirius case demonstrates that for politicians and developers, an economic return above any other consideration is of highest value to them.

Is the economic gain of the city more important than this building? As part of a larger debate, one must not consider and compare the city or the building in isolation. Rather than

simply acknowledging that a city is the sum of its parts, it must be recognised that these parts extend beyond that of individual buildings, and indeed beyond the fabric and people that shape our urban environment. It extends to an understanding of the evolution and history of our society, where buildings are more than mere markers of architectural periods and styles, but reminders of past social policy, politics (both good and bad), the communities they served and the activism they inspired. Understanding the significance of a place extends beyond aesthetics and the politics of any term of government.

The Save our Sirius campaign is important not only for its aim to protect this significant building but in maintaining the integrity of the planning assessment processes and the controls intended to protect and enhance our cities. As the Green Bans of the 1970s prove, we should recognise this because we've been here before. We armchair activists who sit in support of the Save our Sirius campaign and for what it represents more broadly, but haven't spoken or acted with the impassioned efforts of those dedicated to the campaign, should not be complacent in the face of the NSW Government's continued legal appeals. We need to remind our elected representatives that past community-led battles to save the 'treasures' of our cities *matter*. Now, as before, we continue to value legacy over short-term economic gain, and the destruction of these places risks undermining the very culture upon which our cities thrive.

Ms R U Sirius BArch\*

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Farrelly, 'The brutal truth: we're trashing Sydney's heritage', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 August 2016

# Focus on the city: forget the building

'The building is indeed more important than the city. But only when we are constructing the right type of building and retaining our important heritage: for social housing, schools and hospitals in areas of increased urban densification'

## Does Sydney have a soul?

CITIES are a complex agglomeration of buildings, infrastructure and green networks. The building, as the constituent part of the city, provides a layered history that mirrors circumstance and is the physical embodiment of an era. The building is also inherently linked to its context and often comes to define the city itself. The Eiffel Tower without the context of Paris makes no sense, nor does the Flatiron Building when not bound by the particular slicing diagonal geometry of Broadway, NYC intersecting the regular grid of Avenue and Street. The city defines the building. One would not exist without the other. Closer to home, the beauty and timeliness of Utzon's Sydney Opera House lie in its unique response to the sparkling water of the harbour and its majestic headland setting.

Sydney is a city that exists as considerably more than the sum of its notable buildings and iconic architecture. With a beating heart and fabulous outdoorsy lifestyle that is consistently rated in the top ten of world cities for its natural beauty, it has also been, up until the beginning of this decade, a place where an average person on an average wage could have afforded to buy or rent an ordinary house or apartment. But the housing affordability crisis has hit us hard. Home ownership has now been firmly struck from the wishlist of the majority of the population looking to enter the market for at least the next 40 years, according to the latest report from CEDA.<sup>1</sup>

And despite Sydney being in the midst of an apartment construction frenzy, driven by an exponential increase in the cost of housing, a booming population, strong economic growth, historically low-interest rates and a backlog of housing supply, homelessness is at an historic high. How can we continue to rate Sydney on the world stage if our basic human need is increasingly unaffordable?

On the recently removed tent city at Martin Place, the state government and City of Sydney throw accusations at one another about the housing affordability crisis. Lord Mayor Clover



Moore responded to Premier Gladys Berejiklian's request to move homeless people from Martin Place by suggesting that the premier should 'open Sirius and move people in - 77 homes are currently sitting empty in a building purpose-built for social housing. This would immediately resolve the issue in Martin Place'.<sup>2</sup>

Sirius is one of Sydney's iconic brutalist works, but it also provides much needed inner-city social housing. Its imminent removal from an increasingly gentrified inner city has woken the armchair clicktivists. The Save our Sirius campaign defends its namesake from a combination of relentless, hungry developers and the threat of destruction of a significant building. Selling the Sirius site is expected to make more than \$100 million, which would provide for many new social housing dwellings in NSW. However, a heritage listing and retention of Sirius could reduce the value of the site to \$70 million, therefore funding less social housing and causing the government to suffer 'undue financial hardship'.<sup>3</sup>

The building is indeed more important than the city. But only when we are constructing the right type of building and retaining our important heritage: for social housing, schools and hospitals in areas of increased urban densification. We need to do more than providing poorly constructed 'speccky' apartments jammed in without regard for access to public transport and critical services.

We need to rise above the petty partisan politics and point scoring at a local, state and federal level, where the time of the 'post-truth', and polarised politics means that we consume media that mostly accords with our view of the world. We need to advocate for the right type of building and the right type of sensitive, quality development; to house the people of the Martin Place tent city and provide dignity for less visible people pushed to the city fringe; to retain our assets and to protect our heritage; and to imagine new sustainable precincts developed for the needs of all.

While Sirius stands, it honours a city that cares for all socioeconomic levels, not just the higher echelon. It embodies a city with a soul. Are we headed towards a megalopolis full of iconic architecture that is unable to effectively house its people, where 'superscrapers loom uptown in all their gehryglory'?<sup>4</sup> Or can Sydney retain its soul?

This is Sirius\*

- <sup>1</sup> 'Housing Australia', Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA), 2017
- <sup>2</sup> 'Blame game erupts over Sydney's tent city', Australian Associated Press, 1 August 2017
- <sup>3</sup> 'Sirius heritage saga headed back to court', *ArchitectureAU*, 24 August 2017
- <sup>4</sup> Kim Stanley Robinson, *New York 2140* (Orbit, 2017)

Photo: Rob Senior / Instagram @rob.senior.1

# Heritage belongs to the past

WE have three options in considering where heritage belongs. There is the past, where the building was created to fulfil a need at that time. There is the present, where we often find that the function has become superseded and the building is now redundant, but we continue to debate whether it has heritage significance as a built record of that moment in time. Then there is 'the future', which inherits a list from 'the present' of buildings which are deemed culturally significant enough to override the fact they are obsolete.

As time progresses, our catalogue of built history to be preserved grows. Much of this, particularly civic, is located in what were once small towns but are now thriving cities that are already facing enormous pressure. With more than half the world's population now living in urban centres, we are increasingly reliant on our built environment to address a range of social and environmental issues around density, infrastructure, liveability and affordability. Consequently, our urban centres need to be able to adapt and evolve quickly to meet the rapidly changing needs of our population and create vibrant, healthy communities. This raises a serious question around the cost of preserving buildings that no longer perform. In environments where developable space is finite, is it sensible to put relics before people?

Density is our major challenge, and available space is our limiting factor in addressing it. The choice to preserve a heritage building will be at the direct expense of new buildings that are smarter, more efficient and better placed to respond to current needs and expectations. Preserving heritage for its own sake will become a luxury that we cannot afford. This isn't to say that there is no value in heritage, but rather that we cannot have everything – we cannot preserve all of our historic building stock, and also miraculously make more space in our city centres to facilitate urbanisation in a socially and environmentally responsible manner. We need to be increasingly ruthless about what part of our heritage is preserved for the future, and what remains in the past.

Architecture and cities are about people, and

whether our buildings respond to their current and future needs should be the ultimate measure of their value. If a heritage building can perform to current expectations, then it remains relevant and is more than a museum piece. However, it is rare for this to be the case without substantial (and often unfeasible) levels of alterations that planning controls are loath to permit in any case. The irony for heritage buildings and their potential for adaptive reuse is that the very alterations required to make them perform, are inversely related to their heritage value, which diminishes as 'authenticity' and 'intactness' are compromised. As such, it is near impossible for a building to be both a high value and complete heritage symbol, and also perform in a modern context. At their most fundamental levels, heritage (a record of the past) and progression (anticipating future needs) are at odds: the degree to which a building can represent one will always compromise the other.

So the catch-22 is that our heritage buildings must either be altered to a point where their heritage value is significantly compromised and they retain only token significance, or be enshrined in their high value, 'original-but-obsolete' state that serves no current purpose and sees them fall into a state of neglect and disrepair. This is particularly the case where heritage buildings are privately owned, and the owners have little incentive to shoulder the financial burden of maintaining a building that isn't allowed to work for them. Even if the alterations required to address functionality and performance are permitted, there are practical limits on the degree to which this is feasible. The residual code compliance issues around universal access, fire safety and egress are much harder to retrospectively correct, and the implications of this are significant. We have recently seen the devastating outcomes that nonconforming buildings and building materials can have for life and safety, yet heritage buildings are often allowed dispensations that preserve a building's heritage features ahead of human life and dignity.

This is not to say there is no place for

heritage in the future, but rather that cities do not have limitless space and a choice to preserve an underperforming building is at the expense of future possibility. Buildings should be judged on merit and not preserved purely for nostalgic purposes, as our cities strive to reconcile competing pressures of density, amenity and environmental outcomes to create a socially sustainable future. Symbols and information can be reflected in new structures to retain a sense of history, and the opportunity that augmented reality and 3D scanning present to record our built history without the space penalty may enable us to eventually have the best of both worlds. However, in the end, the fundamental issue remains that space is too limited to preserve buildings that don't perform, and the more you adapt a heritage building to make it perform, the less of its heritage value remains. Inescapably and by its very definition, heritage is about the past. Whereas the future of our cities is about the needs of our future population, not their ancestors.

Zelda Zeitgeist\*

**'Architecture and cities are about people, and whether our buildings respond to their current and future needs should be the ultimate measure of their value'**



Photo: Ash Rehn



# Heritage does *not* belong to the past



HERITAGE, as an indelible part of our cultural identity, does not belong in the past. Being a tangible resource and the embodiment of our culture, items of historic significance contribute to the evolution of a rich and meaningful society. Consequently, the value we place on the identification and protection of our urban environments, retained for prosperity and free from prejudice no matter their age, is an indication of how mature and civilised we can be.

So what happens to the future of a society where items of cultural significance are deliberately replaced with new developments for short-term economic gain? This fragility can best be seen in Sydney where the current relationship between the actions of the NSW Government has placed undue risk on the future of our national identity. As the ultimate in 'heritage bigotry', this government has compromised many items of historic significance, including our most recent heritage, buildings in the brutalist aesthetic.

Interestingly the current NSW Government have assumed the importance of 'national building' at the exclusion of long-term cultural prosperity or benefit. Through its endorsement of Westconnex, an over-engineered and anti-urban traffic solution, this government has undertaken a project without due consideration of the cultural or urban values of the city. It involves the destruction of many important historic Sydney suburbs – including Haberfield, North Strathfield and the eastern edge of Rozelle, together with the marooning of the socially significant Sydney Park. Creating Australia's largest infrastructure project and promoting it as being in the 'public interest' the NSW Government will initiate Sydney's newest swathe of urban blight.

Located outside of Central Station on Eddy Avenue is a fabric screen concealing a portion of Sydney's newest light rail infrastructure under construction. Printed on the screen are the words 'building on our past, creating a better future'. Suggesting a role and importance for heritage in the city's future, this proclamation is mere rhetoric. Regrettably, the

detail of this light rail system, linking Circular Quay with Kensington past Central Station and incorporating oversized rolling stock (with a rail gauge unable to be integrated into an existing system) will unduly impact on many heritage-rich Sydney streetscapes and public parklands.

As items of historic significance are being lost across Sydney, any coherent or intelligent argument for future proofing the values of our culture finds little ground. Of concern here are the ethics of the political decision in the future of our culture. Consider the opinions established by the current NSW Treasurer Dominic Perrottet on his ministerial social media site in late 2016. Setting a new standard in cultural ignorance, these comments verified his prejudice towards the public brutalist buildings of Sydney. Describing them as aesthetically worthless, this 'coincidentally' occurred at a time when the NSW Government were 'disposing of' – that is, being sold off for land value only – a number of our culturally significant public brutalist projects. These include Bidura Children's Court (1984), Sirius Apartments (1980) and the Endeavour Housing Project (1976) within the Waterloo Housing Estate.

All too often the protection of our cultural assets (that is, heritage) assumes an apolitical stance in the face of stern anti-heritage agendas; and all too often we are witnessing historically-important architectural projects being treated as a 'commodity' in a rush for the government to redevelop public assets. This attitude has seen the demolition of the Exhibition Building (1989) and the Convention Centre (1988), both being architecturally significant public projects at Darling Harbour. In addition to this, the state government envisages to relocate the Powerhouse Museum (1988) to Parramatta, to enable this public asset at Ultimo to be 'repurposed' for new private uses. Also, the political decision to remove various government departments from the Lands Department Building (1892) and the Department of Education building (1914) in support for the adaptation of these sites for mere privatised hotel use is a gamble that will

continue to alter the multidimensional aspect of our city.

The political decisions for these new developments are but only economically determined and it seems that any analysis of heritage impact is undertaken as a part of a post-rationalising process. As the NSW Government operates a heritage management system (via the NSW Heritage Office), it should be expected that the government would set the standard for recognising and retaining our heritage. Importantly the actions of this administration and its ministers must indeed be held accountable as they have denied the recognition (or even provide the necessary statutory protection) for many of our significant items: consider the current politicised debacle with the Sirius Apartments.

Can heritage, as representative of our collective cultural aspirations, survive in this current political climate? At a time of unquestionable change, it is imperative to remind the NSW Parliament and the ministerial 'taste makers' who make the decisions on our behalf, just how short-sighted and obstructionist they have become. Their economic criteria are not the only processes by which to organise the future of our human environments. In the 'Better Placed' policy, the reinvented NSW Government Architect has presented an alternative strategy. Arguing for good design, this document confirms that as a society we must undertake good design that recognises all aspects of heritage if we are to maintain our national identity. Far from being nostalgic and yearning for things 'old', this intelligently written document should be read by every minister in the NSW Government. They will be presented with the truism that heritage has more worth for the future of our culture than a sanitised and uncivilised society based on business accountancies.

Heritage is indeed at the heart of our national culture, so how can it belong to the past?!

Béton Brut\*

# If it *doesn't* consume you, you aren't doing it right

I am writing this article on a Sunday. In front of me, I have coffee, cake and a morning of cancelled plans – all clear signs of an unbalanced existence.

This hasn't always been the case. For a while, I subscribed to the ridiculous notion that I could somehow achieve balance. Preached by Sunday paper lift outs and HR gurus, I believed in the commonly-held idea that I could eat well, live well and be well; lean in, but not fall over. I was made to feel like there was a magical equilibrium that I could reach.

But work and life aren't two sides of some neatly balanced equation. They are slippery and imprecise. And the reality is that work – with its demands and relentless calendar invites – often takes precedence.

Sure, life should sometimes win this relentless tug-of-war. But, the rest of the time, we might as well embrace the full pelt of a life in architecture. It's more fun, more fulfilling and ultimately more realistic. These days, I am imbalanced on purpose.

We all know the common reasons for imbalance in our industry: long hours, low pay, unreasonable demands from employers and clients, and a competitive culture that places perfection on a pedestal. While I don't support any of these things, they are all factors that make work/life balance almost impossible.

Outside of these challenges, architecture still takes grit, conviction and commitment. As an industry, we favour immersion over detachment. We do unpaid competitions, agree to the extra render, and don't flinch at redrawing a bathroom ten times. This makes absolute sense when you are trying to do the best work that you're capable of and when the process itself motivates you.

The upside of this is that, at its best, architecture enriches both our work and our lives. Balance is meant to be about making

time for other passions and hobbies like gardening or fly fishing.

What happens when your work and your passion are the same? What if you find joy in perfecting a problem or puzzling over a junction? Or if you turn around and notice it's quarter past seven and you've lost track of time? According to some, this is a bad thing – imbalanced and compulsive and crazed. Ironically, this is the kind of work that psychologists salivate over – the 'flow state' that demonstrates complete immersion in a task. Architecture can do this to us, and that's something to be celebrated, not reprimanded.

Of course, there is more to life than architecture, and sometimes there is no better feeling than muting your calls to sit down, drink wine and watch Netflix. Architecture is a job and a hobby, a passion and a project. It defines our social networks and lays out our travel plans. It makes our hearts soar and our blood boil. And this is a wonderful thing. When something gives you that much meaning and purpose, who cares if it throws the balance off?

Choosing imbalance is the best way to move through this industry, but it inevitably requires compromise and sacrifice. We set our alarm clocks early to head off to a site, send emails outside of hours, and sign up for talks and committees. We give our time and energy, and our profession gives back.

As my wise and wonderful mother once said to me: 'you can have it all, you just can't have it all at once'. Sometimes you'll be frantic and sometimes you'll be calm. Sometimes you'll be elated and sometimes exhausted. There are no simple binaries, no magical scale. Rather, there's a pendulum that oscillates wildly in all directions at once.

Duke Silver\*

'The pivot to this question is not to undermine the value of our emotional investment or deny our willingness to offer it, but instead, to avoid the risk of it consuming us'

# If it consumes you, you aren't doing it right

ONE thing that sets our profession in sharp distinction from many others is its inherent reliance on our generosity of spirit. The success of projects seems to rely upon the emotional investment we make over and above the professional investment. Is it time to withdraw the favour? Should we begin to treat the creative endeavour purely as part of the commercial transaction? It seems fair that architecture should demand much in the way of professional investment. The stakes are high; projects are increasingly complex, expensive and resource-intensive. The results persist for decades and profoundly shape the lives of the people who occupy them.

The risks of failure correspond to these high stakes, and the professional satisfaction derived from negotiating the pitfalls is for many something akin to cage diving with sharks – part adrenaline rush, part survival reflex.

We're all aware of the requisite five years of tertiary education, the two-year indentured registration process and the commitment to lifelong learning through compulsory professional development. It's a significant professional investment, nothing less than that made by our peers the doctors and lawyers. But the intriguing thing here is our apparent willingness not only to submit to the professional commitment but to make a similar emotional investment alongside it. And perversely perhaps, this is the very thing that tends to lift architects and architecture above the pack.

All great projects derive their greatness – at least in part – from the emotional and creative investment made by those involved in their conception. And typically, the beneficiaries of this emotional investment reside well outside the profession. At some level this is fine; ours is a profession evolved

through the humanist tradition, where architecture's cause is to improve society. However, there are problems with this situation, not least of which is that it's definitionally unsustainable. It tends to consume us. Particularly those amongst our younger ranks, and often at a point in life where decisions about partnering, family and homeownership begin to intercede.

Possessed with conviction and passion, we devote ourselves to projects at the expense of ourselves, our lives and loved ones. We probably all recognise friends and colleagues for whom this rings true. Those who lose sight of balance, or worse, who lose their 30s altogether.

The pivot to this question is not to undermine the value of our emotional investment or deny our willingness to offer it, but instead, to avoid the risk of it consuming us. Architecture (in its broadest sense) benefits from our spirit of generosity and our willingness to contribute beyond selfish interest.

Great architecture advances society, lifts the human spirit and defines the public interest, all exactly at a point in history where the forces of neoliberalism tend to diminish them. I look to a model of practice where all participants can offer their emotional and creative energy to make projects exceptional and deliver the social dividends that only architecture can. A mode of work-life that allows us to be intensely proud of the role we play within an increasingly sophisticated, intelligent, discerning, diverse and just society. Be driven, be uncompromising, be professional, be generous and selfless, be emotionally invested. Just don't be consumed.

Howard Roark\*

# Gender equity is *never* going to happen

IF you take the position that gender equity is embodied in actions that moderate and limit the impact of sex-based discrimination, then gender equity is already happening. It is present in advocacy, affirmative action and legislation. Given this, let's unpick the statement to develop the positive. In particular, the words gender, equity and happen.

## Gender

Gender is a loaded word. Surprisingly, Wikipedia captures this complexity by defining it as 'a range of characteristics pertaining to and differentiating between masculinity and femininity'.<sup>1</sup> The implied meaning of gender shifts depending on context. In its simplest form, gender refers to an individual's biological sex or intersex. It also encapsulates gender identity, which is how an individual understands themselves as either male, female, a blend of both or neither – and this may differ or be the same as their biological sex.<sup>2</sup> Finally, but not limited to, gender can illustrate societal structures which influence our understanding of what is appropriate behaviour for a woman and a man.<sup>3</sup> These structures exist in collections as small as a family or on a larger scale such as a business, city or country.

## Equity

In her article, *Why equity policy matters*, Naomi Stead drew from a discussion paper by the Australian Federation of Medical Women defining equity as 'the process of being fair to all genders and the varying roles they play'. Inherent to gender equity was the specific valuing of difference and diversity.<sup>4</sup> We are hardwired to understand difference, constantly scanning the field of people and categorising who is similar to us and who is not. At times, this can extend to a 'them and us' mentality energised by fear. Diversity attempts to capture this recognition of difference and celebrate it through acceptance, inclusion and respect. Alliances are built so that the sum of the parts are enriched by the layers of consideration.<sup>5</sup>

## Happen

Happen is past tense suggesting that a goal has been reached and no further action is required to bring about change. Happen also has associations with chance.

Will we, by chance, reach a point where we accept individuals for who they are and no longer be required to question our assumptions and expectations regarding gender?

In short, *no*. Whether by chance or not, we humans have not proven to be capable of such lofty heights. We will always need equity to actively check our potential to discriminate.

The most significant barrier to equity is reaching an agreement on the meaning of 'fair'. We all have a built-in radar for fairness, yet one's interpretation of fair is likely to be different to another. Transfer this to the group and task them to settle on an abstract, individualised belief – as well as the best approach to achieve it – and instantly you have a recipe for poor decision making and clarity of direction. At times, well-meaning groups charge forward and give measurable definitions for 'fair' only to receive backlash. For example, advocacy groups hold true that fair equals 50-50. Numerically, this makes sense. They argue that this is best achieved with quotas or targets, igniting a heated contest where the minutia of delivery is emotionally contended without acknowledging that the concept of fairness has not been agreed. Gender equity will not progress until 'fair' is understood without confusion. This is unlikely, best demonstrated by the existence of a legal system, which spends endless hours debating what is fair and reasonable. Even when defined in legislation, we aim for the wiggle room.

The influence of power and privilege controls the timing in our move towards an equitable world. In the field of architecture, historical, cultural and institutionalised systems result in power and privilege being assigned to the white male. Unfortunately for them, privilege naturally generates an element of blindness towards the struggles that others face. Some react to this with kindness and open eyes. Others fight the feeling of being accused when they don't feel responsible for the situation. There is no doubt that all leaders are 'good' people, but unless they consciously take responsibility for inherited systems and invest in readdressing biases, the patterns of inequity will not budge. Of all the reasons listed today, this change can occur – not by chance but by will.

'Gender equity will not progress until "fair" is understood without confusion. This is unlikely, best demonstrated by the existence of a legal system, which spends endless hours debating what is fair and reasonable. Even when defined in legislation, we aim for the wiggle room'

As a group, young women are a major hurdle for gender equity. Biologically they are women, but they have not yet been assigned the gendered roles of society and so they feed the discussion on the status of fairness towards women. For them, life is fair – in a 50-50 sense. Growing up, they were educated with ideals such as 'you can do anything'. However it is not right for adults to create aspirations without the social structures to make them real. Unless we stop feeding these pipedreams or significantly rewrite the rulebook for women post-30, we will delay change squandered in meaningless quarrels between the young and the old.

Assumptions around the biology of women continue to define the roles of women on the home front. Culture is slow to look beyond the 'mystery of motherhood' but mothers understand one constant: it is different for everyone. Those who have not borne children feed the mythology around the bond between the mother and child, and this generalisation restricts individuals to lead their own life.

Lastly, the tiredness epidemic shapes the time for advocacy. Gender equity will not happen by chance. The amount of work that women currently complete to maintain a household and develop career ambitions results in a level of exhaustion that leaves little space to question whether it is fair. The byproduct of exhaustion is acceptance of the status quo. Without men and women standing together in solidarity to adapt roles, women will continue to face challenges not faced by men.

And so, given our behavioural patterns, it is unlikely that gender equity will reach a point of 'no further action' in our lifetime. That said, if you want to prioritise equity, then you need to act. Nothing will ever take place unless you take responsibility for it. You're contributing to the barrier to fairness. What will you do?

Anne Shirley\*

## NOTES

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender>
- <https://www.hrc.org/resources/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-terminology-and-definitions>
- <https://othersociologist.com/sociology-of-gender>
- <http://archiparlour.org/policy/>
- <https://www.qcc.cuny.edu/diversity/definition>



# Gender equity is going to happen

ACHIEVING gender equity (women and men receiving equal treatment) will happen – it's only a matter of time – and will be by raising awareness and fighting ignorance. It will happen at a different pace in different locations and the prevailing culture will influence the timing for change.

Equity will evolve and resolve as a consequence of people being fundamentally fair and reasonable when presented with compelling information. Facts indicate that women and men are much closer in ability and capability than is reflected in the opportunity each has been historically afforded. It's not to say that a 50-50 representation equates to equity, but it does say that we should be more open to current situations and future opportunities being considered in more transparent and creative ways so that discrimination is removed.

I believe that chasing numbers is wasted energy and counterproductive. Imposing outcomes will not achieve a sustainable form of equity; equity extends beyond gender and needs to be accommodating of all sorts of differences. It's about accepting people on an equal footing, removing the lens of bias, acknowledging strengths and weaknesses and responding in a fair manner.

**'The path is inevitable and I believe that the next ten years could prove a tipping point throughout many parts of the world'**

As a society, we have evolved exponentially over the past 100 years and I do not doubt that we will continue at an even higher pace and a global level in the foreseeable future. To become more enlightened (and I believe we will) we will need to draw on more significant capabilities and experience. With new found freedoms, women will have so much more to contribute across every level of society, be it from a unique perspective, innate toughness or a natural ability to nurture creative thought. The skills are complementary and supplementary, the resource is untapped and the possibilities are limited by imagination only. The desire to look at gender equity as 'the right thing to do' on a comparative basis, will be supplanted by the realisation that women have an incredible amount of diversity and uniqueness to contribute.

You only need to chart gender equity over the past 500 years, by geography and culture, and you will see a steady but inevitable advancement. Voices are being heard, ignorance is slowly being washed away, awareness is coming to the fore and changes are being made.

While ignorance and fear of the unknown have been the greatest hindrance to the speed of change, I feel that technology has given us all resource to individual expression and incredible amounts of varied information. This alone provides an excellent platform for testing opinion, holding us all accountable and exposed to new ways of thinking.

To date, some cultures and workplaces have embraced the opportunity of gender equity seamlessly, while others have struggled. The path is inevitable and I believe that the next ten years could prove a tipping point throughout many parts of the world.

Once equity is achieved at the point of making decisions, and it becomes embedded in our everyday consciousness, the numbers will become irrelevant. The numbers pendulum will swing and will forever reflect a combination of circumstance, environment and politics.

It will not be a discussion about them and us, so much as about people. It will be about respecting individuals and giving space for each to thrive and the collective will be all the better for being inclusive and supportive.

It's not a question of whether gender equity will happen, it's merely a question of how long it takes for humanity to inevitably evolve into this space.

Celeste\*

Gold Medallists of the Australian Institute of Architects from the last 20 years (left to right from the top): Roy Simpson (1997), Gabriel Poole (1998), Richard Leplastrier (1999), John Morphett (2000), Keith Cottier (2001), Brit Andresen (2002), Peter Corrigan (2003), Gregory Burgess (2004), James Birrell (2005), Kerry Hill (2006), Enrico Taglietti (2007), Richard Johnson (2008), Ken Maher (2009), Kerry Clare and Lindsay Clare (2010), Graeme Gunn (2011), Lawrence Nield (2012), Peter Wilson (2013), Phil Harris and Adrian Welke (2014), Peter Stutchbury (2015), ARM Architecture (2016)

# Instagram is making architecture dumb

IT would be convenient to default to Marshall McLuhan's *The Medium is the Message* in any discussion of Instagram and the chimera of multiple other new digital platforms. But the medium is always what you make of it, and the content can have a broader value than the means of its transmittal. It's easy to get caught up in the clickbait, which in a microsecond has superseded the flickbait that used to characterise the dreamy page turning through magazines.

Instagram is symptomatic of the contemporary 'information overload' problem that is undermining our ability to fixedly concentrate on a single intellectual task. This applies not only to scrolling through feeds but also to the careless and clueless posting of mediocre images, with trite or absent commentary. Like many other platforms, there is also the tedium of endless advertising or wan self-promotion. Vacuous is as vacuous does.

Of course, it doesn't have to be like this. Like any other media, Instagram can be used to delight, engage, inform and broaden our knowledge and understanding. It can help to discover quirky angles on life, nature, things and places. Some personal favourites include the erudition of @shftoptplus (Phillip Arnold), the activism of @phuong\_lead (Phuong Le), the backlane compositions of @michaelwardharvey (Michael Harvey), the treasure trove of @combconstruction (Scott Burchell) or the classical beauties @rodeia.pt (Joao Belo Rodeia), amongst other cluey Instagrammers. Some of these people I have never met, but feel an affinity with – yawn 'connectedness' – through the interest in their posts.

As Instagram is here and now, best to use it with your intellect engaged and imagination twiggled.

The Streetwalker \*

'Instagram is symptomatic of the contemporary "information overload" problem that is undermining our ability to fixedly concentrate on a single intellectual task'



hillthalsaup What am I and what am I for? Call for guesses in our Cryptic structures 1 Quiz #northrocks #parkstructure #steelframe  
cmooresydney Cricket practise concrete structure for limited space bowling practise /or similar ... @hillthalsaup  
aperture\_dan Delinquent shade structure. narkin\_design Field sport dug-out.  
mueller6684 Food vans?  
simeonking COLA? Standing room only  
garyhennessyarch Picnic shelter  
tomekarcher Public carport  
64 likes  
JULY 13  
Add a comment...



hillthalsaup Lemur House next to their play ground at Taronga Zoo. Hill Thalys with JILA. photo Alex Rink #taronga zoo @janeirwin\_landscape @adriankmchan @shellatawalo @tarongazoo @muzzah13 #lemur #lemurs @guckmal adriankmchan #funkyroofs #greenroof #architecture  
mhalthystocome Love your zoos work guys!  
hillthalsaup The highlight windows face east, north and west to capture sunlight for the lemurs  
streetsofour\_town So bloody good philippa\_bateman So great!!! You should see what the poor lemurs at London Zoo had to put up with  
guywphoto great stuff 🙌  
222 likes  
FEBRUARY 24  
Add a comment...



hillthalsaup A deep, thick, hovering, billowing roof with tiny pin pricks of light - and such an unexpected sense of intimacy #candlepas #mosque  
#Australianarchitecture #concrete #vault #dome #corner #inpraiseofshadows  
sithlordlim The most informative photos I've seen of this. to date @hillthalsaup  
hillthalsaup Very tricky to photograph @sithlordlim - particularly hard to shoot the room today as the dome is scaffolded...impossible to convey the slight of hand it plays on terms of scale - feels epic and tiny all at once!  
will.fung Sooooo gooooooood!  
telly\_theodore Bravo indeed  
hillthalsaup #angelo\_candas  
ournewhomecoach A bit Escher-like  
262 likes  
SEPTEMBER 4  
Add a comment...



hillthalsaup More fantastic lanterns made for the protest against @WestCONnex motorway. Great show of strength by community against regressive 1950's-era anti-urban disasters #stopwestconnex @nowestconnex #protest #cityofsydney #motorwaymadness #tollways graceful\_dab I'm trying to see @nowestconnex but it doesn't seem to exist. neue.lighting Lovely!  
85 likes  
JULY 23  
Add a comment...



hillthalsaup Living room of our Mountside House. looking towards the sea. Generous volume, framed views, ample sunlight, expressed construction. Photo @brettboardmanphotography #australianarchitecture #countryhouse #livingroom #toplight #highlightwindows #framedviews #expressedconstruction #structuralrationalism #landscapesetting #concretebeam #timberfloors #louvrewindows #timberdoors #balcony With thanks to @sdastructures and @janeirwin\_landscape  
margherita.rapin Fabulous  
lizburge Bliss  
mappellw Amazing!



michaelwardharvey Beaconsfield Lane  
 susannahillips How does Beaconsfield Lane keep on giving?  
 archsiden Very nice!  
 kmarchitect A mustard marvel  
 michaelwardharvey #killyourcity #citykillers #agameoftones #urbex #createexplore #exploretocreate #streetdreamsmag #neverstopexploring #featuremeinastagood #igersone #shoot2kill #streetshred #streetmobs #urbanphotography #streetphotography #streetexploration #urbanandstreet #imaginatones #streettogether #streetmagazine #streetmobs #instamagazine #twgrammers #shotaroundmag #killergams #superhubs #urbanromantix #shotaward #yngkillers #1stinstinct

202 likes  
 JUNE 9  
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michaelwardharvey • Following

michaelwardharvey Kissing Sydney National Trust, Observatory Hill 21 September 2017 #kissingsydney  
 photocat\_andrea Very nice indeed! 🍷🍷🍷  
 junglehammer Wow... can't wait 🍷  
 \_msminimal Stunning capture 🍷

227 likes  
 SEPTEMBER 9  
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michaelwardharvey • Following

michaelwardharvey Amy Street rorythearchitect Such fashionable colours in 2017  
 saraskring Beautiful shot.  
 format\_minimal fantastic composition  
 portcitysupply So nice.

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 AUGUST 30  
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michaelwardharvey Beaconsfield Lane katmade60 Nice!  
 michaelwardharvey Thanks @katmade60  
 roundthewayk 🍷  
 michaelwardharvey Thanks @roundthewayk  
 portcitysupply Nice!  
 micro\_cosmos 🍷🍷🍷  
 michaelwardharvey Thanks @portcitysupply and @excellent\_microcosms!  
 flyingarchitect 🍷  
 michaelwardharvey Thank you @flyingarchitect  
 lucycreagh Endangered species michaelwardharvey 'frail en

117 likes  
 MARCH 29, 2015  
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michaelwardharvey • Following

michaelwardharvey Challis Avenue. I designed these doors based on an original 1938 sketch by architect Chas Bohringer. The foyer was built smaller than the original scheme and the intended doors were never installed. It was a pleasure to finally realise a lovely Art Deco feature 70 years later.  
 sigglethoomph I love those doors  
 junglehammer Excellent work 🍷🍷  
 genevieveleilley Bravo  
 lucycreagh Toppen Micheal!!  
 lord\_fry Excellent!  
 nuhasaad1 Fabulous!  
 adamhaddow Love!!!!  
 guywphoto fantastic!  
 joescerri Fantastic work!

163 likes  
 FEBRUARY 27  
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# Instagram is *not* making architecture dumb

INSTAGRAM is not making architecture dumb. Instagram is connecting architecture with our community. And being connected to our community is what keeps architecture relevant, thriving and valued.

It's easy to argue that Instagram reduces architects' complex cultural and artistic output to an ephemeral low-res image, but that argument ignores how successful Instagram is at starting conversations. It may look like an echo-chamber; a fashion parade propped up by indiscriminate 'likers', but my experience tells me it's much more than that. Instagram connects us to a global audience. It connects us to other architects, to engineers, contractors, fabricators, artists. Perhaps most importantly, it connects our profession to future clients and business opportunities.

In the short time I have been on Instagram, I have been offered work, made genuine professional and personal connections, and been asked questions about architecture, about architects, about heritage. I've had my work hung in an art gallery and now, because of Instagram, I'm writing this. None of these things would have occurred if I wasn't connected, through Instagram, to an engaged and receptive community. A community of 'likers' sure, but what's wrong with positivity? The Instagram community may seem superficial, but in practice it is global, current, intelligent, passionate and dedicated.

My feed started out as a kind of documentary exercise, recording the laneways of inner Sydney. Straightforward elevations of the old dunny lanes and their honest, basic materiality. I rarely photographed known works of architecture, just the everyday unplanned stuff that we walk past every day. It has a charm of its own that I wanted to capture before it all gets rendered and painted mid-grey. Focusing on the diversity of materials in my neighbourhood, the photos developed into something more abstract, a kind of impression of the textures and colours of the area. Then I started adding new works of architecture, sometimes heritage items. On a deeper level, it also deals with visual perception. I only see from one eye, and that eye is not particularly good. The world to me is mostly flat with a shallow depth of focus; collage-like. I try to replicate this in my photos by limiting depth and perspective.

So you can 'read' my feed on any number of levels. It really depends on what you want to take from it. If you want it to be no more than a nice selection of colours, go for it. But if you want to read more into it, there's more to be found.

In short, Instagram gives us the opportunity to connect our profession with a global community. And that community wants to connect with us too.

And if that's dumb, then 🙄(ツ)🙄

Meh\*

*'It's easy to argue that Instagram reduces architects' complex cultural and artistic output to an ephemeral low-res image, but that argument ignores how successful Instagram is at starting conversations'*

'What is conclusive, is that architects seem to be preoccupied with the idea of doing work that is socially responsible and they hold themselves to this higher standard almost by choice'

# Architects do *not* lack a moral compass

WITH the recent news that architecture ranks in the top ten occupation categories for Australian teens of both genders, it hardly seems like the profession is in crisis. And yet, as a profession we remain interested in our relevance and reputation, unsure of our place among other trades and broader society.

In a panel discussion at the Royal Academy of Arts, titled 'Architecture and freedom: architectural ethics', panellist Anna Minton suggested that discussing 'public interest' rather than 'ethical considerations' is more conducive to meaningful discussion about ethics in architecture – as public interest is concerned with what constitutes public benefit and public good. In contrast, writer, journalist and broadcaster Jonathan Meades says 'there's nothing good about ethics, it's rather like sincerity, it depends what you're being sincere about, tyrants are sincere about genocide'. Meades is highlighting what we all know – that your morality is different to my morality and it will be different again to the next individual. Considering ethics as public interest is not a new idea, but it does form a useful framework for discussions as it elevates individual ideas about right and wrong to ways we can address ethics as a group.

*Architectural Review* editor Christine Murray has said that articles on ethics are popular among their readership. However, our debates about ethics in architecture are often clouded with no firm conclusions. What is conclusive, is that architects seem to be preoccupied with the idea of doing work that is socially responsible and they hold themselves to this higher standard almost by choice. Ethics and architecture don't need to inhabit the same sentence as Meades states, but somehow the two find their way entwined together at our insistence.

At the Boyd Foundation lecture in July 2016, Bijoy Jain spoke about the hand as a symbol of empathy for him in the creation of things. I believe it is this empathy that every architect offers regardless of the work undertaken and it is empathy that is the embodiment of ethics in architecture, giving us a solid moral compass.

## Architects and the community

2016 Venice Architecture Biennale curator Alejandro Aravena has spent most of his career responding to the housing crisis. He notes that 'these difficult, complex issues require professional quality, not professional charity' to deal with them. Aravena's best-known work involves housing for underserved populations and the influential 'half house' project, which involves the professional design and construction of half of a house and the occupants are left able to complete the remainder at a later date themselves when they have the means. The fact that Aravena was considered a deserving candidate for curating the Biennale is an indication of how seriously the architectural profession takes these issues.

Locally, we have seen the architectural community step up to defend the rights of public housing occupants in inner-city Sydney with the campaign to save the Sirius public housing complex, while the late Paul Pholeros and Healthhabitat showed that architects have both the skills and the interest in improving lives directly. Upending procurement methods can be another way in which architects can positively contribute to the community and

reduce housing costs (think Jeremy McLeod's Nightingale Housing). Radical architectural thinkers like Indy Johar are pushing the profession to cast our value in terms of social outcomes, rather than delivered projects. This is hardly the work of a profession that lacks a moral compass! Nor is this a belated response to a bad reputation: architectural thinkers have been engaged with issues of mass housing and social progress from the days of Ruskin through to early Modernism. The solutions proposed change; the moral compass that drives them does not.

## Architects and clients

Architects and clients have a reputation for ending on adversarial terms, being blamed for timing and cost overruns. I posit that this is a result of the architect's moral compass, not the lack of one. In an architect-supervised building contract, the architect switches from being the client's agent (in the legal sense) to a neutral arbiter who is nevertheless paid by only one side. The tension in this position amplifies the responsibility of the architect to act in good faith and to preserve the public good. It is somewhat inevitable that the fallout contaminates our reputation.

The title of 'architect' is regulated in Australia, and a key document is the Code of Conduct, which sets out expectations of professional behaviour. Morals, unlike ethics, originate with the individual and is concerned with what the individual determines to be 'right' and 'wrong'. However, those formulating the Act felt that ethical behaviour was so important as to be codified.

In the most severe cases, a complaint alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct can result in the architect being made to the relevant registrar. If the claim is upheld and an architect is found guilty of unsatisfactory professional conduct, they are placed on the register of disciplinary actions, which is publicly available for two years. In NSW, there are currently seven individuals on the disciplinary register. In 2013, there were at least 3,126 NSW registered architects; over 99.75% of these architects act in a way that is consistent with a moral compass and code of conduct. If anything, given the increase in registered architects in that time, the actual percentage of misconduct would be lower.

Architectural projects involve a wide range of people working together, and yet there is very little consideration given to the ethical obligations of developers, project managers and real estate agents. The architect, no longer a single author, has somehow managed to take on all of the public blame for questionable projects, rather than the owner or commercial imperatives, which may in fact have a larger role.

Richard Rogers has said that 'there's more to architecture than architecture'. Architects demonstrably have a moral compass, and it's not one that's been forced on them, with little taught about ethics at university. You may argue that as architects we are all motivated by different things, but I think we can agree that we are unanimously motivated to achieve significant outcomes for the end user.



'An attitude of "do it for the love of it" and "if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen" has created an industry which continues to reproduce itself: stale, pale, frail and male'

# Architects lack a moral compass



WHAT is a moral compass? Morality is widely understood to be shared social norms about right and wrong. Morality differs from ethics in that ethics may be externally imposed. While morality is typically individually held, morals are almost always socially implicated: how we behave towards others. A moral compass then is an innate sense of what is right and wrong. To suggest an entire category of people lack a moral compass is a serious charge. In the words of Steven Covey, 'we judge ourselves by our intentions and others by their behaviour'. Let us then judge the behaviour of architects with their clients, other professions and each other to see if this reflects the presence of a moral compass.

## Architects and their clients

Architects, at their most basic level of competence, conceptualise and communicate instructions about the layout and construction of buildings to third parties to build. This is typically on behalf of a client. Many architects rely on charm, and with experience become natural salespeople, taking advantage and manipulating their client's ignorance to secure their own work and profile at least at the front end. Architects spruik obscure awards they've won to clients without giving any context to the award, such as its history, who sponsors it, how many entries are received and how much it costs to enter. (And they'll often fib about how much the winning project cost too – can't scare off a future client with accurate costing information!) They greatly exaggerate their experience and capabilities and extend this to claims about their buildings. To truly see an architect's capacity for embellishment, simply compare a marketing render with 'active edges' and a finished, undoctored photo. This tendency to embellish the truth is deceit by another name.

The ego of architects is legendary, having been sent up in everything from *The Fountainhead* to 2016's *The Architect*. The latter tellingly used actual quotes from architects, including Gehry's infamous 'I don't know why people hire architects and then tell them what to do'. After all, we are a profession who use the term 'starchitect' without irony to refer to a special few. Architects always know better or know more than anyone else – the hallmark of a narcissist bolstering their sense of self. This ego-centrism also explains the architecture industry's obsession with competitions and awards with their identified winners.

Architects' attitude to client budgets are appalling in the extreme, they're frequently downright irresponsible: 'A budget – that's just a guideline, right? We'll look back and laugh at how small the budget was when we started. Once the client's fallen in love with this design, they'll find the money.' Many architects misrepresent the value of a build on DA forms as a favour to clients. Rather than appreciate the favour, clients now have concrete evidence that the architect can be influenced to lie – right before the architect shifts into an independent contract administration role.

In contrast, when architects lose projects it's never their fault: it's the client's fault for not understanding their vision, not having the budget to pay for the design, not listening to them. The common requirements of PI insurers that architects never admit fault when a client initiates a claim for professional negligence greatly exacerbate this natural incapacity for shame, guilt or remorse.

## That moron – architects and other professionals

Our development system is set up in an inherently combative manner: architects draw up plans, which are then judged by planners and lay people who may have no qualification other than physical proximity. Architects, with their understanding of light and privacy, are often frustrated by planning policies that can work in direct opposition to architectural principles (for example, 'living rooms should face the street for passive

‘Ego-centrism, absence of pro-social standards, lack of empathy and remorse, exploitation as a means of relating to others, manipulation and antagonistic behaviour ... are set out by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) as the clinical indicators of antisocial personality disorder. Sufferers of this are colloquially referred to as *sociopaths*’

surveillance’, with no consideration to aspect). As a result, many architects break planning rules, sparking hostile interactions with planners and neighbours alike. They see themselves as special and above the law.

Similarly, architects speak of allied professionals not as well-intentioned individuals committed to completing a sound and rewarding project to the best of their professional capacity but instead as obstacles to achieving their dream. Which sounds more like something you’d hear in the office?: ‘*The engineer/certifier/planner is fucking me with this fucking column/code/control*’ or ‘*Looks like I stuffed up but thankfully the engineer caught the mistake, so the job can continue*’. Yeah, I thought so. Let’s not even get started on the reputation of architects with builders.

#### Architects eat their own young

Architecture firms are approached on a regular basis by keen and desperate students willing to volunteer their time and skills for free, as they seek an edge in a competitive job market. Having the discipline to refuse these offers can be challenging, and I’m willing to bet more than one or two firms don’t quite manage to do it. That’s before we look at certain overseas firms that have set up in Australia recently and are notorious for accepting free labour. They go so far as to require ‘interns’ to supply their own laptop, software and commit to working six days a week for six months.

It’s unfair of me to point the finger at a single company and interns though – we all know larger firms (often characterised by their tendency to have acronym names) are basically pyramid schemes. There are steady reports of firms having informal policies about overtime, not ‘counting’ until 55 hours have been worked in a week, with promises about ‘coming in late tomorrow’. Staff work ridiculously long hours, proving their ‘commitment’ to the firm with the carrot of being made an associate, who will benefit in turn from the long hours of others. Mysteriously, by expertise, capacity and cultural fit, men were the better candidate for promotion to associate or partner – with back-of-the-envelope calculations estimating this occurrence 100+ times in a row over the past 30 years between our largest practices. An attitude of ‘do it for the love of it’ and ‘if you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen’ has created an industry which continues to reproduce itself: stale, pale, frail and male.

The ACA annual salary report continues to show over 10% of architects being being paid below award wages and 37% of graduates were being paid below the award – and that’s before superannuation and overtime are factored in. It seems that too many architects run a short calculation like this: ‘*The award calls for (say) \$28/hour for 38 hours, then seven hours overtime at 1.5 which works out at \$42/hour, so a 45-hour week should cost \$1358 ... Nah, I’ll pay \$30/hour on the basis of a 38-hour week, set up a culture where overtime is the norm (“firm buys dinner”), tell*

*them the award doesn’t apply because they earn more than the minimum wage and pocket the \$218 difference. Multiply by 48 weeks and 20 staff, and there’s a nice extra \$200,000 in “profit”. The more they work, the more I profit.*’ Not strong evidence of a moral compass.

There’s also a healthy grapevine among women in architecture that transmits information on which high-profile architects are known to exclusively hire attractive, young female grads; be ‘close talkers’ after a wine or two at a conference; and who should never be left alone with students or are just plain creepy. Also on this grapevine are which firms that always seem to promote young men and only ever send the female grads to get lunch, while shunting them to interiors. This is not the sign of a healthy profession with a strong moral compass.

#### Architects and society

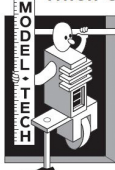
Globally, architects have been involved in planning the infrastructure for many horrific crimes: Auschwitz gas chambers; solitary confinement and execution units in some prisons; migration detention centres; and torture chambers in some jurisdictions. While many professions require members to abstain from engaging in work that may breach human rights, there appears to be no restriction on architects by their professional bodies. Attempts to encourage membership organisations to create prohibition clauses for their membership have not yet succeeded. The internal morality and the attempted imposition of an external ethics code have both failed to prevent architects from contributing towards the design of inhumane conditions for their fellow humans.

#### But what does this mean?

Many of the characteristics outlined above – ego-centrism, absence of pro-social standards, lack of empathy and remorse, exploitation as a means of relating to others, manipulation and antagonistic behaviour, deceitfulness, callousness, hostility, irresponsibility, impulsiveness and risk-taking – are set out by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) as the clinical indicators of antisocial personality disorder. Sufferers of this are colloquially referred to as *sociopaths*. It’s not just that architects demonstrably lack a moral compass. It’s that our behaviour is demonstrably linked to pathological characteristics that should really have you worried. Although you probably think that you’re special and different to those other architects that I’ve described above, don’t you?

The Brick Thrower\*

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# PROTECTION AND STYLE IN BELLEVUE HILL

Function, not just form was on the minds of a family in Bellevue Hill in Sydney's eastern suburbs when selecting the Markilux MX-1 Galaxy awning.

The awning incorporates several functions not seen in most folding arm awning systems including a drop valance, led lighting strips and individual spot lighting.

"This drop valance is the main reason the MX-1 was chosen as it offers the greatest projection with a drop valance," commented Kieran Keen, head of marketing for Markilux Australia.

"The size of the awning is 7000 x 3870 mm, although the projection can go to 4370mm, making the MX-1 pretty much the biggest and most advanced single awning on the market."

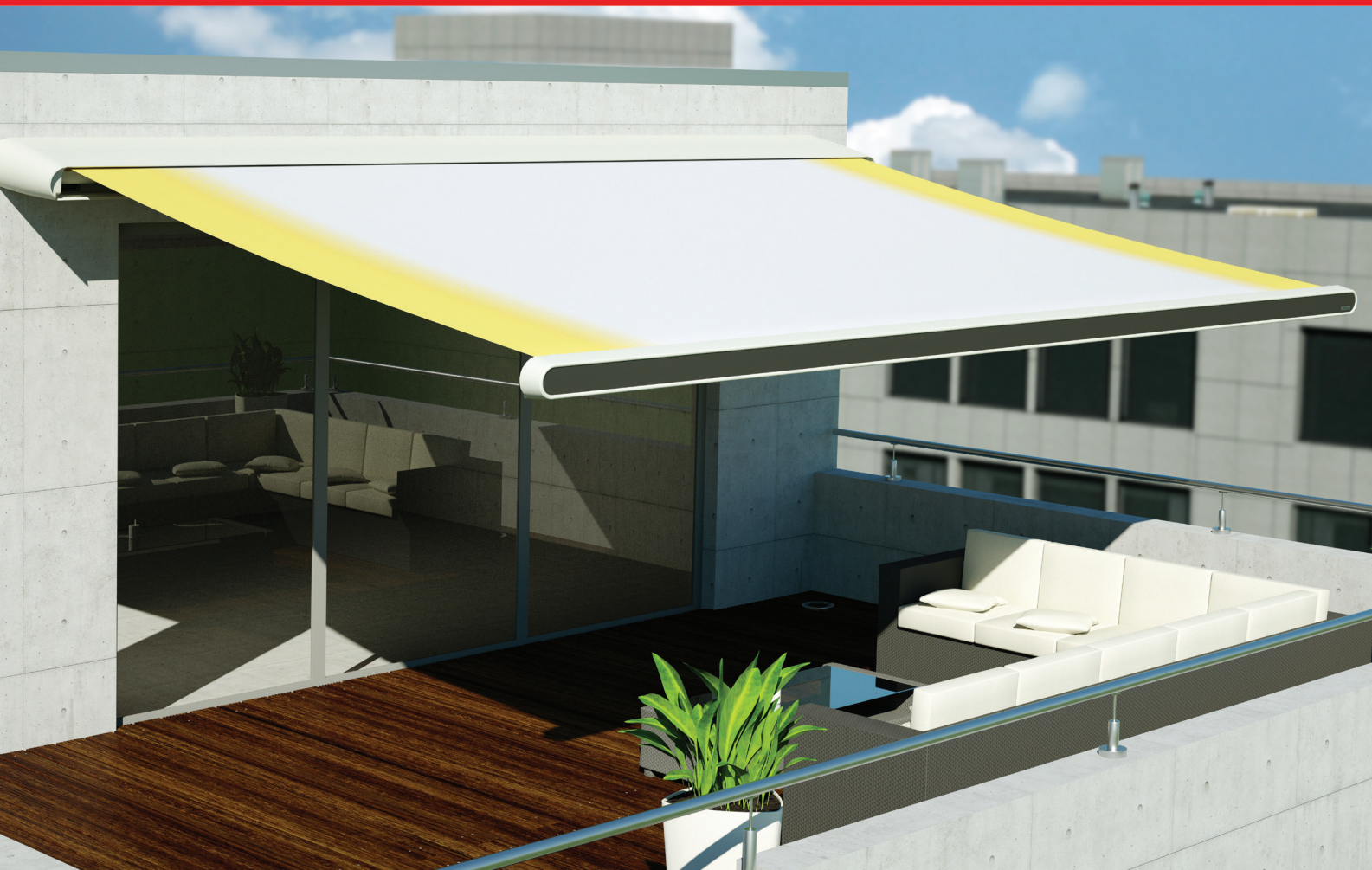
"The MX-1 has lighting in the front profile in the form of an LED line and lighting in the cassette shining downwards in the form of individual spotlights."

"The main fabric used in Bellevue Hill was 37007 (Sunvas Perla) which is a fabric with increased water resistance while the extra valance at the front is also an optional extra worth mentioning which uses fabric 31717 (Vuscreen ALU)."

The markilux MX-1 Galaxy makes an immediate impact with its unique mix of shape and functionality. Retracted, the tapered full cassette with a depth of 620mm makes a deep impression on the observer as a weather-proof canopy that protects your awning from the effects of the weather.

The standard operation type for the MX-1 Galaxy is a radio-controlled motor with a markilux 4-channel remote control. Optionally a hard-wired motor is available to connect the awning to a home automation system.

[www.markilux.com.au](http://www.markilux.com.au)



## Markilux Galaxy

a new vision



Introducing Markilux Galaxy, setting visual and technical milestones with its conical basic shape and clear lines.

The Markilux Galaxy features folding arms with bionic tendons, pitch adjustment from 5 degrees to 25 degrees via a tilt device, water drainage via an integrated gutter in the front profile and a multitude of drive technologies, colour variations and optional accessories fulfil the most unusual of requirements.

The Markilux Galaxy series is equipped with a radio controlled motor and a markilux remote control.

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