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## Architecture Bulletin Autumn 2018

Front cover: excerpt from 'Romantic-Comedy Jobs, Updated for 2016' by Jason Adam Katzenstein and Blythe Roberson. Originally published in *The New Yorker* (30 March 2016) and updated for our cover. Courtesy of the artists and *The New Yorker*

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# shift

## President's message



If 2017 was all about a reset – then 2018 is about seeing the results of that reset. We wanted to make the Institute's committee system more transparent and in line with the newly-adopted Institute Strategy direction. We have restructured the committee system; renaming some and folding others into each other to ensure their ongoing relevance.

Terms of reference for each committee were written and approved through Chapter Council. These will continue to be fine-tuned and reviewed on a regular basis. Committee membership is now aligned with our Awards Juries and assembled through an open expression of interest process. This will introduce new blood and a renewed vigour into the committee system, along with removing the perception that the Institute is a closed club where the same faces are on rotation.

2017 also saw the reintroduction of the Large Practice Forum, followed by the Small Practice Forum, and, through popular demand, a Medium Practice Forum. Along with the Country and Newcastle Divisions, these membership groups provide significant networking opportunities and a feedback loop to Chapter Council of what members see as important for the profession. This year we want to re-tune our relationship with Sydney's Practice Networks, something that has been long overdue. Starting with the initiative – of my predecessor Shaun Carter – to take Chapter Council 'on-the-road' to meet the Networks, we have been continuing with direct engagement to resolve outstanding issues and improve communication.

Much of our public advocacy has and will continue to be reactionary, as we respond to government policy and proposals through our many written submissions. But we also want to be the ones to set the agenda for public discussion and policy development. One important initiative has been the establishment of the Procurement Taskforce. Their role is to gather information on the good, bad and ugly of current procurement practices and then influence how architecture is procured going forward through direct engagement. It should not be unreasonable to expect a procurement process that is fairer and more consistent. It might leave us more time to do what we do best and provide better outcomes for our clients and the public.

The NSW Chapter continues to lead in the drive for gender equality within our profession. The Gender Equity Taskforce prepared a proposal to roll out our national Male Champions of Change program and I presented this to the National Council at the last meeting of 2017. In the past we have struggled to encourage women to nominate for Chapter Council, yet with the recent Chapter Council elections we will for the first time actually have a majority of women around the table. I see that as a genuine milestone, as it shows that our profession is becoming truly representative.

If there is one message that I would like to communicate it is this: the Institute is the membership and all members have the ability to be involved and to influence what we say and do.

Andrew Nimmo, NSW Chapter President  
@NSWChapterPres



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### EDITORIAL

EDITOR & DESIGNER  
Ricardo Felipe  
ricardo.felipe@architecture.  
com.au

EDITORIAL CHAIR  
David Tickle  
dtickle@hassellstudio.com

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE  
Nicola Balch  
Ashley Dunn  
Amelia Holliday  
David Tickle

MANAGING EDITOR  
Joshua Morrin

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS  
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Architecture Awards issue)  
\$60; students \$40  
nsw@architecture.com.au

EDITORIAL OFFICE  
Tusculum, 3 Manning St  
Potts Point NSW 2011  
Sydney +61 2 9246 4055

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### PUBLISHING

PUBLISHER  
Boston Publishing

EDITOR & PUBLISHER  
James Boston  
james@bostonpublishing.  
com.au

ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
Belinda Smart

ART DIRECTOR  
Elizabeth Graciela

ADVERTISING MANAGER  
Angela Kalas  
angela@bostonpublishing.  
com.au

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT  
MANAGER  
Michael Dolphing

BOSTON PUBLISHING  
HEAD OFFICE  
Unit 2, 83-87 Dover St  
Richmond VIC 3121  
PO Box 2371  
Richmond South VIC 3121  
Melbourne +61 3 8060 1002

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Thank you to Nicola Balch and Amelia Holliday for their significant contributions to *Architecture Bulletin* over the last two years. Both have now stepped down from the editorial committee. Thank you also to Boston Publishing who have published the last 14 issues, including this one.

From August 2018, *Architecture Bulletin* will be once again self-published by the Institute with changes to its structure and design. If you have any suggestions for what you would like to see, please email [ricardo.felipe@architecture.com.au](mailto:ricardo.felipe@architecture.com.au)

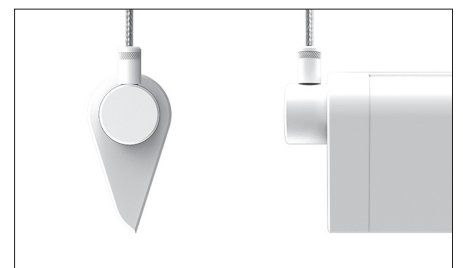
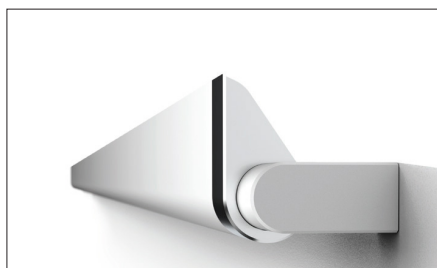




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This issue of the *Bulletin* highlights a range of individuals who have pursued paths that are architecturally unconventional. As one who has also left the world of mainstream architectural practice,\* so it is that I too am for the shifters. We need more of them.

We need architects – or former architects – who can carry the message that architecture is about substance more than style. Shifters who can provide responsible, coherent and compelling solutions to real-world issues, informed by a level of design intelligence. But what about the profession? Change more often than not needs to begin at home.

#### A shift in emphasis

The Institute's new strategic plan has a renewed focus and investment in fulfilling the role of the voice of the profession. Importantly, this emphasis has come from the membership; the plan is the fruition of a substantial process of engaging with members.

Why all this change? What is the Institute – your Institute – trying to achieve? Together we are engaging with our agency; our capacity to act in a given environment.

#### The agency of agency

To achieve influence, you must first possess the capacity to influence. At the core of this capacity is a robust understanding of who you are, why you are here and what you are trying to do. The Institute has established this knowledge, which is crystallised in the strategic plan. From this position we can consider the next point.

#### The agency of architecture

Architecture can achieve something beyond the merely functional response of a building. As architects, our work can shape culture; it can challenge the mind and impart a sense of self that cannot be found anywhere else. At the same time, architecture can artfully resolve such complexity into a coherent whole.

#### No agency, no act

Put simply, if you don't design, you don't get a building. But the actualisation of a design requires more than that: if you don't exercise influence, you'll never get anything built.

#### No agency, no change

As members, you have your degrees and in many cases your registration. Generally speaking, you're designing buildings and they're getting built. That is all fine, but architecture needs more than that. You need more than that.

#### No agency, no future

Without anything more than yourselves, the world moves on. You might still be an architect, but perhaps you begin to notice that things are not quite so good as they once were. Or maybe

you've seen some things in your practice that you think should be different, but you either ignore them or can't change them. You wonder why great buildings disappear from the skyline as if nobody cared. You wonder why you work to tighter deadlines. You wonder why there are fewer women around the office. You wonder why your pay hasn't increased. The future, instead of expanding, is shrinking. What or who helps you effect the change that you want to see in the world?

#### No Institute, no agency

When we start to understand that we need something or someone bigger than ourselves, that is the point at which we begin to activate our agency. If we are not engaged with an agency as a collective, then we have no agency. Our voice will not be heard.

The choice is stark but simple. If you want architecture to possess and exert agency, then you need to have a body that is larger than the individual. This is why you have the Institute of Architects. Without it, you don't have a voice. But the reverse is also true. Without you, there is no Institute. Being involved shows that you care about your future.

#### Shifting the agency of the profession

For too long the architectural profession has held itself as a kind of silent guardian of great buildings accessible to a select few. But our 21st-century world calls for a radical reorientation in the way we think about what we do, as well as how we do it. A change is also needed in the way the Institute works on behalf of the profession.

The Institute's strategic plan reaffirms its goal of making the world a better place through architecture. It articulates this overarching purpose in a clear and focused mission that will direct our endeavours over the next three years: *to develop and promote a strong architectural profession and be the public voice for architecture*. We have plenty of work to do.

Joshua Morrin, Executive Director, NSW

\* Joshua Morrin trained as an architect at the University of Sydney and RMIT. He is a university medallist (USyd) and recipient of the Anne Butler Memorial Prize (RMIT) and the Institute's Victorian Graduate Prize. He worked as an architect at Melbourne-based Lyons prior to moving to the opposite side of the country (Darwin) and joining the Institute (all a story for another day!)

Above is an edited introductory message for the opening of the Agency Congress 2017. See pages 10–11 for more on the Australasian Student Architecture Congress

1 Joshua Morrin addressing delegates of the 2017 Agency Congress in Sydney

**AGENCY**  
**THE AGENCY OF AGENCY**  
**THE AGENCY OF ARCHITECTURE**  
**NO AGENCY, NO ACT**  
**NO AGENCY, NO CHANGE**  
**NO AGENCY, NO FUTURE**  
**NO INSTITUTE, NO AGENCY**

\*NO INSTITUTE ≠ NO ARCHITECTURE

The proposed new art garden of the expanded Art Gallery of New South Wales and entry plaza of the Sydney Modern Project. Both were designed in response to submissions received during the public exhibition of a state-significant DA. A new aperture will allow for better integration of extra landscaping and artwork underneath the entry plaza roof. Image: Sydney Modern Project as produced by Kazuyo Sejima + Ryue Nishizawa / SANAA © Art Gallery of New South Wales



### Art Gallery of NSW expansion project – Sydney Modern

Consideration needs to be given to enhancing Art Gallery Road's traditional role as the ceremonial roadway leading to Mrs Macquarie's Chair. In particular, we recommend that the pavilions facing the road should be pulled back to be in a closer alignment with the Gallery's ceremonial steps; in the current design they will intrude into the visual curtilage of the roadway, which provides a link between the urban form of the city and the parkland environment beyond Sydney Modern and the entrance to the Garden.

– excerpt from submission December 2017

Full submissions at [architecture.com.au/nsw](http://architecture.com.au/nsw) under Policy & advocacy

### Proposed amendment to SEPP for the Sirius site

We firmly maintain our position that Sirius should be retained and recognised for its architectural, social and cultural significance. The proposed amendments to the SEPP (State Significant Precincts) 2005 to include planning controls for the Sirius site primarily seek to support the sale of the land, rather than acknowledge the value of the existing building. There should be no need for an amendment because the building's tenure should not be under question. Accordingly, while we have provided comments in response to the proposed SEPP amendments in good faith, we neither support the proposal nor agree with its rationale.

– excerpt from submission February 2018

### Complying development in Greenfield areas

The public domain must be green; street trees are fundamental to achieving this outcome. It should be mandatory for local councils to provide and maintain them. To encourage the planting of large street trees the street must not be dominated by driveway crossings. The Housing Code restricts double garages to lots over 12 metres wide, but the background paper proposes to delete this standard. This could result in narrow lots 7 to 12 metres wide with double garages, minimal space for street trees and very little verge area.

– excerpt from submission July 2017

### Draft green infrastructure policy for NSW

Well planned green infrastructure is essential infrastructure. It is fundamental to ensuring quality of life and sustainability, and should be integrated into all community planning. Government, industry and the community must all work together to achieve the objectives of the NSW Government's draft Greener Places Policy, actualising the principles of integration, connectivity, multifunctionality and participation. Architects are creating green infrastructure across all jurisdictions and at all scales. But they require clearer guidance from the policy to understand what success looks like, how we know when we have done well and when we are not doing so well.

– excerpt from joint AIA/AILA submission May 2018

### Draft Greater Sydney region plan and draft district plans

The Greater Sydney Commission is developing data collection methodologies across a number of metrics. This is being pursued with local government for consistency and to assist local governments to develop their plans. We strongly support this initiative so that meaningful targets may be set and proper feedback is possible. It is critical that this data is made publicly accessible so that it may inform good decisions more widely and gain community trust.

– excerpt from submission December 2017



## Chapter news

- 1 We held our first CPD night session in March. Architect and engineer Richard Maddock (Foster + Partners London) spoke on the integration of structural concepts into the design process and the use of digital fabrication in timber construction. Pictured are members of F+P's specialist modelling group



### Professional leadership

The February announcement of the newly-elected Chapter councillors heralded a first for NSW. The addition of four female representatives to the existing suite of councillors changed the gender ratio, with the total number of women exceeding men. On Andrew Nimmo's recognition of this shift, there were cheers of joy.

Increasing the number of women in senior and leadership positions is a core value of the Gender Equity Taskforce (GET). While tipping the balance was never a goal, participation was crucial. GET cannot take credit for this result. This change came from a groundswell movement, which facilitated comfort for individuals to be elected and then trust from the electorate towards those individuals.

This groundswell is present across our industry. We continue to see an increase in women's participation with our clients, builders, consultants, authorities and government. Their seat at the table can imply the work is done but rushing towards a conclusion can be misleading. Women do not have parity – see last year's *Champions of Change Progress Report* for evidence of this. But a seat at the table does imply that implementing an equitable world will continue to be easier.

The 2018 theme for International Women's Day, #PressforProgress, stressed the urgency to stay motivated. GET continues to deliver their core programs of the Champions of Change, GET: together and GET: talking. We also commit to introducing new voices and new themes to the debate. If you're interested in gender advocacy and want to participate, GET: progressive.

Email GET at [nsw@architecture.com.au](mailto:nsw@architecture.com.au).

Monica Edwards and Natalie Lane-Rose  
NSW GET Co-chairs

### Continuous learning

Continuous learning is a priority in the Institute's current strategic plan. The NSW Architects Registration Board has also made continuous learning (CPD) a requirement for annual re-registration. Continuing Professional Development aims to protect consumers from purchasing architectural services from practitioners who may not be current in their knowledge and skills base. CPD has two categories, formal and informal. Both are defined on the ARB website.

Each year an individual's CPD must relate to at least two of the units of competency prescribed by the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia: design, documentation, project delivery and practice management.

There are several ways to achieve the requisite formal points. Attendance at formal CPD events is one. Online courses, preparing or presenting at CPD events, authoring published articles/books/papers or participating in architects' learning groups are others. All must have stated learning outcomes or a formal structure and have an assessment component. All must be recorded and records kept for five years.

One of the benefits of traditional formal CPD gatherings at the Institute, or elsewhere, is the opportunity for networking and socialising with peers. This remains the case but is not diminished by online events such as the National Continuum program. Individuals can purchase these short seminars and watch them at times that suit.

The NSW Chapter is exploring diverse ways to provide relevant, stimulating, varied and vibrant formal CPD for members. Breakfast, daytime and evening seminars are scheduled with local and international speakers. Where speakers on topical themes requiring a more immediate response are not available, a combination of an online seminar watched as a group, followed by a facilitator and open discussion is being piloted. We plan to expand CPD offerings soon to include real-time online seminars and discussions.

Kate Moore, Professional Development Lead

Kate started working at the NSW Chapter in November 2017. Qualified in both architecture and education, her career has 'shifted' several times between the two

### Networking and community

Last year the NSW Government released a draft special infrastructure contribution for the Hunter Region. Given the rapid shift towards large-scale development occurring within the city of Newcastle, it is encouraging to see a commitment to improving the supporting infrastructure within the Hunter Region. But with rapid change comes great responsibility to ensure these changes to our social and built environments contribute positively to the communities they serve.

2018 began with the Newcastle Architecture Awards, which reinforces the significance that architecture holds in leading a positive transformation of our built environment. The event showcases our achievements not only to our peers but also the community at large. Congratulations to all the winners.

The Newcastle Division has welcomed an increase in dedicated committee members. These volunteers strengthen our presence within the region to advocate the profession of architecture. This diverse group are committed to delivering quality CPD events and design discourse to the Institute members and practitioners located outside the Sydney metropolitan area. The committee continues to build relationships with University of Newcastle's School of Architecture and local governments. Discussions are ongoing between the Newcastle Division, Lower Hunter and Central Coast local government organisations and the Urban Design Institute to establish an urban design awards program. The initiative aims to acknowledge excellence in our public domain and the successful collaboration between allied disciplines.

Joel Chamberlain, Newcastle Division Deputy Chair



- 2 EmAGN NSW co-chairs Chloe Rayfield and Hannah Slater were at the EmAGN NSW 2018 launch party at Archer Office's rooftop in March
- 3 ... along with many others. Photos: Joseph O'Meara

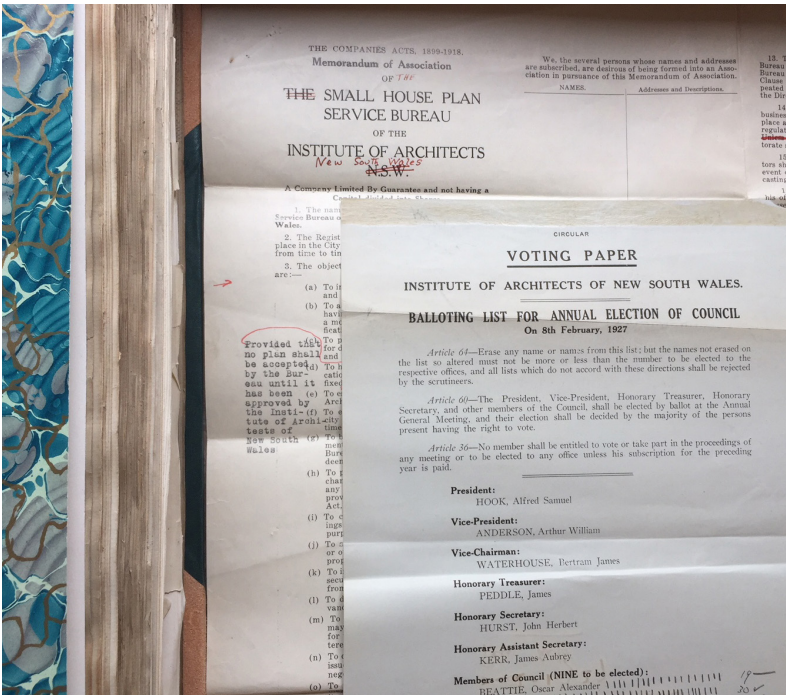
## Emerging Architects and Graduates Network

EmAGN NSW congratulates Hannah Slater who has stepped up into the role of co-chair of EmAGN NSW. She replaced Joseph O'Meara, who will continue as a committee member. We would like to thank Joseph for helping lead the committee over the last two years. Joseph is one of five winners of the 2018 Dulux Study Tour to London, Berlin and Milan. We look forward to tracking his journey on Instagram with awe and jealousy.

Farewell to Mitch Walsh who has stepped down from the committee. He has moved overseas and we wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

Congratulations also to committee member Gemma Savio who is now a Chapter councillor and member of the editorial committee. She represents the interest of emerging practices. We look forward to seeing more bright, young faces at the forefront of the Institute serving our demographic.

Phuong Le, former EmAGN NSW Co-chair



## Unpacking the archive of the NSW Chapter

Last June in New York, I watched a public discussion between MoMA director Glenn Lowry and architecture professor and curator Barry Bergdoll. They were discussing the launch of *Frank Lloyd Wright at 150: Unpacking the Archive*, a joint exhibition between MoMA and the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University. During the discussion, Lowry paused to ask the question ‘Is there anything new to say about Frank Lloyd Wright?’ Bergdoll responded that every new generation has new questions and new views, even on familiar material and that it is possible for archives to offer new revelations.

I think there’s often a perception that the material in archives, once plumbed and published, are rendered ‘closed’ – but that’s quite untrue. The best archives are rich, multi-layered, multi-faceted resources. Possessing their strata, they are vaults of information offering revelation and insight into a particular time, place or person. What is often forgotten is that every generation can recontextualise and ask new questions of that material.

Here at the NSW Chapter, we have such a resource. We are in fact the only chapter to have an archive. It comprises a significant and large collection of unresearched photographs by Max Dupain; the Adrian Ashton Photograph Collection; the Neville Gruzman Book Collection; a slide collection; a book and journal collection; NSW Chapter records; and other historical items. Granted, the collection needs some work but to be fair, there’s been minimal financial resources.

The challenge for the Institute is to preserve and steward the collection well, to build upon well-structured foundations and to give better access, both physical and digital. The more use a collection has, the more valuable it becomes. It’s the difference between dollar value and cultural value. Cultural value increases, so that what we have becomes a valued and available critical cultural resource.

If you would like information about the NSW Chapter Collection please contact Sascha Garner on 02 9246 4008 or [sascha.garner@architecture.com.au](mailto:sascha.garner@architecture.com.au).

Sascha Garner, Architectural Heritage and Collections Advisor

- 1 Watsons Grove Epping by BKA Architecture
- 2 Wharf Club at Wharf's Entrance in Melbourne by Mirvac Design. Photo: John Gollings
- 3 Rendering of Alexandria Park Community School by TKD Architects



### BKA Architecture

BKA Architecture finished 2017 with the completed construction of three apartment projects: Watsons Grove Epping with 141 apartments, Hudson St Lewisham with 50 apartments and a heritage hotel and The Duke at Waterloo with 19 apartments.

2018 began with diverse projects with development applications and designs prepared for a hotel of 73 rooms in Haberfield, an owner-occupied office building at Green Square and a 50-room student accommodation complex at Randwick.

These diverse projects represent a significant change of project type from what we have experienced in the last few years. Recently we have seen in the studio a change to undertake more diversified tasks in-house, rather than engage outside consultants. This has had two main advantages:

1. Staff broaden their interests within the studio and have more appreciation for design development and office management
2. BKA can control the timing, quality and understanding of design intent.

These components have included 3D imaging, model making, photography, quality assurance, graphics and professional development.

On a lighter note, BKA staff have had five babies in the last nine months – demonstrating that all our time is not spent at a computer.

### Mirvac Design

Conceived as a community focus, the Wharf Club at Wharf's Entrance, at Docklands in Melbourne, was designed by Mirvac Design early in the concept phase to provide an upfront centralised resident amenity, activating the precinct from day one. This premium facility helps bring people out of their buildings and creates a sense of community as people meet their neighbours. Membership is also open to the public providing a more civic response.

The building was envisioned as an extension of the park morphing out of the landscape, continuing the grass plane as an accessible green roof. This also has benefits for the adjacent apartments providing a pleasant landscaped view. The grassed roof creates opportunities for different activities including an elevated viewing platform for the public, as well as a hill on which to play.

The building on the park became the park on the building, maintaining the maximum park area and available public green space.

Designed as an iconic attractor helping to bring people westward towards the Bolte Bridge and encourage exploration, the building is shaped to respond to the pedestrian walking patterns. Either aligning to the promenade and defining the built edge or channelling people coming from the east into the park, café and Wharf Club, continuing to South Wharf Drive and Forge.

### TKD Architects

Since late 2015, TKD has been working on a group of public school projects for the NSW Department of Education that embraces a new approach to school design. These projects include new buildings on existing school sites, the complete redevelopment of existing schools and new schools on Greenfield sites. The design process saw a collaborative partnership with some specialist designers and critically, an educational specialist, New Learning Environments. This partnership has grown over the life of these projects establishing a range of new approaches for collaborative and future-focused learning.

The projects incorporate design elements that seek to engage and excite students and change the perception of school life. Use of applied graphics that are playful and lively is a positive demonstration of this commitment. Working with graphic designers, Leading Hand Design, our team has delivered solutions for both permanent and temporary schools, responding to the particular culture of each school.

The first projects are now under construction, with the temporary or 'pop-up' school in Ultimo now complete. The second group of projects are equally diverse, including new schools and large-scale redevelopments in the inner city and new schools in Sydney's north-west and south-west growth corridors. The largest project, Alexandria Park Community School, sees the complete redevelopment of the existing school site as an integrated K-12 school. It embraces a stage-based educational model, making deep and lasting connections to the local community and physical environment.



'A voice of reason over prejudice and lethargy, on selection panels Viggo made a habit of successfully arguing for the appointment of staff based on potential, rather than being swayed by their country of origin (and therefore lack of practice working with Australian standards)'

# Danish architect who built The Quay

by Vivienne Reiner

One of a legion of Danish architects who moved to Australia, Viggo Knackstredt left his homeland to marry his childhood sweetheart, who had made the journey a decade earlier. It was the start of a lifelong journey that resulted in his making his mark on NSW architecture.

Knackstredt was born on 16 March 1948, and lived in Frederiksberg, Copenhagen. He longed to fulfil his father's dream of going to university and designing buildings. After completing high school, Viggo enrolled in engineering but after two years was drawn to architecture. He completed a degree in architecture at the leading local institution of its kind, Det Kongelige Danske Kunstakademi, and started working in private practice.

On moving to Australia in the 1970s, Knackstredt started working with the now late Danish architect Leif Kristensen based in Arcadia on Sydney's outskirts. Kristensen was a former employee of the NSW Government Architect's Office whose designs later included developments at the Sydney Opera House. Their work included the Nordic-focused Nordby Retirement Village in Sydney's Hills District, which was opened by the Danish ambassador, and the Juliana Village for the Dutch community in the southern suburb of Miranda, which won the Royal Australian Institute of Architects award for outstanding architecture.

In the 1980s working for the multidisciplinary interior design and architecture firm Nettleton Tribe Partnership, Knackstredt was the lead architect for The Quay at Circular Quay. It took three years to design and oversee the erection of this luxurious 29-storey skyscraper.

The Quay was also one of the first buildings to incorporate the now popular 'green walls' concept, with landscaped balconies and a private rooftop garden. The \$22-million construction had three penthouses with panoramic views and gold-plated fixtures. It was completed in September 1984, seven years after Knackstredt arrived in Australia.

The same year, Knackstredt finished building his family's home overlooking the Berowra Valley Regional Park, the home in which he married childhood sweetheart Mimi Wellisch. When the land was purchased, developers had commented: 'We're glad you're an architect; the land will be difficult to build on' because of the steep rocky plot. The solution was the 'pole house' design.

Work continued at a series of firms, with major projects including the Chatswood Club and Queanbeyan Shopping Centre near Canberra, as project controller for Rice Daubney Architects.

To spend more time with his family, which now included his second child, he left private practice and joined Penrith Council in the 1990s, where notable developments he oversaw included the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre.

As architect supervisor at the council for more than a decade, Viggo's responsibilities included assessing commercial building development applications. He believed it was important to maintain a human scale despite continued urban growth as Sydney's population sprawled westward. One solution he regularly espoused was European-style high density, centrally

designed developments complete with generous public spaces.

Penrith Council landscape architect supervisor Karin Schicht recalls Knackstredt's advocacy for such things as disability access and parenting rooms. 'He was before his time, embracing issues to do better than just comply with the standards', she said.

He had the foresight to undertake a Master of Planning degree in his mid-40s. He later accepted a position at the mini-city-sized Macquarie University to direct refurbishments and minor works, where he stayed until his retirement.

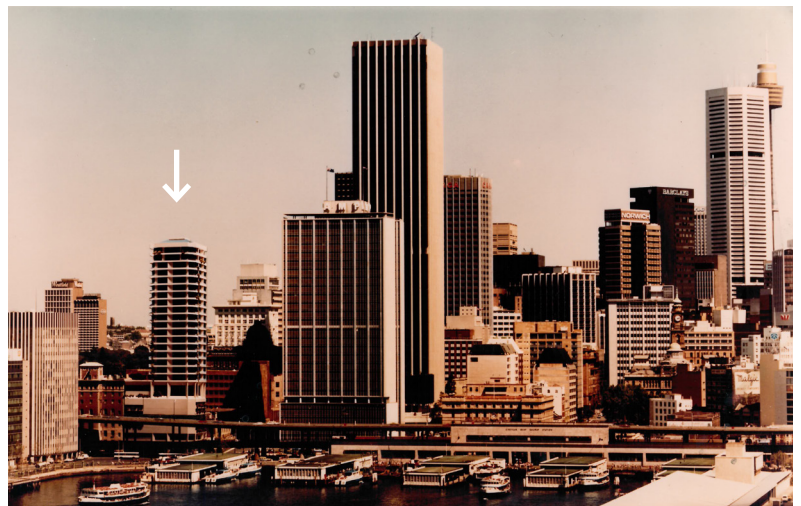
A voice of reason over prejudice and lethargy, on selection panels Viggo made a habit of successfully arguing for the appointment of staff based on potential, rather than being swayed by their country of origin (and therefore lack of practice working with Australian standards). He also offered advice pro bono for the Indigenous community at New Burnt Bridge in Kempsey on the NSW north coast and later acted as a consultant for the Dharruk people in Sydney's west.

Viggo is survived by his wife Mimi, children Joshua and Nicola, stepchildren Michelle and Vivienne, grandchildren and step-grandchildren.

Vivienne Reiner is a trained journalist. She is currently studying a master's degree in sustainability, as encouraged by Viggo

An edited version of this obituary first appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 24 January 2018

Built in 1984, The Quay apartment block on Phillip Street was one of the first harbour-front residential towers in the area, following the slump in the city office market in the early 80s. Knackstredt was lead architect for this project at Nettleton Tribe



'Like many students who represent the next generation of architects, our interest in architectural agency comes at a time when architecture's role as social, cultural and artistic expression has become secondary to the generation of financial return'

– Agency Congress creative directors Estelle Rehayem and Peter Nguyen

# Agency Congress 2017

by Siobhan Hudson

Sydney held the biennial southern hemisphere pilgrimage of architecture students last December. But it is a miracle it even happened considering it was self-organised, self-funded, self-advertised and self-staffed. It marked the latest instalment of a 50-year tradition to host provocative gatherings for internationally renowned levers of power, government, property developers, humanitarian architects, architect-builders, digital artists, fabricators, academics and students.

One student described the previous event in New Zealand as the 'best week of (her) life'. This indicated the gravitas of the legacy to uphold. A quick show of hands on day one proved a third had flown from overseas, and every state and territory in Australia were represented. Invited guests hailed from South Africa, Japan, Britain and the United States.

The week allowed a swarm of students and practitioners to fill Sydney lecture halls, exhibition galleries, bars, construction sites, open studios and homes – recognised by matching canvas backpacks and 3D-printed lanyards or matching jewellery.

The crowd was a testament to the event's topical agenda and preceding years of organising. 'Like many students who represent the next generation of architects, our interest in architectural agency comes at a time when architecture's role as social, cultural and artistic expression has become secondary to the generation of financial return', explains conference creative directors Estelle Rehayem and Peter Nguyen (Cox Architecture). How do we, as future built environment professionals, question the centre and boundaries of the status quo?

Sydney has the second-most expensive housing in the world averaging \$1.1 million (12.2 × median household income), followed by Auckland in fourth place (10 ×) and Melbourne in sixth place (9.5 ×).

– *Demographic International Housing Affordability* (2017)

For such broad provocation, the event had three subthemes: the agency to cultivate, act and catalyse. Each of the 36 guests addressed the theme through their work and provided insights for future practice. A brief selection is covered below.

## Agency to cultivate

For many design students, the transition from theory to practice is often a disconcerting process. Reconciling the ideals of architectural production in design studios against the reality of practice, where the majority of design decisions are determined by external forces, capital flows, a broader design team and end-user consultations. This experience highlights the shortcomings of our education system, one inherently conservative and repeats the internalised and exclusive tradition of Ecole des Beaux-Arts of the early 1800s.

Jeremy Till is an educator (pro-vice chancellor of Central Saint Martins, London), author and captivating presenter. A brief history of our current curriculum and the 'design critique' repeated worldwide highlighted its shortcomings in addressing end-user consultations, shifting from perfect portfolio outputs, in encouraging project failures, and a focus on an individual's wellbeing.

You know you are an architecture student when ...

You have an alarm to tell you when to sleep

Your breakfast, lunch and dinner merge into one meal

You know what time the vending machine is re-filled

You carry deodorant with you

– Jeremy Till (*Architecture Depends*, 2009)

Our profession is grounded in generating social and environmental value. Yet in the face of impatient global capital, architecture faces an existential threat. Till is optimistic about the inclusion of ethics in education and will begin to address this consumer-driven climate. He urges a whole curriculum review, with student and teacher engagement, to better nurture student self-knowledge and independent thinking.

Yoshiharu Tsukamoto (Atelier Bow-Wow, Tokyo) gave insights into their theory of behaviourology – the knowledge from lived experience and physical phenomenon. This informed micro-interventions, of window detailing, to macro systematic design, as seen in the timber woodlands of Kurimoto. This rural region on the outskirts of Tokyo suffered from vast deforestation and resulted in a declining community. Their proposal included a firewood supply plant, to repair the damaged woodlands and provide a safe workplace for elderly and disabled urban citizens. Atelier Bow-Wow continues to study local context to support environmental and social opportunities.

## Agency to act

Tradition would have it that the early years of a graduate's career would be documentation based – years spent acquiring past project details in the hope of innovating and leading a design project in the distant future. Instead, we heard from practitioners who are learning through doing and thinking through fabrication; architect-builders and experimenters united by delivering the quality of work they feel is missing.

From a history of self-builds and construction dissemination Stacie Wong (Gluck+, New York) shed light on how grassroots ideals can grow into medium-sized practices. Disappointed at the lack of communication and self-reflection between the design and building teams, Gluck+ have fostered their architect-builder company to remedy this. Limitations learned from prototypes and the economics of standard studwork have enabled their latest projects to be delivered under budget for an increasing not-for-profit client base.

Closer to home and at residential scale, Clinton Cole (CplusC, Sydney) shed light on the expediency of an architect-builder practice to resolve detailing, assure client budgets and improve on-site relations.

Robert Benson (AR-MA, Sydney), challenged us to remedy the volume of knowledge lost through current design-build practice and the miscommunication inherent in separate detailing by architectural tender and fabrication stages. An architectural education and passion for problem solving have created a niche in the construction market. AR-MA, by becoming parametric specialists, have secured confidence in the delivery of high-end finishes with intricate complexity and million-dollar price points. Benson urged to seek and seize weaknesses in current delivery



# AGENCY<sup>2017</sup>



methods to encourage new ways of providing services. His advice: don't let on about your architectural training.

## Agency to catalyse

Another painful omission from current curriculums is capital flows and client budgets. A full day was dedicated to better understanding architecture in the context of low-interest rates, booming construction rates and looming lows. By speaking the same language as investors, guest policy makers and architects proved how social- and environment-driven projects can be delivered in a profit-driven climate.

Though topical, affordable housing is not unique to Australia. Julie Eizenberg (Koning Eizenberg, Los Angeles) drew parallels with the United States as Marc Vlessing (Pocket Living, London) did to the UK. The latter began a dialogue over current apartment guidelines to lever inclusion for smaller, high quality and transit located first-time homes in London. Although a slow process, advocacy in policy making has now allowed the first modular apartments to be constructed throughout the city, at a rapid rate.

CHROFI (Sydney) are investigating ways the rise of the share economy can unlock new forms of inhabitation and funding. Using high rents from Airbnb, subsidised affordable housing, flexible space for retail evolution and car parking dissolution, together formed the basis of a three-hour intensive workshop. Their work explores financially-viable ways of communities having greater input into shaping local spaces and fostering a civic economy for entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs alike.

At the end of last day five, the passion-sparked and agency-ignited audience spurred Nguyen to address how we continue this momentum of excitement and healthy questioning over the next two years.

The lasting legacy of any congress is the connection to a global community (dissolving university walls) and all who encourage thinking beyond the current curriculum. The week of warm nights and pilgrimage through Sydney's street network has created a bond with future colleagues, design team members and teachers. It has imbued a healthy sense of inquest and rejection of 'business as normal' when the only constant in our professional life is change.

Agency Congress created a space to discuss how to improve the world through design. As such, it forms the only curriculum responding fast enough to current challenges of our industry. The graduating class are filled with optimism, fierce intelligence and complex problem-solving skills. They will become your next employee, university tutor, policy maker, urban designer or team coordinator.

Looking towards 2019, the next Australasian Student Architecture Congress in Christchurch promises to address how bottom-up, community-led design solutions have been able to respond faster as the city recovers from seismic activity post-2011. I know 300 students who have already checked flights. Have you?

Siobhan Hudson completed an architecture degree at UNSW. She is now an MSD Master of Urban Design student at the University of Melbourne



The 2017 Agency Congress ran from Tuesday 28 November until Saturday 2 December across many inner-city studios, teaching spaces and the graduate exhibitions of UNSW, USYD and UTS by day, and secret party and after-party locations by night

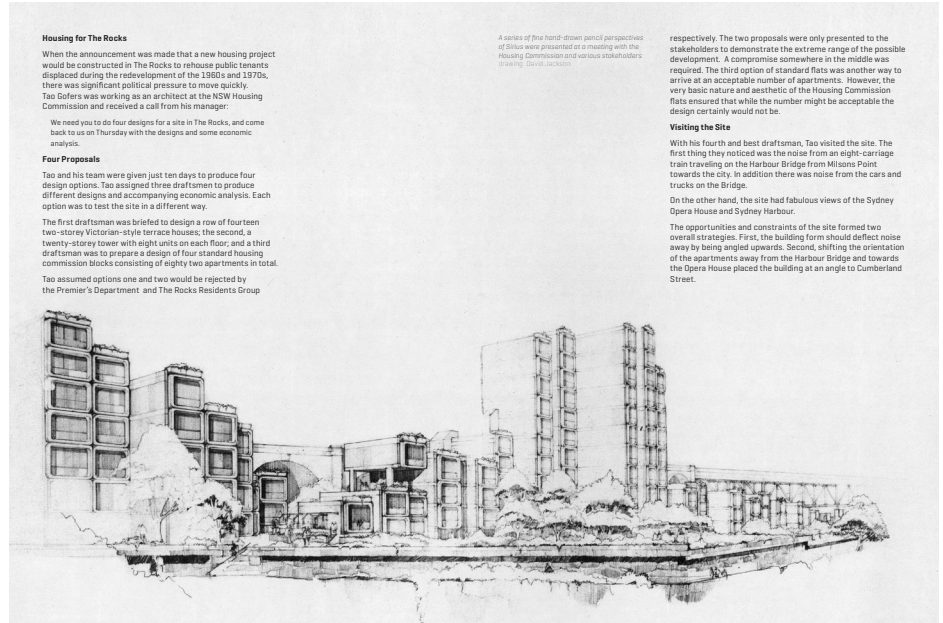
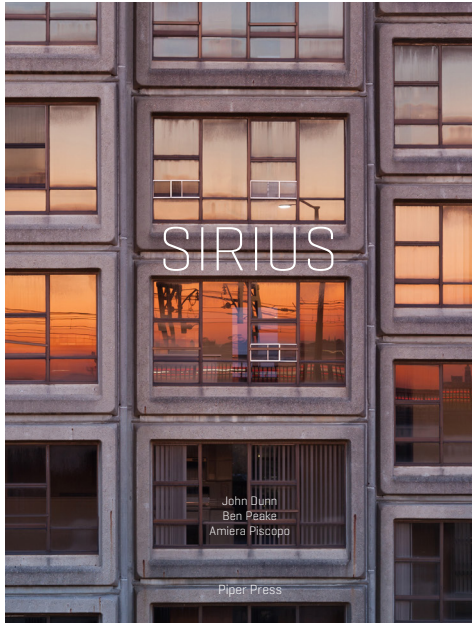
For the full program and event coverage visit [www.agency2017.net](http://www.agency2017.net)



'Finding a challenge more Byzantine than public housing in NSW is hard. Little wonder when "ideal" outcomes walk a knife-edge between the exacting demands of economics, high-level policy and an oft-contested sense of public duty'

# Sirius on The Rocks

by Dmitriy Lewicki



Perched upon the sandstone escarpment that gives The Rocks its name, Sirius cuts a dark silhouette against the Harbour Bridge and the sky beyond. I walked up to it the other day. The victors of the struggle for the building over the last few years, have barricaded it with chain link fencing; their 'for sale' sign is an incongruous flag by the front door. For 15 years, the only sign Sirius ever had was Owen McAloon's famous 'One Way! Jesus' – a hopeful ministry that bridge motorists saw when passing. Existential uncertainty was later joined by a more immediate anxiety embodied in Myra Demetriou's plaintive 'SOS'.

Neither sign shines anymore. Instead their memory is confined to its witnesses and *Sirius*, a book by John Dunn, Ben Peake and Amiera Piscopo. This publication offers an earnest glimpse into the history behind a building that has come to be one of Sydney's most universally acknowledged landmarks. Hot on the heels of the 2016 fight for heritage listing, it elicits fresh questions about public housing in the city, its communities and the role and nature of development.

The Rocks in Sydney has always had a tumultuous relationship with development. In 1900, a bubonic plague laid the groundwork for successive waves of 'slum clearing', which came to a climax in the Jack Munday-led Green Bans of the 1970s. The book walks through this history and establishes the context from which stories about the building develop.

There is an insightful section on the building's design by its architects Tao Gofers and Penny Rosier. Featured are drawings and illustrations from Gofers's archive, as well as an interview with Rosier. These pages depict their sincerity in making sure Sirius was a place that fostered its community.

The communal spaces throughout the building are a testament to their success. Yet this only makes the accounts of the gradual closures of these spaces ever more harrowing and callous. Interviews with tenants take on a bittersweet quality: heartwarming in their reminiscences and heartbreaking in their outlook.

It's emotionally charged non-fiction but the polemic quality, coupled with the looseness and variety of the literary formats – ranging from firsthand accounts to interviews and newspaper excerpts – give the text an extraordinary liveliness and readability. The book feels like a genuine piece of the Sirius totality; every page describes a feature or voice that made this place special. The quality of the publication echoes this. The boxboard cover's edges are exposed; the off-white paper is heavy and uncoated; and the layouts change throughout. I can't help but feel reminded of a paste book. It's a delight to behold. Dunn, Peake and Piscopo's publication somehow captures that particular brand of kookiness that is so Sirius.

Finding a challenge more Byzantine than public housing in NSW is hard. Little wonder when 'ideal' outcomes walk a knife-edge between the exacting demands of economics, high-level policy and an oft-contested sense of public duty. Housing outcomes make an excellent gauge for measuring these demands against each other. Sirius today is the victim of a ruthless cost-benefit analysis sweeping through The Rocks. It's quite telling of where our values lie. But mostly it's a tragedy because while the building still stands, it remains one of the most thoughtfully executed examples of public housing in Australia.

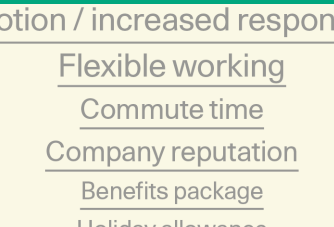
*Sirius* is essential reading for anyone interested in Sydney's heritage, especially its social, political and architectural history. Or for anyone who cares about cities.

Dmitriy Lewicki completed a Master of Architecture at UTS in 2013. He is now a designer at CHROFI

The cover and a spread from *Sirius*, authored by John Dunn, Ben Peake and Amiera Piscopo, and published by Piper Press. The second edition is now available in bookstores. *Sirius* was shortlisted in the 2018 National Gallery of Victoria Cornish Family Prize for art and design publishing

# SHIFT

## THE PROFESSION



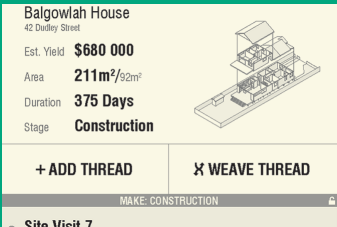
Culture

14



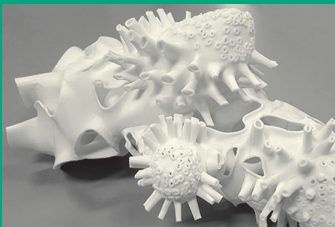
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Architects are spacemakers and shapeshifters. In the complex process of creating buildings, we are required to take on many roles, wear many hats, be many characters. We are expected to be the grand visionary as well as the expert detailer. The manager of big project teams, bigger budgets and the biggest of on-site screwups. The negotiator. The reformer. The counsellor. The comic relief when it all goes horribly wrong. We shift between these roles as a matter of everyday course.

But some architects have taken a more substantial shift by focusing on one of these roles, moving into aligned positions or entirely new professional endeavours.

We asked a group of our colleagues to reflect upon their professional 'shifts' and how architectural training and experience, as well as design thinking, have allowed them to explore these fields of operation.

To frame these personal reflections, we also explore broader shifts that are occurring within the architectural profession, including education and accreditation, models of practice and workplace culture.

David Tickle  
Editorial Committee Chair

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Emergency responder

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Specialist generalist

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Sustainability master

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# Buoyant market conditions and positive changes for workers

Krista Shearer

Thanks to the buoyant market of the past five years, Australian architects are experiencing positive shifts in the sector. These include flexible working, new opportunities and improved benefits, as firms realise the need to attract and keep the best staff.

The gender imbalance in many firms has increased the uptake of flexible working, which is now commonplace across the industry. Up until 2015, most practices were not open to flexible hours or part-time work arrangements. More women are now returning to practice after children, and more men are choosing flexible work arrangements to help with childcare. We have seen an increase in these roles offered within the architecture sector. An impressive 45% of workers who responded to our recent job satisfaction survey are now permitted to work from home.

2017 was a great year for employees globally, with 42%\* receiving an annual bonus – this is a significant change in a sector where bonuses are not traditionally paid. In comparison, only 20% of Australians received a bonus.

The new year has seen a subtle correction to salary levels. This is after five years of steady increases and practices trumping each other with offers. We are now seeing salaries level off. Practices who were short staffed for project requirements throughout the boom hired hastily as a result. Despite practices slowing the pace of hiring, there is still a huge shortage of strong architects at all levels. Along the Australian east coast, it is a competitive market for practices to attract the top architects. We often see strong candidates receive up to three or four offers and a counter-offer throughout the recruitment process.

Our global job satisfaction survey showed that 35% of Australians (compared to a worldwide average of 45%) are looking to move roles in the next 12 to 18 months. The number one reason people are looking to move roles is that of salary and the hope of a pay increase. Interestingly, only 34% of Australians expressed satisfaction with their current salary package. The second reason is a lack of career progression. Firms need to ensure they are paying fair salaries and looking at softer 'sells' to attract the best people, such as career progression, work-life balance and culture. These are top factors that candidates look for in a new role.

When it comes to hiring staff, it is crucial to have an appealing culture to inspire and engage teams. Some practices offer study tours as in-house design competition prizes and take graduates to Europe to attend the World Architecture Festival. Other firms bring their entire practice to annual conferences for innovation and research.

Over the last year, there has been a shift in the demand for skills: with the multi-residential sector decreasing, demand for skills in infrastructure, urban and education projects are increasing. The landscape and BIM sectors have also picked up in the past six months globally. The growth over the past five years for many practices has also shown a spike in roles at the strategic level. Where practices may have grown their leaders from within in the past, the quick growth has meant that many are now looking to source external candidates. We have a high number of roles for potential principal-level staff.

What are the people looking for in a new role?

In order of importance from Bespoke Career's recent global employee survey

- Pay increase
- Work-life balance
- Career progression prospects
- Company culture
- Training & development
- Promotion / increased responsibility
- Flexible working
- Commute time
- Company reputation
- Benefits package
- Holiday allowance
- Bonus
- Other
- Work from home
- Corporate social responsibility

We have also seen an increase in architects moving into new in-house roles for submissions coordinators, practice managers and innovation leaders. Where practices may have relied on directors to look after certain areas, they are now hiring architects into these positions as stand-alone roles. Architects are also moving out of the sector into the construction and developer realm for design management and in-house design roles. Movement in the interior and architectural building product market has also increased.

It's good news for those at the top of their game in their sector or strong all-rounders. There is high demand for them across Australia, the UK, US and Hong Kong. With firms competing for the best talent, and attraction and retention strategies sitting high on the agenda, many architects are hopefully starting to enjoy improved benefits, including work-life balance, some inspiring upskilling and even a bonus.

Krista Shearer trained as an architect at the University of Sydney and practised in the city before moving to London. She joined Bespoke Careers London in 2007 and is now the managing director of the Sydney office

\* Stats from the Bespoke Careers global job satisfaction survey



# Negotiating change in architectural regulation

Byron Kinnaird

When I was 24, the preface of my final-year thesis declared my intention of not registering as an architect. It was a terse barb for both the academy and the profession – institutions I thought were failing architecture. While they were debating whether to fail me instead, I decided to commit to a career in architecture, one way or the other. It turned out to be the other.

Without knowing it at the time, I was asking questions that would direct the next ten years of my practice as an educator and researcher: How does architectural education work? And does it? How do we learn as a profession? What's the role of the regulators, architects, educators and students? Many influences impact the education of aspiring architects. What interests me is how we talk about it and how we develop a common language and a culture of learning. Especially when it wrestles with authority and negotiates change.

It's ironic that I now work at the NSW Architects Registration Board, the statutory authority that accredits courses in architecture, registers and regulates architects and promotes discussion of architectural issues in the community. Behind these activities are codes, policies and procedures that shape the discipline of architecture. But in return, it's the profession itself that can form these regulations through discussions, participation, research and events.

Not all happens in full view. Important regulations have been (re)written that are changing how architectural education happens. Would many people know about the Higher Education Standards Framework (threshold standards) 2015 (HESF 2015) and the new Architecture Program Accreditation Procedure in Australia and New Zealand (APAPANZ)?

The HESF sets the accreditation standards that universities apply to their courses, while APAPANZ connects those courses with the expectations of the profession. This distinction is important because the HESF and APAPANZ now provide a clear regulatory basis that universities and the profession have different expectations for the learning outcomes of students. This matters.

Accreditation has always been the connective tissue running between the diverse expectations of university management, federal government agencies, regulators, frontline teachers, architectural practices, sessional staff and students themselves. Accreditation means different things to people. Sometimes those expectations deviate from the regulatory purpose, scope and aspiration of accreditation. It's remarkable that a single regulation has managed to translate these unspoken expectations of everyone involved.

That doesn't mean it can't work better. The most recent review of the accreditation procedure has clarified these expectations even more, with a process that is more transparent, accountable and streamlined.

The management and governance of accreditation have changed. While the Australian Institute of Architects was a founding member of the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA) along with the State Registration Boards in 1974, they withdrew their membership 20 years later, even though they continued to provide secretariat support and facilitation of the accreditation procedure. This relationship was

never formalised, so the secretariat shifted to the AACA, who is the national voice for the accrediting authorities. The new management committee comprises five members from key stakeholders: the Institute, the Boards, AACA and the universities (through the Australasian Architecture Schools Association and the Australasian Deans of the Built Environment).

One of the key roles of this committee is to oversee a fresh selection and training process for standing panel members. That builds new regulatory intelligence around the accreditation procedure. A mix of educators and architects populate the accreditation review panels who visit schools and make recommendations to the accrediting authority. Accreditation is now a peer-review process, where panels (of practising architects) assess the aspirations of universities with the expectations of the profession. It turns out the profession sets the standard. And, as they say, 'The standard you walk past is the standard you accept'.

So where is the argument over the standard that sits behind architecture and – rightly or wrongly – helps give it shape? I know from experience it's hard to fight at the end of long days/years, layers of administration or even another accreditation visit. Does the sector have enough in the tank to invest in itself?

And will these recent changes radically shift architecture education or practice anyway? Probably not. Regulatory frameworks and national standards don't tend to spark revolutions. But they should start discussions. Then debate. Then argument. Then review. Then change.

Byron Kinnaird is the research & policy officer for the NSW Architects Registration Board. He is also working on a PhD on the accreditation of architecture education in Australia

Listen to 'Learning thresholds: the architecture program accreditation procedure' from Architecture Insights, NSW ARB's podcast on SoundCloud

The exhibition of student work is an important part of accreditation, so members of the profession can assess the threshold standard. Photo: Jacquie Manning



# Prototyping practice

Professor Anthony Burke and Jason Twill

Whereas other sectors such as banking and finance have radically changed both their practice and their disciplinary framing over the last 50 years in response to their changing technical and cultural contexts, architecture has in contrast remained stubbornly static. This disciplinary stasis is anchored in a surprisingly consistent approach to education that favors a highly redundant, and thus highly resilient form, maintained through a well-articulated disciplinary culture, which in turn is reinforced through (international) schools of architecture and architectural media. Both of these rely on the traditional hinge of architecture as located at the intersection of art practice and technology, which does little to recognise or even teach the skills necessary for success in contemporary practice itself.

Anecdotally instructors recognise that despite the cost or opportunity barriers to setting up a small practice being lower than ever, many students assume that training in a large (and traditional) practice internship situation is almost mandatory on graduation to pick up the skills that universities do not (and should not) cover.<sup>1</sup> This traditional form of professional apprenticeship, by its nature, works against innovating the nature of practice; replaying stereotyped roles, reinforcing disciplinary norms and resisting change in the remit of practice or its requisite skills.

In this light, the task of designing one's practice is perhaps the least recognised and least considered design project of both the industry and architectural education.

But what if we took the position that the most important design project of any graduating architect is the design of their own practice? And the most important question for graduating students, the one that should keep them up at night, is 'How will I be an architect?'

In 2016, the UTS School of Architecture began a new final semester option, Prototyping Practice. In contrast to thesis design projects, Prototyping Practice offers an individual or small group of students a platform to explore the design of new practice forms. Framed around a critical examination of their own future practice, students consider alternate ideas of practice in their early career when failure is an option.<sup>2</sup>

Motivated by a desire to expand notions of practice by designing it, the final semester of Prototyping Practice integrates a design and demonstration context (typical studio), with business and entrepreneurial skills, academic and industry mentorship and a high degree of external stakeholder engagement. The approach develops new definitions for and sites of architectural work, while practicing spatial problem solving, entrepreneurship, and the analytical and communication skills of architecture within non-architectural contexts and testing the cultural identification of architecture itself.

There is a high bar set for entry to this studio stream within a more typical studio project focused masters program. For entry, students are assessed on academic performance, their considered expression of interest and practice proposal, and a critical statement of their own motivations to establish non-traditional models of practice. Students work alone or in teams



of two or three, but each practice is reviewed on its own merits before being accepted into the Prototyping Practice stream.

Practice ideas have been surprising, with all practice proposals to date pursuing issues that explore the role of architectural skills and spatial thinking in larger social or ethical terms outside of building alone. While all practices have integrated technology as a means to achieve better design outcomes or processes, technology has been a critical supporting part of only a small number of practices so far, with students much more concerned with ethical issues. Selected practice proposals have addressed issues such as:

1. The issue of improving primary and secondary school participation rates through learning streams based in architecture and design-based problem solving techniques.
2. Using evidence-based design in the built environment to address domestic violence, through an environmental understanding and response.
3. The making of architectural facilitation platforms to help communities in implementing deliberative housing models to address housing affordability in expensive urban areas.
4. Linking neuroscience to user experience within the built environment through VR, to create a 'pre-occupancy evaluation' of a particular design focused on occupant satisfaction.
5. Using cloud-based platforms to facilitate risk, time, cost and communication management for the client and the small firm.

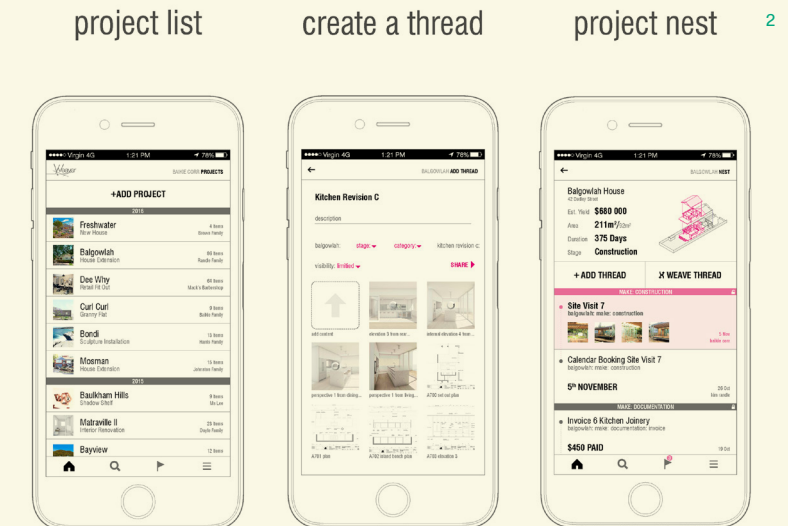
All these practice proposals have taken on an issue and sought to understand and establish operating parameters for success that brings spatial understanding, complex problem-solving skills, and design-led research into focus within the community of its concern.

'Students are far less reverent of traditional practice models. They see them as formal and not operational ... complicit with an industry that is development focused and not delivering quality outcomes in complex social contexts of the built environment'

Prototyping Practice register generated since June 2016

Name	Purpose
Weaver	A mobile based technology solution for small practice and client communications and project tracking for residential renovation project < \$1million
Co-Lab	Address the costs of living in the Sydney housing market for 25- to 35-year-olds, by facilitating neighbourhood consultation for co-op housing strategies
Vigilanti	A social project instigator that designs and implements spatial solutions for social issues. 'Vigilanti: a spatial advocate for the betterment of humanities social needs'
Neurotexture	Promote a healthier mental environment by focusing on user based analysis and VR prototyping of design. 'Our mission is to highlight the value of architecture, and rethink the criteria for good design'
GenArch	Mentoring program for high school students (12-18 years old) that teaches them about project based learning and design thinking methodologies, through architecture. 'Young minds mixed with big experiences'

- 1 The members of Vigilanti – Lin See Lee, Eddie Ma and Lexie Ho – pose for a team photo as part of Vigilanti's marketing package
- 2 Weaver smartphone interface design prototype developed with UX designer collaborators



Flying in the face of individual awards for design and representational dexterity, finding and developing a working relationship with a client, experts, user and operatives across the area of interest as much as taking advice from startup and incubator contexts such as the UTS hatchery program has emerged as a strong theme. Through engaging with external stakeholders (not architects) to consult or work with, architecture students quickly identify their unique value of framing a problem from within architecture. This engagement builds confidence in the students for their skills and practice model, as well as honing the professional skills and openness to learn from the specific context of a problem set.

Unlike industry-led projects or industry-sponsored studio projects, this subject begins with the question, how will you be an architect and what will you contribute? As such, students have all established the role of the architect as a motivating member of a team of experts within a project community, rather than looking to reinforce the model of the individual figure of the design architect as the 'solution bringer'.

Prototyping Practices supports the strong desire that a new generation of graduate architects has to make a meaningful contribution to society through a different approach to architecture itself. At a time of radical industry reformulation happening around them, students are far less reverent of traditional practice models. They see them as formal and not operational or performative, or even worse, complicit with an industry that is development focused and not delivering quality outcomes in complex social contexts of the built environment.

Architecture in this scenario becomes a way to pursue meaningful broader goals and is illuminating the values of the next generation of architecture students. There is an overwhelming desire to do something real and make a difference.

One critique of the program is of its 'instrumentality'. There is a concern of leading students by the hand too directly, as they gain business and practice skills seen in contradistinction to the typical intellectual, critical or conceptual skills of the studio. However, experience so far shows the opposite to be true, with students embracing academic independence to exercise their choice of practice and applying a robust critical framework across the traditional professional context. Concerns about accreditation or intellectual independence have not materialised, and the reports from students who have taken on this challenge have been positive and empowering.

The strongest outcome from Prototyping Practice as an experiment in defining new practices is the benefit of a focus on practice itself as the design project. If the shape of practice is to change, then that change must start with education and its culture; here the skills and conceptual framework of the discipline are tested and challenged at a structural level. In this sense, recasting the last design project of a professional degree as the first design project of an architectural career seems more like a necessity than an option.

Anthony Burke is a professor of architecture and associate dean of international and engagement in the Faculty of Design Architecture and Building at the University of Technology Sydney. Jason Twill is an innovation fellow and senior lecturer at UTS and directs the prototyping practice masters stream

- 1 For an extended discussion of the nature of education within the formulation of practice, see D Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*, MIT Press, 1991, and P Stubb, V Kaps, G Papathanasiou, (eds.), *New Schools of Thought (NeST) Program*, University of Liechtenstein, 2016, and curated as part of the Swiss Pavillion, Venice Architecture Biennale 2016
- 2 The much overused, and recently contested, Silicon Valley entrepreneur adage to 'fail fast and fail often' is almost a pre-requisite for success. It is embedded in studios as the iterative design process, but not extended to practice itself



'For graduates to be creative, critical, entrepreneurial and strategic, our future educational model also needs to offer a platform that fosters nascent practice models. This is where the combination of lateral and analytical thinking with technical proficiency differentiates the design professions from others'

# Shifting our educational paradigm

Professor Helen Lochhead

With a career that has straddled architecture, landscape, urban design and planning, my professional life has combined teaching and practice for over 25 years. So the transition into my current role as dean at UNSW Built Environment, a faculty that encompasses all these disciplines, was not a such a long bow to draw. My work has focused on projects in the public realm where there is greater opportunity to have societal impact. Educating our next generation also offers this opportunity. It provides a platform to shape future professionals with public conscience and agency – a mindset and skill set – to make a difference on a broader scale.

It's about time that we speculate the future of architectural education. For too long we have siloed the built environment and related design disciplines in our educational institutions and professional practice.

The urban realm is a system where decisions and actions in one part impact the other. It is inevitable that, as projects and challenges become more complex and interconnected, we bring these disciplines together in universities and think strategically about how one engages and informs the other. So why has this not happened sooner?

Universities are incubators of new ideas and thinking. But as institutions governed by conservative structures, they can be slow to respond to the changing world we need to anticipate as educators of our future professionals.

The academic drivers of university performance and the demands of professional practice are at odds. For the built environment disciplines, this is further compounded by professional accreditation bodies that have critiqued the increasing divergence between education and the needs of professional practice. The focus on professionalisation puts at risk experimentation and innovation in our educational settings.

This pragmatism runs counter to the growing demand for the professional to act as more than a respondent but as a proactive agent in the agenda-setting and making of the city. It is known that tomorrow's graduates will need to be not only technically skilled but also agile and adaptive. They will face the prospects of rapid shifts in technology and escalating global uncertainties, as well as many career reinventions over their lifetimes.

Because of the rapid pace, scale and diffuse nature of urban expansion this century, traditional models of citymaking reliant on top-down planning and project implementation are less viable when dealing with such dynamic conditions. For the next generation to rise to these challenges and to expand the relevance and terms of engagement of the professions, we need a different educational paradigm.

A paradigm shift that challenges our current educational pedagogy, as well as practice, is emerging. While we will continue to value disciplinary expertise, as boundaries between disciplines are being eroded, our education will need to be broad, deep and nimble enough to prepare graduates for the global drivers and nature of practice in the 21st century.

To be future focused, our educational paradigm needs to value ideas, critical enquiry and speculation; not only knowledge transfer, skills development and vocational training. A model that encourages collaboration and a transdisciplinary mindset is vital.

Today's students are hungry for meaning and agency. Engaging in real-world projects – to address environmental and sociopolitical issues of consequence – provides a roadmap for future practice where they can see a clear nexus between their educational endeavours and the potential impact of their work. UNSW Architecture's Social Agency stream meets this need by designing with local and international marginalised communities.

For graduates to be creative, critical, entrepreneurial and strategic, our future educational model also needs to offer a platform that fosters nascent practice models and ways of working. Such experimentation and exploration demand evidence-based research as a precursor. New strategies are also needed to navigate and interpret the data that surrounds us. This is where the combination of lateral and analytical thinking with technical proficiency differentiates the design professions from others. It has the potential to give our graduates a strategic advantage in our globally mobile work environment.

At UNSW, our educational models are expanding to enable students to speculate and use design enquiry to develop propositional models beyond disciplinary boundaries. For example, through working with marine biologists, computational designers have developed biodegradable artificial reefs tailored to rehabilitate specific marine habitats while others are working with material scientists on applications for new building materials generated from waste and yet others are speculating 'what if' urban scenarios using collaborative digital tools that bring technology and communities together. Interdisciplinary research and teaching are fundamental to our pedagogy. Students across all our Built Environment disciplines, participate in interdisciplinary programs to develop breadth, as well as their disciplinary depth.

Students at UNSW are also given the flexibility to find their passion and develop their strengths through flexible pathways that enables more individualised programs; and also, breadth, through dual degrees, which build on the transdisciplinary foundations of the undergraduate programs to the more expanded scaffold of the postgraduate and continuing professional development programs.

Within this context, we hope to build an agile platform for research and exchange that can respond to the changing needs of the professions while also anticipating the unknown. We are developing skilled and enquiring graduates, who we hope will positively engage, adapt and shape our future cities for the benefit of all people and the planet, firmly in mind.

Professor Helen Lochhead has held many influential positions in the NSW Government and the City of Sydney including executive director roles at Sydney Olympic Park Authority and Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, and deputy NSW government architect. She is currently dean at UNSW Built Environment and president-elect of the Australian Institute of Architects

Applying architectural design skills to different problems, UNSW computational designers, working with marine biologists, have developed biodegradable artificial reefs tailored to rehabilitate marine habitats





'If the role of architectural education is to provoke discourse on the built environment and instil a passion for creating great places for people, then my personal story is a testament to its success. If architecture school is a place where one learns to become an architect, I am yet to prove its success'

# Bryony Simcox

## A love of people and place

'It's a blend of maths and art – it'll be perfect for you' is what my mum told me before I trotted off to study architecture. Funnily enough, that's a pretty good summation of what I do for a living now: 'creative strategy' as a placemaker and urban designer.

The first turning point in my career was a realisation that I love people. They bring spontaneous messiness and vitality to places, through their daily rituals of staying and moving, and making their marks on their environment. Scanning painstakingly-drawn pin-ups and convincing renders produced by my peers at our final university crit, I searched for human life within the drawings. Most of the imagery was devoid of people, while the pictures of people I did see felt like afterthoughts.

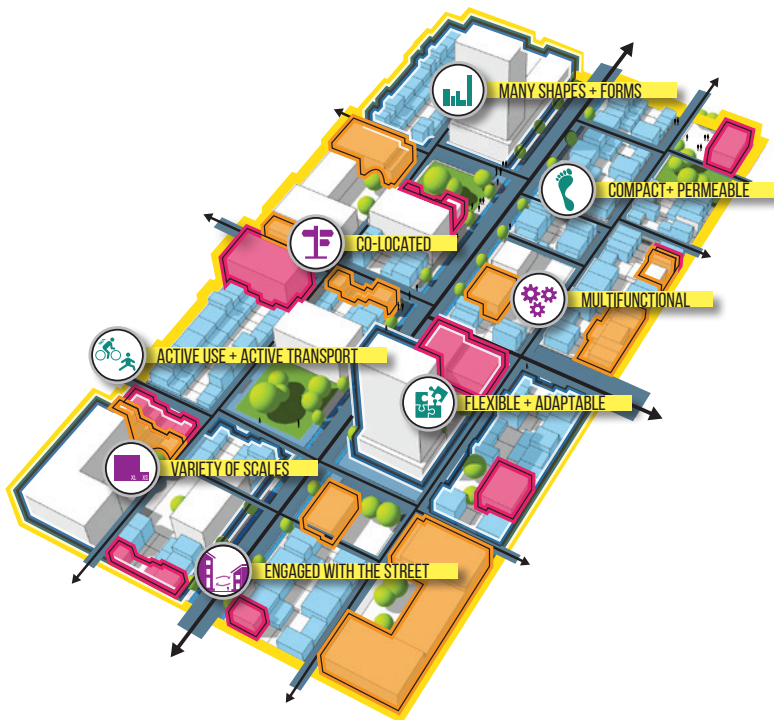
My love of people drew me towards co-participation practices. I found myself working with an incredible team of researchers to empower and guide a community in the design of a local public space. With the residents, we told stories, drew maps, spent countless hours on site observing and talking, and even built a 1:1 model to test the proposal in place. This inspiring project relied on the intimacy of local knowledge, and yet was woven into a nationwide government scheme to improve walking and cycling connectivity across cities.

Working hands-on in this environment inspired the second turning point in my career: I wanted to shift my focus between scales, from the tangible human scale of looking and touching through to city-shaping exercises with a long-term mindset. My current role at RobertsDay sees me making use of those two scales in parallel; preparing strategies for the creation of places, which both at once need to think big and small. And I always ask myself: What about the people in the place? How will they experience it? How will they introduce new dynamics? Can we draw upon these people's knowledge and experiences and weave them into a design solution?

I will never regret studying architecture. The course I attended in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, was a refreshing contrast to the rigidity of high school. First, we unlearned 'learning': non-linear, fearless thinking often produces the most innovative results. An academic environment allowed us to take ideas to the edge, where our concepts sometimes stood up better than our buildings did.

Concept and communication are powerful tools at architecture school. Dripped wax, spoken word, rooms filled with balloons, light installations and hand-sketched parti diagrams were all used to reveal themes and ideas. And even if the idea didn't float in the end, there was merit in the method. Excellent communication has proven critical in my current job: using presentation skills, writing and drawing to articulate the message.

The best things about studying architecture were also the worst. It felt like I could tackle almost anything ... except for architecture itself. After all the cross-disciplinary experimentation and playful imagined projects at university, I was terrified of



working in what I deemed the 'real world', full of computer software and scary clients. We had our non-linear thinking but where were our skills? Part of me yearned for a return to the Bauhaus: an education of directed labour and craft-based training.

It was through a desire to travel, an innate optimism and a passion for communication that I broke into the working world. Following freelance work (as a writer, researcher and consultant), a flight to Sydney, and a series of informal conversations, I found myself as a 'placemaker', putting into practice the gems gleaned from an education far away in the UK.

If the role of architectural education is to provoke discourse on the built environment and instil a passion for creating great places for people, then my personal story is a testament to its success. If architecture school is a place where one learns to become an architect, I am yet to prove its success.

Bryony Simcox is an urban designer and placemaker at RobertsDay

Diagram from the *Fine Grain People Places* (October 2017), a report produced by Bryony and colleagues at RobertsDay for the Greater Sydney Commission. It examines how the urban environment can encourage Greater Sydney to thrive – realising our fullest potential as individuals and communities

'The ways that our public domain and streets are designed can make them user-friendly and safe for different demographics and age groups – and more vibrant and accessible. Walking routes can encourage people to leave their cars at home ... and get some exercise and social engagement'

## Jon Johannsen

# The practice of transition

After 40 years as an architectural professional (including 30 years of my AJA practice), I am moving towards consultancy-based work with a more relaxed family work-life balance, travelling opportunities and cultural pursuits. Like many of my generation, our education and experience has given us a broad and informed overview of our increasingly challenging world. So full retirement is not yet contemplated.

Working from a home studio will facilitate my continuing interests in architecture and urban design, as well as the chance to pursue interests in related fields:

- design review panel work for local councils
- associated urban design and architectural consultation
- community engagement and writing on urban issues
- mentoring other emerging design professionals
- urban art installation collaborations

There will also be the potential to travel, attend and speak at conferences. And more time for family, friends and some cultural pursuits.

As a director and chair of a village revitalisation group in Lane Cove (2007–15), I became interested in the emerging sphere of community advocacy and 'placemaking'. Lane Cove town centre was evolving from a sleepy suburban village to a more dynamic retail and community hub that could better provide for increased residential density. Through community consultation in collaboration with the council, processes and guidance mechanisms were established for structure planning to deal with public domain improvements, traffic growth, parking space pressure and environmental amenity.

This experience gave me an innate appreciation of the potential of space in the urban place:

- how dynamic and interactive it can be in different locations at different times of the day or during periodic cycles
- what physical attributes or services are needed for civic space between shops to run a makers' market or noodle market at night
- what types of retail shops and configurations create potential for successful activation of street fronts, laneways or arcades
- how public behaviour at the local level can affect economic decision-making, and hence urban place potential

Beyond planning and urban design, the ways that our public domain and streets are designed can make them user-friendly and safe for different demographics and age groups – and more vibrant and accessible. Walking routes can encourage people to leave their cars at home and make better use of minutes wasted looking for a parking space to get some exercise and social engagement.

Such experience can then be applied to design review and local advocacy for a range of place-related opportunities. For example, what might constitute a more appropriate podium form in mixed-use or shoptop development for small startup studios or community facilities, rather than more units? A coffee shop next to a small pocket park might turn a green space into a safe playground area for pram brigades to meet. Is an interpretative

artwork, green wall or water feature likely to add character to a space without being just another piece of arbitrary street clutter? Can basement car park entries or loading docks be shared between adjacent sites to minimise loss of street footpaths?

I am also mentoring other design-related businesses such as an emerging industrial design outfit working in 'kinetic architecture'. They are looking at how new product developments for operable walls or roofs might be applied to the creation of more flexible and interactive spaces on the perimeter of buildings to extend activities from inside to out. Could the process of design and fabrication for street furniture be improved with an architectural understanding of materiality, environmental, structural and service needs? Is it possible to secure open spaces from perceived threats with more creative alternatives to bollards and barriers?

To survive and shine in these challenging times, architects need to be diamond-like consultants: well-polished, multifaceted and robust. An architectural education gives us a vast base and the capacity to move in different directions beyond our initial expectations. So shine on you crazy diamonds.\*

Jon Johannsen is the founding principal of Architects Johannsen + Associates

\* Apologies to Pink Floyd

*The Way of the River* is an urban art project at Granville that AJA undertook in collaboration with artists Kath Fries and Rhonda Pryor in 2016





# Andrea Nield

## In my beginning is my end'



I was born in post-war Hamburg, which was like how Syrian cities are today. With the Australian government supporting European immigration in the early 1950s, my family immigrated to Australia for a better life. My father was a carpenter and builder. I spent many hours on building sites in a country town in the Hunter Valley. My parents and their friends worked hard to build the first school for children with disabilities and open the first preschool there.

Our first home in Australia, a single detached car garage, was destroyed by the 1954 Hunter Valley floods. My parents lost all their possessions, yet the war had made them resilient and determined. They stayed with the rest of the locals to rebuild the town together. I saw a strong and inclusive community rebuilding with the expertise of builders, engineers and architects. The council produced planning and building codes to minimise flooding. New bridges and levees were built. It was a formative event for me.

My parents valued education as the war had limited theirs. From the age of 12, my dream was to become an architect. There were none in town, but Edmund Blackett and Horbury Hunt had designed local banks and churches. I read all the books on architecture in the school library. At the time, girls could not study technical drawing at high school; I studied art and painted and sculpted instead.

The University of Sydney in the early 1970s supported my interest in community-based architecture. Lloyd Rees taught us art and Jennifer Taylor taught architectural history. Amos Rappaport taught 'man environment studies', which was useful for understanding community interactions.

It was also a time of political ferment. We demonstrated against the Vietnam war and Col James galvanised us to work with the marginalised community at The Block in Redfern. The architecture students' strike in 1973 aimed to make the course more relevant to our changing world – like what is happening in universities today. It allowed us to study other subjects, such as historical archaeology. Many of our design tutors were talented (and now Gold Medal) practising architects.

To fund my accommodation in Sydney, I worked for construction companies, quantity surveyors, structural engineers and architects. I learnt how the building professions interacted, something not taught at university. In 1972 I was lucky to get a holiday job with McConnell Smith and Johnson. I met Lawrence Nield there, who was the director of YRM+MSJ and we married in 1973. Two years later we started Lawrence Nield and Partners. Lawrence was the foundation stone of my professional life. I worked on Mt Druitt polyclinic and larger hospital projects, such as the Children's Hospital in Westmead and the St Vincent's Hospital extension.

But large hospitals were challenging seven-year projects and I needed a change. The Afghan Ambassador to Australia had funding from the Sultan of Brunei. The Afghan war was apparently won! In 2003, I agreed to go to Afghanistan to find a site and design a 100-bed women and children's hospital. It was small with extraordinary constraints and it became one of my most complicated and absorbing projects. It introduced me to poor, strong and hospitable communities. However, the lack of trained medical staff thwarted the

project. This touching experience made me rethink my professional direction and took me back to my roots.

I started Emergency Architects Australia (EAA) at the time of the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, after meeting Patrick Coulombel of Architectes de l'urgence. Eager students and architects who felt this work was also important became involved. The NSW Chapter and many practices were supportive of the many projects undertaken by EAA. For those interested, read my article in *Beyond Shelter: Architecture for Crisis*.<sup>2</sup> EAA grew out of my family background and education at Sydney University. It was an energetic and special moment in Sydney architectural teaching. Emergency Architects aggregated all my interests.<sup>3</sup>

Andrea Nield is practice professor for architecture at the University of Newcastle, principal at Studio Nield and design director (2016/18) for the Northern Territory Government Architect

1 From T S Eliot, 'East Coker', part II of *Four Quartets*

2 Andrea Nield, 'Beyond shelter in the Solomon Islands', in *Beyond Shelter: Architecture for Crisis*, edited by Marie J Aquilino. It has many articles about alternative architectural practice

3 Others EAA member architects also gave their time to assist in Sydney. The funding for the project was from EU-Stabex and funds raised from events held in Sydney by EAA and architectural company donors

Students and teachers gather on the veranda to celebrate the completion of the exemplar Ngari Community High School in the Solomon Islands. Photo by Richard Briggs for EAA. Richard and Vicki Hon Briggs spent a year in Ngari, as the project managers and photographer for the school. Tricia Helyar also undertook training of the master carpenters in surrounding islands, to ensure construction skills were enhanced



# Phuong Le

## Satisfaction in project management

'Money doesn't make you happy.' This was my mantra for many years while I was growing up and when it came to career decisions at school. In Year 12, the subjects I enjoyed pointed to either a career in engineering or architecture. Knowing that I didn't want to sit in a factory assembling parts all day long (because that's what engineers did, right?), I decided to study architecture. Work conditions or pay rates were not important to me then.

My first architectural first job was at Carter Williamson. I recall drafting on the computer and getting such a thrill when lines I drew aligned. 'I can't believe I get paid to do this', I thought to myself. I was happy. After a few years, I moved to Melbourne and completed a Master of Architecture degree at the University of Melbourne. I worked at another fantastic practice, Zen Architects, and made some friends who were also passionate about architecture. I was happy. Until I got the call from mum.

My mum – a single mother after my parents had separated when I was younger – had struggled to meet mortgage repayments and was undergoing personal bankruptcy. The fibro house in Western Sydney that I had called home in my early years went up for sale. Money doesn't make you happy, but not having it was incredibly stressful. The seed was planted in my mind.

After relocating back to Sydney a few years later, the GFC was in full swing. I found a rare job at an architectural practice but was not happy there. A combination of poor management and a lack of staff appreciation led me to start reassessing my options. I had always worked in architecture and organised events and projects in my spare time. What would it be like to flip that equation?

I signed up to do a diploma in project management. At the time I was volunteering with the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) and landed a job at MPA, a construction management company. Working in residential architecture, I hadn't seen many projects through from design to completion and was keen to gain more site and contract administration experience. I took the leap.

I soon became more aware of others who before worked in design and now worked in related areas. I met many who were like me, who had transitioned over to 'the dark side' – and it wasn't that dark. In my role, I found great satisfaction in working towards practical completion. Using my architecture training, I was able to identify quality assurance gaps in



documentation, assist in value-engineering exercises and could interpret a designer's intent to help during the tendering and construction phases. On site, I could help trades rationalise and propose details that balanced design intent and cost-effectiveness. My training and experience made me aware of project risks and gave me a sense of responsibility to look at design details to ensure coverage to minimise project variations.

It was a steep learning curve and gave me insight from a builder's perspective. I worked with many talented project managers, site managers, consultants and trades. Designers enjoyed working with me as I had a sharp eye for design and helped make their job easier.

I now saw a world where architects could play a broader role in the lifecycle of a project and began to question what it meant to be an architect. Around 2015, I joined the Emerging Architects and Graduates Network and was considering to apply for the role as co-chair. Could I lead a team of passionate architects who represented the emerging generation when I was not working as an architect? Could I sit on the NSW Chapter Council representing this demographic when discussions about the profession focused on traditional architectural practice? Since membership in the Institute was categorised around years of practice in architecture, I felt like an anomaly. The people I knew welcomed me, but I did not feel welcomed by the institution.

By engaging in various projects and groups, I became friends with inspiring women who had succeeded within the male-dominated building industry. These women were passionate about their work, business savvy and go-getters. I found role models who were not specifically architects.

I now work at CBRE in the project management division reporting to an inspiring and supportive female project director and have many other female colleagues there. I still use my architecture skills to verify that the project team has coordinated documentation, identify any scope gaps and of course help with value-engineering exercises.

My wide range of skills and experience, ranging from architect to builder to project manager, offers me many opportunities and the pay has also been relative. These days I seek a balance between getting paid what I'm worth and finding job satisfaction. I still worry about supporting my parents in their old age and being able to afford property in Sydney. But I no longer feel limited in my career goals and aspirations. Money doesn't make you happy, but it gives you many options.

Phuong Le is a registered architect working in project management with over 10 years' experience working in the design and construction sectors in Sydney and Melbourne. She maintains an active involvement with the Australian Institute of Architects

Eco House, Fitzroy North by Zen Architects  
Photo: Emma Cross

# Peter Freeman

## Telling tales and drawing on the past

When I was a junior student at Shepparton High School in the Goulburn Valley in central Victoria, I entered an essay competition sponsored by *The Argus*, a Melbourne newspaper sadly no more. I wanted to write an abbreviated history of 'my town'. Yet at the age of twelve, and having followed my minister father and family around two other towns already, I felt that there was a certain degree of insubstantiality in considering any place 'mine'. Perhaps I was using history to anchor myself to the place?

Anyway, I was one of twelve winners and the prize was a TAA return trip to Sydney and a visit to Taronga Park Zoo. History was in my blood, and so was a love of architecture. Having completed high school with a mediocre all maths and science matriculation, I elected to apply for architecture. However, I made the mistake of leaving the application to my parents, while I was backpacking in Tasmania. They believed that the sciences would be much more appropriate and duly made application for that faculty. I was very cranky and obtained an interview with the dean of architecture, Professor Brian Bannatyne Lewis, who brusquely observed that I was not a convincing applicant. Nonetheless, he allowed my admission and I started first year.

As a total newcomer to the arts, to life drawing, to measured drawing and to art history and engineering lectures, I was out of my depth. The makeshift faculty buildings and two lecturers had a profound impact on my learning. The faculty buildings in 1961 comprised of a string of large Nissen huts placed in parallel. They were linked by an arched

passageway, all in corrugated galvanised iron. Each hut accommodated one of the faculty years with their students, lecturers and tutors. The last huts were devoted for use as a large assembly and design critiquing area. The passageway was where you met students from other years. Professor Frederick Alois 'Fritz' Janeba was an Austrian, who was a member of the University's Faculty of Architecture Planning and Building from 1949 to 1964. I was lucky enough to be a student in his design lectures and studios for my first two years.

Professor David Arthur Lewis Saunders had joined the faculty as a junior lecturer in 1956 and was promoted to senior lecturer status in 1960. Eight years later he became a senior lecturer at the Power Institute of Fine Arts at the University of Sydney. I was fortunate enough to have Saunders as my lecturer in history, design and design theory for over a period of three years. It is no coincidence that I took out an exhibition in each of those three subjects in my third year. It was during this period that I found my feet, in terms of architectural design, historical research, sketching and measuring, as well as the arcane aspects of architectural practice. My subsequent architectural career took me to London, Sydney, Cootamundra, Canberra, and latterly Moruya, in south coast NSW.

Having started my practice in 1984 following a stint with the Australian Heritage Commission, the late 1980s and 1990s saw a surfeit of both architectural and conservation work. The practice undertook work throughout Australia and in Southeast Asia, and I continued to write and edit books for the Royal Australian Institute

of Architects, as it was then. In 1996 I had had enough, and I decided to return to a one-person practice focusing on writing, heritage surveys, conservation and a modicum of architectural work. By the early 2000s, and following our move to the south coast, I refined my activities still further concentrating on small conservation projects and writing, illustrating and publishing.

Thus I made my 'transition'. No one event brought about this change of career. But the ideas of minimising liabilities and working with associates rather than employees were very appealing. The real reason for the change was, I suspect, because I had always loved telling architectural, social and historical stories, and finding a way to illustrate these narratives. It seemed inevitable that the twelve-year-old storyteller would be doing the same thing more than sixty years later.

If I were to name one deficiency in current architectural education, an area with which I have now have no direct contact, it would be to bemoan the fact that hand-drawn measured drawing seems now to be a thing of the past. You can only understand a structure by measuring and drawing it.

Peter Freeman is the author of *The Woolshed: A Riverina Anthology* (OUP, Melbourne, 1980), *The Homestead: A Riverina Anthology* (OUP Melbourne, 1982), and *The Wallpapered Manse: The Rescue of an Endangered House* (Watermark, Sydney, 2014). The latter was shortlisted in the 2014 NSW Premier's History Awards

Peter Freeman's pastel and line drawing of the former Manse and St Stephens Presbyterian Church in 2013





# Ken Maher



## Sliding not shifting

While most of the contributors to this topic have made the transition out of architecture, there are some of us who remain happily trapped, yet have broadened the nature of practice into adjacent fields and modes – a horizontal rather than vertical shift.

For me, this has not been a matter of deliberate intent, but rather an organic expansion of interests and an exploration of the public dimension of design. I am reminded of Irish poet Seamus Heaney's observation that 'in a life the nucleus stays the same but with any luck the circumference moves out' – over time for many of us in both mind and body!

The generalist focus, the questioning, the learned curiosity, the idealistic influences and creative problem-solving aspects of architectural education are often promoted as a valuable foundation for many roles in life.

A good architectural education nurtures a hunger for learning, passion, optimism and resilience. The skills and interests gained are often adaptable to other fields by those who are unfulfilled by a life within the profession. This has the benefits of opening up what might otherwise, through its introversion, be dangerously akin to a cult.

Fortunately, I inherited an insatiable curiosity from my undergraduate studies way back in the heady 1960s, and am still 'growing up' and exploring the opportunities for diversity within, rather than outside the bounds of architecture. Architecture's great value is in its fundamental focus on the human condition as connected to the physical and experiential world. This value is underrated.

Like most architecture students my passion was for design, although my undergraduate thesis was in architectural history and postgraduate research on computer applications in design. An interest in the greater context of architecture in early practice and the influence of some teachers and close colleagues led me to a focus on the natural environment and studies in landscape architecture, and later on in environmental studies. From these excursions beyond the strict limits of architecture, I also gained an appreciation of the value of multi- and cross-discipline engagement.

Involvement with the Institute including a period in the early 80s as editor of *Architecture Bulletin* stimulated my understanding of the value of the profession. It also led to greater engagement through roles on Chapter and National Council. With my gradual shift from small to larger practice, I also started looking more outside the profession in exploring the value of design through advisory roles to governments while still primarily focussing on practice and projects, as well as design teaching.

This expanding interest through architecture, landscape architecture and urban design unsurprisingly led me into a multi-disciplinary mode of practice within HASSELL, and to explore the then-emerging field of sustainability.

This led to my involvement in the early days of the Green Building Council, and more recently with the Cooperative Research Centre for Low Carbon Living, and the Australian

Sustainable Built Environment Council. These broader industry forums are focusing on evidence-based research and advocacy.

My current interests centre on environmental challenges: the tensions between natural systems and the built world, and the essential connection between the two. If we are to meet international agreements for a zero carbon world by 2050, then these will be significant preoccupations within communities and politics. The architecture profession is well placed to help achieve these reductions through design, while also improving the quality of lives.

Our challenge is to ensure our cities and towns are sustaining and civilising places – to be fairer, kinder and more equitable places concerning gender, ethnicity, beliefs and social conditions. At a critical time in the health of our fragile planet and our societies, architecture and design must play a more influential part within our communities and political consciousness.

Inventive and informed design can't be seen as a luxury or an optional extra; rather, it is essential to delivering a built environment that can sustain Australia's diverse communities. The more all of us with a grounding in architecture advocate and engage within, and especially beyond the limits of our small profession, the better it will be for humanity and the future.

Ken Maher is a fellow of HASSELL and president of the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council (ASBEC). He is also a past national president and gold medalist of the Australian Institute of Architects

Ken Maher at the Sydney office of HASSELL



# Vince Sorrenti

## Observation, reflection, satire and irreverence

Bob Hope and George Burns lived to 100 years. Philip Johnson 98, Frank Lloyd Wright 92. Renzo Piano and Norman Foster are still doing great things in their senior years. What is the energy that keeps architects and comics going?

'You're a lot safer watching me on stage than living in one of my buildings!' It's a line I use for a question I am often asked: 'How did a graduate of architecture become a stand-up comic?'

The question appears to miss the point. How does anyone become a stand-up comic? What course of study would prepare someone for a life of observation, reflection, satire and irreverence? What connection does comedy have to any ministry? In truth the connection is real.

Architecture might be the only profession that truly embodies creativity. There are not too many ways a doctor can remove an appendix and it doesn't take a lot of imagination for a lawyer to file an injunction. While some of our more dodgy accountants flirt with creativity, we can assume that what they do is as regimented as most professionals. Architects create and so do I.

The design process is a parallel to what I do every day. I synthesise information, consider its historical and social context, and drill down to its essence. I have to come up with a new expression that is both pleasing and relevant to its environment. Sometimes the solution is obvious and easy, and other times not so. When I am stuck for an angle, it's tempting to take a known path; an answer that will please. It's a temptation I try to avoid and one that a discerning audience will respect me for. Yes, someone else would probably do it. Sound familiar? For every poorly-designed building, there is a bad joke.

At the root of being funny is knowledge, and architectural design is no different. If you scrutinised every hospital that has ever been built, you would be on firm ground designing the next one. Political satirists, for example, understand politics better than most politicians. Their grasp of the nuances and context is so thorough they can imagine politics from another angle. They can see the joke before it arrives. From my experience, architecture graduates have perspective, insight and wonderful intuition. I often suggest to young people who don't know what to do, that they should study architecture.

My architectural education was a rounded experience. Apart from design, it incorporated history, science, mathematics, law, geography and much more. It lacked writing – something I have always loved and missed during my six years at Sydney Uni. It also lacked public speaking and performance, but the annual Architecture Revue more than made up for that! Our revue was, is, and always will be, the best. We were able to relate to everyone, not only other engineering students or dentists. In this specialised world where one's area of expertise is a specific irrelevance – hello to all the blockchain farming analysts reading this – people with a rounded general education are rare and for mine, indispensable.

I love to have architects in the audience. They seem to understand me on a dog-whistle level. They appreciate comedy for all the right reasons, namely none. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is the crux of it all.

Appreciating comedy and architecture has to work on a completely innocent level. You don't need to know anything about design to feel good in a particular space. You can intellectualise about a building until you disappear into your backside, but it changes nothing. How often have you laughed at a joke to pretend you understand?

So what is the energy that keeps us going? It is innocence – I believe that the truth lies in naivety. Be immature. You'll live longer.

Vince Sorrenti is a renowned stand-up comedian and writer

Vince Sorrenti as Noah in the Ark, Architecture Revue, University of Sydney, 1982. It was on this stage and at the newly opened (1981) Sydney Comedy Store that Sorrenti cut his teeth as a performer



'I love to have architects in the audience. They seem to understand me on a dog-whistle level. They appreciate comedy for all the right reasons, namely none. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is the crux of it all'

# Carolyn Mitchell

## Practice becomes the educator

Someone once told me that a degree in architecture was the ultimate all-round degree, allowing a broad-based education, which could lead you anywhere. From history to art, physics to the environment, we learnt to use watercolours, build models, calculate loads and analyse solar paths. We presented our innermost hopes and dreams to a room full of strangers; exposed and vulnerable, yet ambitious and arrogant.

Back in the day, friends in other faculties often joked that it was a degree in colouring in. They asked how our exams were going, not understanding that the all-nighters leading to our final design presentation jury were a mix of drawing, drafting and model-making – both frustrating and exhilarating. It was make or break. Are the drawings complete? Will the model survive the journey? Will I make sense after a week of no sleep? If you failed, it was best to fail spectacularly. Minor failures or a pass conceded, were a bland indictment of your hard work. Better to soar or crash.

In the real world, those fortunate enough to find employment realised that crashing was not on the agenda. We were too young and green to be allowed soar. Competition was fierce to be the chosen one. So the middle is where many remained ... dreaming of greatness. Bathroom details anyone?

This is why so many architects pursue more ways to exert their creativity through designing, making, performing, playing and crafting. After all, we learnt these skills during our studies: photography, graphic design, engineering, painting, model making, programming, coding, history, law, philosophy, geography, public speaking, writing and anthropology are just the start.

The desire to move into another field is inherent in our studies. Our training is so comprehensive there are myriad opportunities to develop our niche. Strangely, what we often need to pursue a career in architecture is not taught. Business development, negotiation, marketing, project management and finance are skills required to get work and get ahead. So too are softer skills such as people management and how to inspire and enthuse a team.

It falls then to practices to train and mentor, providing support for young architects to grow. Larger practices often can develop training programs; in smaller practices the skills are learnt on the job by default, as everyone pitches in. The practice becomes the educator.

So how do you find the talent that has the best potential and the enthusiasm to become the leaders of the future? Succession planning is essential and often overlooked. When interviewing, it is all too easy to look for the Revit speed the candidate achieved in the test, or the fact that they stayed in one place for more than six months, or worked on that iconic building, which is just the experience we need. Having a conversation can tease out how they might respond in times of high pressure and deadlines, but some skills cannot be taught. New software can be learnt and new building types researched. We can ask about working in a team. But how much did they do, or how much did 'we' do? That is the question.



Extracurricular activities are now rarely listed on a CV. Finding out what someone does away from the office can often tell much: their interaction with the team, their ability to take and give direction, and their leadership potential. What do they love to do? Do they have a side hustle, or have they moved sideways? This can be a great thing, not a threat. It speaks to drive and ambition, as well as confidence in their abilities. They have passion. They are interesting.

At Mirvac Design we work with a former tailor, a former primary school teacher and a former plumber. Several in our team have moved sideways within Mirvac into development, construction, sales and project design management. We are lucky that we can support them in their moves within the greater business, retaining their expertise and fulfilling their ambitions.

Embracing diversity of education and experience will become more critical to define and differentiate. Our broad architectural education is a blessing. What do you love? Where do you want to focus? It is only limited by your imagination.

A strategic architectural leader, Carolyn Mitchell has a strong focus on operations, design and people management, which she brings to her role as studio manager at Mirvac Design

The wall in the foyer of Mirvac Design's studio celebrates the 100+ team members' diversity with a collage of their favourite photos of themselves



## Annie Tennant

# Creating the best places for all people

As general manager of sustainability and culture for the Barangaroo South precinct for Lendlease, I lead the environmental and social sustainability efforts, strategy and delivery of public art and culture, as well as general design advocacy on the project. My architectural education taught me a way to approach and think through any challenge. We were practising 'design thinking' before it became trendy. My work is firmly within architectural practice, which for me includes everything that requires spatial thinking and creative design applied to the development of our cities.

I came to this role by following my passions and not worrying about whether it was architectural enough. After graduating, I worked on public space design for the Sydney Olympics with the Government Architect's Office and Hargreaves Associates. It made me realise that I was more interested in the spaces between buildings than the buildings themselves. That led to me undertake a Master of Urban Design at UC Berkeley. Afterwards, I worked for the landscape architect and artist Walter Hood on projects that created positive social and community impacts.

After returning to Sydney and becoming involved with the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), my interest in broader industry issues – particularly for women and other disenfranchised groups – was cemented. When offered the opportunity to be Lendlease's first global diversity and inclusion manager in 2008, I applied design thinking to develop the business case and strategy that was rolled out globally for Lendlease. It was arguably a first for the Australian property and construction sector. Despite not being trained in HR or business strategy, my design thinking and knowledge of the industry enabled me to analyse what was needed and establish the structure to embed it within the business.

Joining the Barangaroo South development team brought me back to my first loves: the public domain and public art. In developing the public art strategy, I pulled in expertise from across the art world to produce an exciting and rigorous approach to the delivery of public art and culture at Barangaroo South. Design thinking was as critical to developing public art and its delivery process, as it was to guiding the design and construction of the public realm.

Architecture teaches us to think of the big picture and to understand how a range of factors, such as climate and the environment, affect our places and cities. When my role expanded to include leading the ambitious environmental and social sustainability efforts for the Barangaroo South project, it involved broadening the understanding of ecological and social considerations. I am also now working with leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creatives and thought leaders to understand better how to embed Indigenous sensibility into all stages of project development. This will reflect the community's values in the making of places that connect to Country – so vital for inclusive cities.

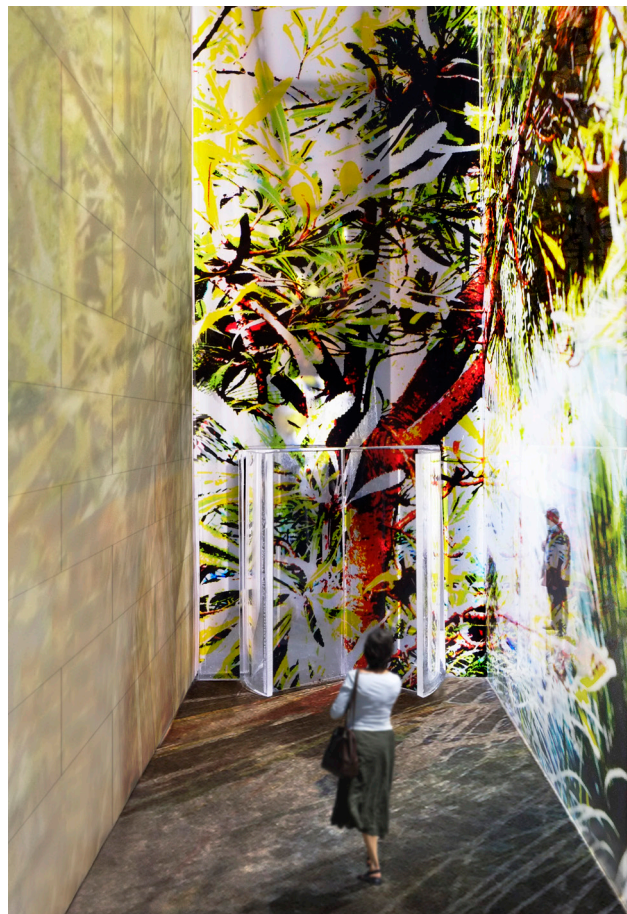
In recognising my strengths (and understanding my weaknesses) as well as my passions, my career has led me to focus on creating the best places for all people – walkable, accessible, inclusive, genuine and connected to community and Country.

These are places that build capacity, where people feel that they can take part and belong. Places with minimal ecological impact, where in fact they improve ecology. Places that are climatically responsive and resilient. Places that promote health and well-being. And places that are designed well and have character and identity, respecting the heritage and identity of the site.

There is a strong business case that diverse teams – while sometimes being more challenging to set up – turn out being a significant business benefit for retention, engagement and business performance. This is true also for city making. Architects need to work on an equal footing together with landscape architects, environmental planners, transportation planners, engineers, designers and artists – with their diversity of skills, brains, experience and approaches – to create the best cities.

Annie Tennant is the general manager for sustainability and culture at Barangaroo South

An impression of a permanent public artwork by German artist Sabine Hornig. Commissioned by Lendlease under the Barangaroo Public Art and Cultural Plan, *Shadows* will be installed across a 170-metre walkway connecting the three International Towers Sydney at Barangaroo at the end of 2018





# Sascha Haselmayer

Interview by Nicola Balch

## How questioning the architecture brief inspired a new way of thinking about city procurement

**Nicola Balch:** You studied and worked in architecture for some years before starting a range of different small businesses. What brought on this shift?

**Sascha Haselmayer:** I studied architecture to change the world. I studied at the Architectural Association in London, a school that has a pretty broad definition of what architecture is. So for me, architecture was never defined as being strictly about design and building. It became more of a practice of cities. After school, I spent a year in the slums of Venezuela and helped lay the structural foundations that ultimately brought Hugo Chavez to power. At this point, around 70% of the population was not recognised by the government as being legal residents and citizens of their own country. For me, the question became at what point do you say, 'Oh I'm only here as an architect. I'm going to make your life better through building'? Or do you ask yourself how you become part of tackling some of the causes? In all, I practised as an architect for up to two or three years. What I'm doing today, uncannily, is almost an extension of what I did as a first- or second-year student. I followed a path that began in architecture and then created my own profession out of it.

Many architects don't practice the act of building a building at all but setting up the right frameworks for urban change. In many respects that is what Citymart does but through technology. When we first spoke, you mentioned how your issue with the briefing and the procurement process of architecture led to the development of Citymart. Could you elaborate?

In my final year of architecture, I was interested in how privatisation models in the UK worked. I ended up being employed by a huge construction company, Carillion, that went bust because the whole procurement model of the UK didn't work (poetic justice). I was interested in understanding where the brief comes from. I never understood any of the briefs I was involved in because a lot of the things were directly translated into architectural terms. For example, we would see briefs to make a city more innovative by building a technology incubator next to a research centre, but there wasn't a real rethinking of the actual policies that would govern what was going on there. So I started a company that developed briefs for urban design, by covering the gap between lofty policy goals and the instructions that would be given to planners. We worked with 37 cities and universities developing their policy/planning interface, focused on urban innovation districts. But we found that in the implementation, cities were going back to just building buildings. They were struggling with adopting the policy part. So we started to ask the question: 'How do we use government to become part of

bringing about real change?' Rather than saying 'We want it to happen and we'll just watch it happen'.

In 2003, we developed a spin-off organisation to rethink how we deliver services focused on the citizen experience in cities, aimed at changing the relationship between government and citizens by incorporating all kinds of new actors like startups, universities and technology companies. It was literally taking design thinking and applying it to the way city services were run. We were very successful, but even if these solutions were working, they weren't scaling. They weren't travelling from one city to the other. That's where the idea for Citymart was born. It dawned on us there was a relationship between how governments were contracting and how they were choosing what to buy and how to communicate with the market.

**So you started to problem solve how and why procurement was managed?**

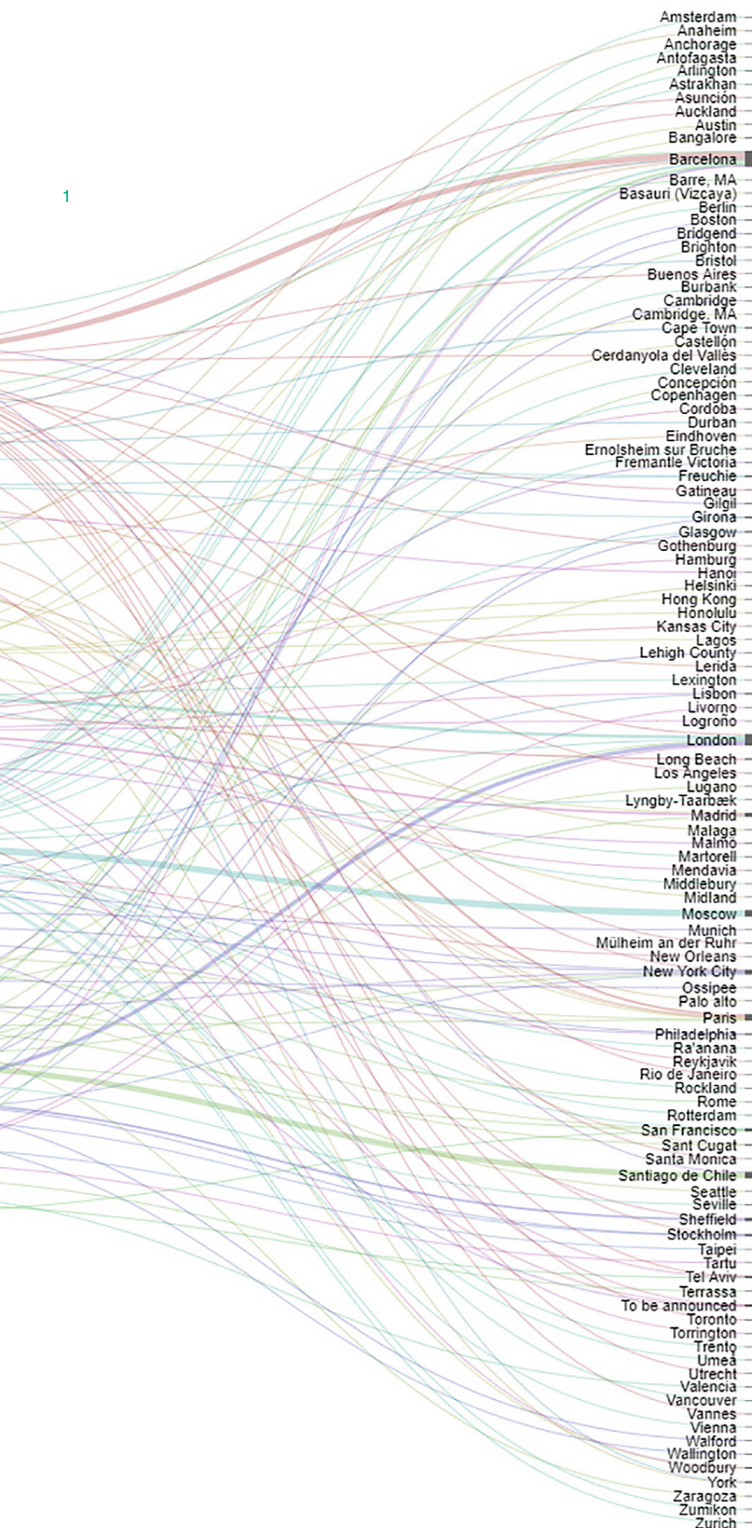
Until this point, we'd never thought about public procurement. We thought about privatisation and how it worked, but not how these transactions happened. Then we learned that cities issue 18 million procurements a year, yet no one knows what's happening. This is 10% of the world economy that is issued through procurements. What we found was that the same issues with briefs were repeating in every service and discipline. City governments didn't have a clear definition of the problem they were trying to solve. They were missing the opportunity to invite providers to not only deliver exactly what they're asking for but to also add their experience to it and offer improvements on what is possible. We arrived at a formula where if a city publishes a problem instead of a specification, it allows them to build a fruitful relationship between the community, businesses, social organisations and city departments to uncover better solutions.

**That formula relies on cities coming to the forefront and admitting their problems. Did you have any difficulty with that?**

We initially labelled them 'problems' and marketed it as 'turn your local problem into an opportunity'. Then we realised that cities were uncomfortable with publishing their issues. They typically want to market the solution and citizens expect that it's almost like Santa Claus promising you presents. If you think about it, that's how politics works. So for the first couple of years, we struggled with that. We had to self-reflect and ask how can we, as a little organisation, move this entire market without any political or economic capital. So we created a dynamic between the cities where they felt accountable to each other and not to us. Our campaign model partnered cities with each other, with us as the facilitator. An important factor was to get cool cities

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Santiago de Chile  
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York

‘Cities were missing the opportunity to invite providers to not only deliver exactly what they’re asking for but to also add their experience to it and offer improvements on what is possible. We arrived at a formula where if a city publishes a problem instead of a specification, it allows them to build a fruitful relationship between the community, businesses, social organisations and city departments to uncover better solutions’



1 Visualisation of how cities around the world sourced solutions through 99 challenges with Citymart's help  
2 An innovation workshop at the 2014 Cities Summit, hosted by Citymart and the mayor of London

like San Francisco, London, Paris or Barcelona to embrace these partnerships. This would give the movement cultural capital and credibility so that others would want to join. Because the cities felt more accountable to one another, they would collectively agree to each publish a problem on a given date. Over time we found what motivated them was not just the problem-solving nature of the network, but to be seen as attractive places for talent, like startups and innovators. The formula worked. It got us out of the problem of not having to have a first mover. The result was a community of cities grouping together to target startups and inviting them to come to their city to solve problems. We also realised that the cities took this far more seriously if we charged for the facilitation. That's how we started Citymart.

How does this method of problem-solving compare to standard consultancy methods, such as what we experience in architecture?

We've broken quite a few paradigms. We had a tiny team helping 30 cities solve problems simultaneously. Nowadays we have more than 2000 problems managed on our platform, so we had to define our goal. And our goal was not to do interesting work. Our goal was to change the plumbing of how these 18 million transactions are done. It took us a long time to get our egos out of the way and to understand that every meeting we were having with a client was one meeting too many. You can't do that 18 million times a year. So we had to design ourselves as humans outside of the process and introduce technology to play that role. When we attend these meetings, we usually end up referring to an example from another city tackling a similar problem; and figuring out not what product is right but what the city actually wants to accomplish. It's essential for us to make this work accessible and scalable. That is very different from a mission where you say, 'I want to create'. And we've been torn between these worlds.

It's incredible how many startups there are with architects as the founders, whether they're tech startups or social enterprises. There's something about the training that is not just design thinking, but also the complex process of working with teams of different disciplines developing solutions for the long term. It's a powerful ingredient. I now practice a different profession today, but it's more related to what I was learning in architecture, than the traditional practice-oriented stuff. It's not really a shift at all.

Sascha Haselmayer is a social entrepreneur and an expert in the field of social and urban innovation and public procurement in cities. Haselmayer is CEO of Citymart, an online platform working to improve the lives of millions of citizens by helping over 100 cities in 25 countries transform the way they solve problems



# Matthew Turner

Interview by Ashley Dunn

## Finding fulfilment as an architect

After a career in architecture and on the client side in NSW, Spain, the UK and India, Matthew Turner is now based in London and runs the specialist career consultancy [buildingonarchitecture.com](http://buildingonarchitecture.com). He helps architects with their careers both within the profession and those looking to move beyond it. His years as the architect's agony uncle at the UK's *Building Design* and now the *Architects' Journal* careers coach, has given him the unique experience of hearing firsthand the anxieties and hopes of architects. He talked to Ashley Dunn about how architects can find fulfilment.

### Ashley Dunn: Do many architects stress about their careers?

Matthew Turner: To outsiders, architecture has to be one of the most coveted professions. After all, I can't count how many times someone has come up to me at a party and said they would have loved to be an architect. The reality is not all rosy. Many might be content, but others with an architectural background struggle, judging by the number of emails I get. Many at early- and mid-career find office life and politics much more mundane and dominant than they would wish for. They are finding it hard to sustain their interest, or, the options ahead as traditional architects seem not attractive.

### Why do you think this is?

If you think about it, many architects chose a vocational course when just a teenager, assuming that translates into a secure, stable profession in the way that a vocation such as medicine still does. Many young architects leapfrog over an existential questioning phase that most go through in their 20s. For example, those who study French and business, or physics, at some point tend to have had examined what they are good at and what they want to do, whereas architects in their early career are cocooned by a comfort that 'the profession' awaits them. A teenager's understanding of work is very different from that of a 40-year-old, let alone taking into account current changes in the workplace. As a result, I find many architects lack the self-awareness that others have.

### What do you think are the main strengths and weaknesses of architects?

Something I heard when I was part of a team advising a university on the set-up of a combined planning and architecture

course has always stuck in my mind. One tutor pointed out an irony that the most able and inquisitive students with grand aspirations to make cities applied to do architecture, and those who chose planning were seeking a steady public sector job. Yet those with the latter background would ultimately have the most influence on our urban environment. What architects end up doing is sometimes not aligned with their core motivations.

Architects tend to be idealists and enthusiasts, and love to think alternately at the big and small scale. This is an incredible strength and very much valued in other industries at a strategic level. The trouble is the opportunities to fully flex this muscle are only occasional in the construction sector, where other factors such as regulatory, financial or organisational considerations compete for attention. While of course some architects thrive on these constraints, many never get over the shock that life is more complex than a studio project.

Also originating from what I consider a woefully outmoded education system, architects can struggle with collaboration. A given of most work environments, collaborative working all too quickly seems to translate to 'compromise' for many architects, a feeling ingrained in us ever since we had to stand up at our first crit and defend 'our' idea. Architects who can collaborate well are really valued.

### What frustrates architects most about their careers?

From what I see, the frustration boils down to value. The perception of what is valued, what value is offered, and what that value commands. Architects value things that are often not particularly recognised by others, and vice versa. Many architects get drawn into such things as perfecting a detail or composing the most elegant plan, but the trouble is your average client assumes that all comes with the service. Clients often are motivated by other interests, which many architects either don't prioritise or don't find interesting. So, for example, when architects have little regard to the competing demands within a client's organisation or underestimate the power of design risk from a funder's point of view, the value of the architect's service is harder to see. This is a contributing factor to their marginalisation, and in the end, lower fees.

This all translates to a profession generally with low salaries, which by far is the most regular complaint I receive in my inbox. I have a steady stream of clients coming to me because their



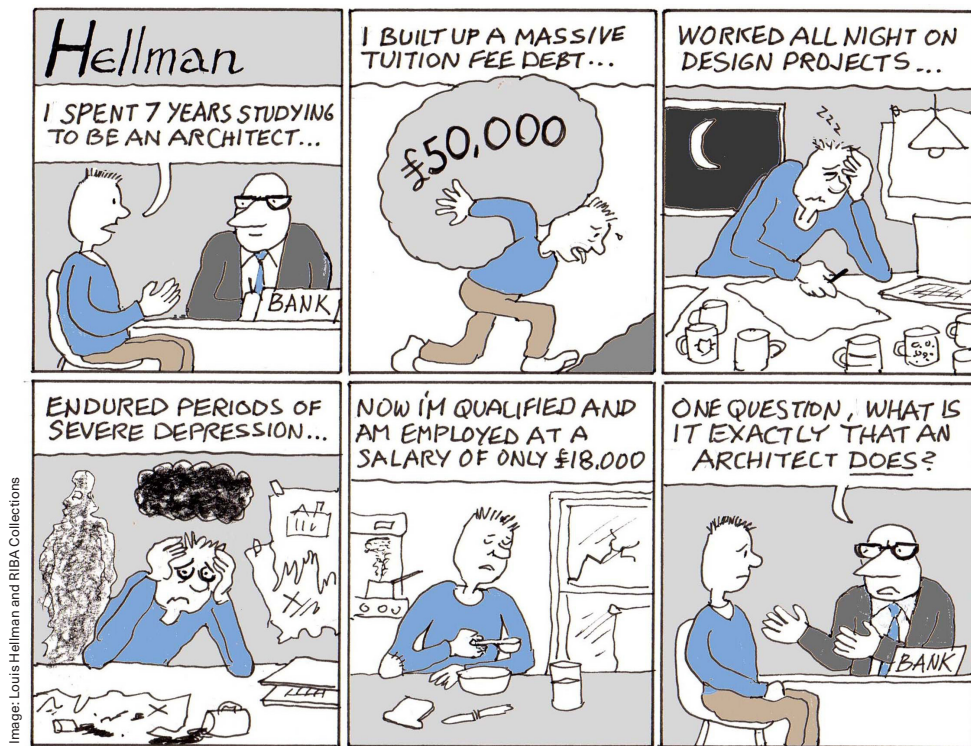


Image: Louis Hellman and RIBA Collections

partners who work in other professions have told them they couldn't believe how little they earn as qualified professionals.

#### What kind of architects tend to look for opportunities beyond architecture, and what options are there?

Increasing earnings quite often drives architects to seek out other options, but many are also motivated by seeking how they could apply their skills elsewhere. Some muse on solving wider problems than designing buildings, and there are many avenues in this direction. Consultancies exist who offer integrated problem solving (for example, IDEO offer design thinking solutions for issues as diverse as urban farming to running hospital departments). There are also opportunities within multidisciplinary teams that focus on the kind of projects where the built environment is only one aspect. Such commissions are increasingly seen in forward-thinking public sector organisations. It is worth noting that most of these opportunities are concentrated in a few cities globally, and to transition to this sector requires a degree of skilful career management.

Another way individuals often make a change is to climb further up the construction industry 'tree', arguably to where decisions are made. There are many opportunities on the client side, and the person who can manage architects has great value in many sectors. Of course these jobs are primarily about project management and have little direct design function, but the hybrid of project manager and architect is a potent one. When an organisation has vision, these roles can be incredibly creative and in many ways become the author of schemes in the modern construction industry. Roles exist in the public and private sector, from the estates strategy lead for a university, to the in-house layout designer for a specialist professional kitchen company. Some architects may pooh-pooh these options as not architecture, but these kinds of roles can offer strategy, autonomy, a higher salary and more respect than architecture.

#### How about the options out there for practices to develop?

It has always seemed to me surprising how few architecture firms cross the table to become developers themselves. Architects spend their careers becoming expert at a wide range of aspects of the property market, but rarely go that step further beyond design interests and extract the value from that knowledge themselves.

Practices may well dip their toe in by developing their property or office building, but rarely scale up. Two MBA professors I know tell me they have not once had a student who was an architect – something I find telling. Perhaps the seemingly limited interest of architects in the spreadsheet world of business and development economics is due to a perception that you need money to be a developer. But it is worth bearing in mind that the vast majority of commercial developers aren't using their own money.

Of course, money making as a focus is an anathema to many architects. I often come across architects who are driven by a sense of improving the world but are crestfallen by their ideas never coming to fruition. This is where modesty and learning the art of collaboration can develop into a rich seam of work opportunities.

Architects can really make a difference, but this is by helping to solve the problems of others, not starting from problems they themselves want to solve. Last year's RIBA Stirling Prize winner [for best building in the UK] offers a case in point, illustrating a new sensitivity of architects that can make business sense, as well as bring fulfilment. dRMM's Hastings Pier has been described as a 'non-building'. More a space for the public to use, its function and form have been conceived of by the public, not by the architect. The architect's main value to this project wasn't designing a beautiful aesthetic result, but playing a part in marshalling, organising, guiding and supporting a community group to develop a fundable project, enabling a successful funding application. Many such opportunities to make things happen are out there for architects and are a wonderful way to scratch an architect's itch to make a difference.

#### What single thing can an architect do to be fulfilled?

As individuals, we can't put the world to rights and we can't all have stellar careers. But from my experience there is a single maxim as individual architects: those who make themselves useful get the most opportunities and are more likely to be fulfilled. Prioritise articulating, capturing or realising the value that your client or end user wants.

Matthew Turner is an architect and careers consultant who runs the consultancy Building on Architecture. See also his column in *Architects' Journal*

# Meg Bartholomew

## The value of life's intangibles and the built environment

Driving 900 kilometres through the desert for a design meeting with the women of Watarru Community; then flying in an eight-seater through the storm clouds of Arnhem land to check reinforcement before a concrete pour; and now creating the economic narrative to catalyse urban renewal in a struggling city. My career has not followed a linear projection – mostly I follow my nose. I started studying architecture at UNSW and finished up at the University of Tasmania. Since then, I have never practised strictly as an architect.

After university, I went on holiday to Uluru and didn't come back. I lived with an Indigenous community for five years, working in both housing and planning roles for the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) people. The most intriguing work came towards the end when I finally knew enough to map the overlaps between culture and spatial organisation and how that might impact on social dynamics and mental health. Many of the stories I heard were about intangible ideas like comfort, control, proximity or pride: being able to enjoy sitting in the sun protected from the wind; feeling secure with degrees of visual accessibility; living close to loved ones; and associating strongly with a particular place. People would design or adapt their houses and communities to respond to these kinds of intangible needs. I have experienced these values as universal for all people I have worked with, across a diversity of cultures and situations. It was a similar story in my work in Arnhem Land and the same drivers in the city development I worked on most recently at PwC. It is also the same rhetoric in the dispute over property in London that consumes minds at the London School of Economics, where I am currently studying an MSc in Cities.

An architectural education primes you to feel these intangibles and to see behind the surface to the underlying forces that drive outcomes. Choices made based on values is something an economist might describe as irrational or imperfect decision making – the behavioural economics of architecture. It is economics that is an elephant in the beautifully proportioned (yet over budget) architectural room that is not addressed enough in education. It leaves the profession playing catch up. Understanding both the tangible cost of design as well as the value of intangible benefits – in equal monetary terms – can bring credibility with backers as well as bureaucrats, resulting in greater impact for the end users.

**'Understanding both the tangible cost of design as well as the value of intangible benefits – in equal monetary terms – can bring credibility with backers as well as bureaucrats, resulting in greater impact for the end users'**



Focusing more on people is the common thread among my fellow master's students, or soon to be ex-architects, that motivated us to diversify from architecture. Every one of us – from South Africa, India, Colombia and Australia – wanted to learn more about the behaviours that constitute and reconstitute urban life. The practice of architecture either sparked the interest or left us wanting to know more about people's behaviour through space: who controls it, who builds it and who inhabits it? It is also a broadening of the profession's limited impact that is a common motivation to shift careers. We have all experienced the unseen levers of policy or finance that influence our cities in a bigger way than any single building. The action-oriented nature of architectural education leaves us the legacy of seeing through a problem and then also able to design an implementable solution, in any field, from governance to investment.

I hope to foster one of these implementable solutions through the master's research by looking at how to better incorporate the value of life's intangibles in urban investment decisions, shifting the focus from real estate uplift to the deeper drivers. A driver such as connecting with others links to economic growth, social mobility and life satisfaction. Changes in social networks and places with active public realm register this. Quantifying the impacts of sound design for our cities in this way can lead to better decision making. Do I regret any of my irrational career choices? Absolutely not.


Meg Bartholomew is an associate director at PwC. Her work in placemaking includes economics, finance, sociology, urban planning, architecture and development

Meg would like to thank Anees Arnold, Anukriti Pathak, Rohan Patankar, Cara Doherty and Felipe Walter-Correa, who shared their dreams and frustrations

A rural road in South Australia's APY Lands. Photo: Greenhill Australia



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