Lost Sydney
First of the new

Now in its 75th year, Architecture Bulletin is Australia’s oldest architecture journal. Since 1944 it has been the platform for the profession to have the conversations it needs to have and we are delighted that with this issue we have returned to self-publication. This is part of our commitment to an ongoing discourse within the profession in NSW.

This first of the new is a meditation on Sydney – the one we have, the ones we might have had – and reminds us that many of our contemporary questions and challenges remain remarkably unchanged over time. Architecture Bulletin’s relevance and value is similarly enduring.

Architecture Bulletin is unequivocally for our members, whose support makes it possible. We invite you to become a patron of the Architecture Bulletin and support the Institute in continuing to deliver its high quality content to our 3500 plus subscribers quarterly, in hard copy and online. As a patron, your practice demonstrates its support for the architectural profession and its voice, and is provided the opportunity to contribute editorial content and showcase projects.

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Joshua Morrin
Executive Director, NSW

A revamped approach

The selection of front covers of Architecture Bulletin on the opposite page provides a snapshot of over seven decades of evolution within our publication – the longest running architectural journal in Australia and an institution in its own right. With this issue we return to a self-publishing model that will allow better control over its design, production and structure. Architecture Bulletin now opens with the themed feature pages followed by the Chapter section. The latter includes the usual messages from the chapter president and executive director, chapter and patron news, as well as other articles and reviews.

The last page is a new opinion series called Provoke. For the rest of 2018, Angelo Candalepas will explore topics from a call to making transformative architecture (this issue) to aesthetic responsibility and the awards (next issue). Each year a different author will have the opportunity to take up this platform to probe provocative topics of their choice. See page 40 for more information on how to be the Provoke author for 2019.

As part of the remodel, we are returning to a volume and issue numbering system instead of seasons. This edition is volume 75 issue 2, since it’s the 75th year and the second issue for 2018. There will be four issues a year.

Enjoy the Lost Sydney issue and the revamp of Architecture Bulletin. We welcome your feedback.

David Tickle (Chair) and Ricardo Felipe (Editor)
on behalf of the NSW Chapter editorial committee

‘In the past it has often been said that the Institute was as dead as the dodo. The pros and cons of this statement will not be debated. The important fact is that at present the Institute – and particularly the New South Wales Chapter – is very much alive.’

Chapter Bulletin, Vol. 1 No. 1
Following on from your Hellman cartoon in the excellent AB [Shift issue] today, I couldn’t resist sending my son’s 2001 effort (with his teacher’s comments) of describing what I really do … together with his graphic.

Rolfe Chrystal
Architects of Arcadia
23 July 2018

I found the latest issue of AB [Shift issue] very interesting and agree that our architectural training prepares us for many other vocations through a shift in emphasis and application. In a shifting world of design, procurement and social responsibilities, architects have much to contribute. Some beavering away in communities of their choice, and others take on a more public, vocal stage. I am pleased to see good design in architecture and the built environment becoming more visible to the community. With thanks to the NSW Architects Registration Board who have educating the public in their charter to administer the Architects Act 2003, and the Institute through advocacy. Well done and please thank all who contributed and were involved in this issue.

Ingrid Pearson FRAIA
30 July 2018
RAIA Gateway Competition entry by Nick Hollo, architect with the Energy Authority of NSW (finalist). ‘The scheme recreates the atmosphere of 1788, atop a water-covered, glazed roof over parts of Circular Quay Plaza (Alfred Street) and the Expressway, and bushy, landscaped walks along Circular Quay East. […] The Plaza is to be a monument to Sydney’s 200 years; but not a monument in the pompous sense. It should give us pride, and yet fill us with shame; make us laugh and yet fill us with sorrow, allow us to be, and relax and yet provoke us with new insights and enable us to marvel at the beauty, and the chaos of the city.’ – image and text from Hollo’s competition entry, Quay Visions (CAA/RAIA, 1983)

Architecture Bulletin acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the traditional owners of the land and waters upon which the Sydney CBD and Circular Quay stands.

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Angelo Candalepas
Lost Sydney

Circular Quay has long been an exceptional environment with its natural beauty and cherished structures. But along the sweep between the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House there also stand built objects of derision. The 1909 Royal Commission on the improvement of Sydney was a key turning point in Circular Quay’s development. In this issue, we look at its architectural past, its real and imagined present, and its potential future. What has Sydney lost and what can we gain from the past?

2010 Circular Quay masterplan by the NSW Government Architect’s Office and HASSELL
A grand building or an expansive public space on the quay front?

Peter John Cantrill

In this sketch of Sulman’s 1909 proposal, the Commission’s draftsman Coulter included the building on the waterfront that was not described in Sulman’s evidence.
In 120 years, Sydney’s colonial population grew to over half a million. Within a quarter of a century, it would more than double. With over 6000 trams arriving and departing each day from Circular Quay, the place of first contact had become the city’s transport epicentre, and congestion was increasing faster than population.

On the request of the City of Sydney, the State Government had appointed a ‘Royal Commission for the Improvement of the City of Sydney and its Suburbs’, with the Lord Mayor as president. The city needed an underground railway and a station at Circular Quay was inevitable. What form it would take required careful examination.

21 May 1909 was the last of the 90 days of the public hearings on the topic, although the ensuing public discussion led by the press would continue. Of the 40 witnesses, John Sulman, architect, academic and co-founder of the international town planning movement, appeared for a record eleventh time, tabling evidence and facing questions. He proposed a rail line under the middle of the city from Central Station to Circular Quay as part of a figure of eight, one loop under Woolloomooloo the other under Pyrmont, prefacing an expansion of central Sydney.

To the very end, Circular Quay vexed the Commissioners. It posed not simply a technical or financial question, there was more to consider. Sulman described a water gate, in a widened quay in which the gardens, fountains, monuments, and buildings, are harmonious parts of one dignified composition, [that]…form a worthy water portal of the city. Most witnesses had preferred an underground station. Sulman agreed it would be sorry to see the city railway carried above ground at Circular Quay – from a practical point of view … the rattle and the noise would be very detrimental; and from an artistic point of view … there should be no long building facing the Quay that would hide the view of the city.¹

The questioning from his senior, the innovator engineer Commissioner Norman Selfe, a long-time advocate for a circular city railway, was incessant.

Selfe: On the other hand, other witnesses consider that it [an elevated station] would form a kind of Watergate to the city and would add very much to the effect?
Sulman: That is not my opinion.
Selfe: Why cannot a railway station be designed properly if it be placed in the hands of competent architects?
Sulman: It could be well designed, but I think it would be detrimental because of its height and mass.
Selfe: Do you not think, as the road rises so rapidly, that you would only have to go a little distance [back] up … before you could see right over the station?
Sulman: No. The elevated railway with its roof over it would, I believe, entirely block the view … as far as Bent-street.
Selfe: Would it not be compensated for by the handsome view you would get of a good building from the water?
Sulman: I would prefer to see over a low building at the water front, and see fine handsome buildings at the back of the Quay …
Selfe: Do you think that the obstruction of the view should stand before the question of the convenience of passengers?
Sulman: No. On the other hand I think that an underground line there would be more useful practically than an overhead one, because it would obviate the noise and passengers would be nearer the surface than they could be if you had an elevated road.

Selfe: Would the noise be any greater than it is on the streets, or half so great?
Sulman: I should say it would be double. The noise made by trains passing over bridges is infinitely greater than the noise of trains passing along the level.
Selfe: That is a mere matter of construction?
Sulman: No, I think not … ²

Finally, Sulman changed the subject to end the barrage, raising a local resident’s unrelated idea.

Selfe preferred a grand overhead waterfront railway station. He appeared before the Commission aided by 14 sketches prepared by the Commission’s draftsman, Coulter. He claimed it requires no costly resumptions, and instead of being a disfigurement, is made a great ornament of the future city adornment, designed to add prominence to the water front. It … interferes in no way with the present tram-lines, as it is nearly all over the waters of the cove, and more than 20 feet above the Quay level. The mezzanine floor … [contains] offices, and … gives access to … the wharfs [and] the roadway of the Quay. By the addition of a restaurant and a clocktower, it is possible for some architectural effect to be realised at comparatively small cost.³

Sulman advocated for more space connected to the water for the public. Selfe, instead, privileged the private diners and office workers overlooking the scene below. Hutchinson, the chief engineer for railway and tramway construction, preferred an underground station having considered construction, cost and passenger convenience.

John Sulman’s proposed central avenue and remodelling of Circular Quay, 1909, drawn by Coulter
Neither Sulman nor Hutchinson sat amongst the Commissioners who recommended Selfe’s scheme.

Commissioner Hickson, engineer and president of the Sydney Harbour Trust, found the elevated station objectionable. Labor opposition leader, Commissioner McGowan, joined him in a rare dissent from the recommendations. For Hickson everything pointed the other way:

... to place the station wholly over the water would mean constructing a sea-wall some 150 feet beyond the present wall at the centre of the Quay, the demolition of the existing ferry premises which (with the existing sea-wall) cost about £100,000, the erection of new jetties, the putting out of use of two good deep-sea berths, the demolition of the Harbour Trust office, and the Fire Brigade station, to make room for the western approach to the station, and the serious disturbance of the ferry traffic during the construction of the station, a period of from one and one-half to two years.

The construction of such a station, taking up practically the whole Quay frontage would ... be a great eyesore, and shut out the view of the Cove ... from the Quay.

I recommend that the railway station be placed underground, ... midway between the ferry premises and the Customs House, and that subways be constructed between the station and the Quay.4

Next month the Commission delivered the report to Government and made it public in full. The transparency fuelled an open, optimistic debate.

Consequently, the harbour was infilled, the Circular Quay straightened and the overhead station constructed. Without the private restaurant and offices of Selfe’s grand building, the station gave a generous harbour view freely to the passengers on the platforms and more space to the public beneath and in front.

Selfe’s intent – connecting a more expansive public space to the water – remains incomplete. The crowds grow and grow. To this day, calls for the railway’s undergrounding to connect the public space to the water, no matter how seemingly impractical, continue. Resolution awaits.

Peter John Cantrill is the urban design program manager at the City of Sydney. Any opinion expressed is his own and does not represent the view of the City of Sydney.

1. ‘The Royal Commission for the Improvement of the City of Sydney and its Suburbs, Minutes of Evidence’, 1909, p 253

‘Sulman advocated for more space connected to the water for the public. Selfe, instead, privileged the private diners and office workers overlooking the scene below. Hutchinson, the chief engineer for railway and tramway construction, preferred an underground station. Neither Sulman nor Hutchinson sat amongst the Commissioners who recommended Selfe’s scheme.’
Quay Visions

It’s one of the landfalls of the world. Look at it from memories of Naples, or Plymouth, or London, or Tilbury. Where else do you know anything better?

– Lloyd Rees

Circular Quay is arguably Sydney’s most popular and significant public place. It is also one of the most studied and subject to the greatest number of speculative propositions over time. Yet it remains strangely neglected. We need to ask, is this due to complex operational and governance challenges, or a lack of vision and political will? Or is it that the citizens of our ‘accidental’ city have been lulled into accepting a mediocre, mostly good enough outcome? Would our most significant place be subject to this neglect if it were in more singular control (like that of the City of Sydney, whose recent track record on leadership and design excellence in the public domain has been exemplary)?

More mature readers may recall that way back in 1983, as part of a CAA/RAIA conference The City in Conflict, the NSW Chapter published Quay Visions. The primary purpose of this modest monograph was to stimulate discussion about the potential of the Quay. In the foreword, I wrote:

Circular Quay draws into focus the very essence of Sydney. At that place where the magic of Sydney Harbour – in many ways unchanged since the time of Aboriginal occupation – meets with the excitement of a continually changing urban Sydney, the Quay truly embodies the past and the present.

Located at the foundation of European settlement of Australia, the Quay is now flanked by those monumental symbols of Australian achievement and culture, the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Opera House. With these, and the city as a backdrop, the Quay is a stage set and focus for the more gregarious activities of Sydney.

Conflict and controversy have surrounded the development of Circular Quay. Over the years numerous grand schemes for its development have been promoted, yet none have been realised. The very best and the worst of the city’s buildings continue to vie for a box seat in the arena of the Quay. Great initiatives in design and planning have been lost in the immobilising process of its urban management and, in particular, by the isolated decisions of unrelated authorities […] If the Quay is to respond to its unique place in the consciousness of the citizens of Sydney, then how should it change? What better time […] to pause and reflect upon its quality, to review its role within the city, and to adopt a vision for its revitalisation?

In producing Quay Visions, I had the delight of interviewing Sydney artist Lloyd Rees, whose inspiration and understanding of the city has been an unending influence on many architects of my generation through his teaching at the University of Sydney. Quotes from Rees interspersed throughout that text to introduce essays and address the Quay’s past, present and future retain all their richness today, 35 years later, when we find the same conditions and questions remain.
Mr Nerran Saffi's proposal for Circular Quay presented to the Royal Commission in 1989. An overhead railway follows the line of the present railway. The building is three storeys high and incorporates the style of architectural detail, including a clock tower and spires, which was popular at the time. It incorporated a handsome colonnade to Alfred Street. It was built out over the water on piles and its blockout completely the views of the harbour from Alfred Street. Compare the style with the scheme favoured by the Circular Quay Planning Commission of 1937.

Mr John Saliman's proposal for Circular Quay. Although this scheme includes a barrier of buildings along the waterfront its principal contribution to the city was the creation of large formal open spaces. The exhibition is a large formal garden and pavilion on the Alfred Street side and it contained a six-storey classical-style building (now Customs House) which formed part of a symmetrical composition embracing the whole of Alfred Street. Old Customs House is demolished and in its place there is a Grand Central Avenue.

The Royal Commission 1909

Concern at the civic design of Circular Quay is not a recent phenomenon. As far back as 1909 a Royal Commission was set up "to diligently examine and investigate the whole subject of the remodelling of Sydney...and to consider also the expediency of constructing such lines of railway and tramway as may be necessary to meet the increasing demands of traffic." (1)

The Commission held forty meetings and took evidence from 27 witnesses, many of whom provided "valuable suggestions, many of which were being further elaborated and investigated."

At the beginning of their report the Commissioners commented that the problem facing them was an extremely complex one compounded by the mistakes of the early colonial leaders in laying out narrow and crooked streets, the hilly terrain of the city and difficult approaches to many of the bays and prominent areas.

The commissioners recognised that the charm of the city lay in its "harbour and picturesque setting" and stressed the need to perceive its natural beauty. "On no account," they stated, "should any further Crown property be parted with on the headlands or along the bays of the Harbour."

Not surprisingly the Commission spent some time considering the future of Circular Quay. Several schemes for remodelling the Quay were received and the ideas expressed included a high-level roadway over the ferry wharves linking George Street to
Circular Quay is not what it was. When I came here before the Bridge it was an amazing marketplace, probably very vulgar, but I'm inclined to think even the quays of Greece ... were like that. The retail trade was tremendous because it flowed out from ferry after ferry after ferry and it still had a sort of scrappy appearance with old buildings ... crowning the skyline before the Bridge brought about their destruction.

– Lloyd Rees

In revisiting Quay Visions let’s first explore the past. The making of Circular Quay’s urban identity began in 1837 through the work of colonial engineer George Barney, who directed the construction of a stone wall forming a semi-circular quay, followed by the building of Customs House in 1844–45. Rebuilt in 1885 to a design by James Barney, Customs House still characterises the Quay today.

For a short time in 1867, a Great Arch adorned the bottom of Loftus Street to welcome Prince Alfred to the colony. A new, comprehensive plan for the Quay followed the formation of the Sydney Harbour Trust in 1901, with new wharves being constructed between 1903 and 1911. In 1909, a Royal Commission was set up to ‘diligently examine and investigate the whole subject of remodelling Sydney’ – unsurprisingly with a focus on Circular Quay. Submissions were notable for their detailed design propositions. Grand schemes by John Sulman and Norman Selfe were both characterised by imposing architectural compositions defining the northern frontage of the Quay and large formal gardens facing the city. In 1923, John Bradfield showed great foresight in proposing an electric rail network for the city, and a scheme for the Harbour Bridge and a Circular Quay Station.

The current overhead rail line and station (influenced by this earlier thinking and originally designed by Budden & Mackay), is a compromised version of a design proposed by the 1937 Circular Quay Planning Committee, with a formal composition of pylons and colonnades. The current configuration of the Cahill Expressway savagely disconnects the city from the harbour, and thus the present from its past. The station from the 1950s has remained with only minor reworking of the ferry wharves.

Sydney has probably the world’s untidiest front door ... Quay Station is suffering from arrested development, and consists of sundry unco-ordinated parts. There is a tunnel which peers from under the lower end of Macquarie Street, on the eastern side of the Quay (1918). There are circular concrete columns, standing here and there among masses of machinery and junk littered from one end of the Quay to the other ... [T]he locality has been afflicted with this disorder for decades. And it grows progressively worse, with symptoms most marked around the centre of the Quay. This region is not only a perpetual eyesore, but a peril to pedestrians who have to cross the no-man’s land between ferry wharves and tramlines.
There has been no shortage of visionary propositions for the Quay since its early days. In 1983, before the publication of *Quay Visions*, the NSW Chapter staged an ideas competition for the site fronting Circular Quay. Ken Woolley was the selected winner and the project was later undertaken by Kahn Finch. Second place was an audacious and playful entry by Richard Leplastrier, myself and Peter Ireland that sought to celebrate the Quay in a monumental way – to frame the city entrance and thus suppress the dominance of the transport infrastructure.

*Quay Visions* invited 14 submissions for the transformation of the Quay, extending from the Sydney Opera House to Dawes Point. Unconstrained in their approach but limited to a four-week development timeframe, submissions were required to be presented on a double-page spread.

Propositions ranged from Philip Cox’s vertically scaled occupation of the Quay as an extension of the city form, to Nick Hollo’s evocative introduction of landscape and waterfalls to reassert Aboriginal culture. Craig Burton offered a humanist reconstruction of the former Semi-Circular Quay, and Neil Durbach and Harry Levine’s abstract modernist proposition reinterpreted the structure of Sydney Harbour’s points and coves.

In reviewing the schemes in the concluding essay, James Weirick noted:

> The invitation to submit ideas for the reconstruction of Circular Quay generated a set of intriguing, provocative and occasionally lunatic design solutions which may very well reverberate into the next millennium. Although there are some quite practical and realisable proposals amongst them, the submissions are far more suggestive than prescriptive. They are considered here for the flashes of insight they provide into various functional, aesthetic and symbolic problems of the Quay [...] There is a certain sense of unease about Sydney Cove’s historic moment: the first landing has yet to transcend its elemental violence, its taint of criminality.

Beyond *Quay Visions* studies, masterplans and propositions have continued. The NSW Chapter staged an ideas competition in 1994 won by Nation Fender. Tony Caro, who took second place, went on to collaborate with HASSELL to gain support for implementing a major renewal project during 1996 – again without implementation.

Sustainable Sydney 2030 Strategy included an ambitious proposal to liberate the public space of the Quay and underground the rail station by Richard Francis-Jones, based on an earlier competition entry. More recently, in 2010 the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority invited HASSELL to develop a masterplan strategy in collaboration with the former Government Architect Office. However, this was not adopted following a change in government.
I love the idea of grandeur – of planning, of exultation due to great architecture and so on, but there is another side of beauty which is the inevitability of mankind working like beavers. And so when Hardy Wilson wrote about Sydney Harbour, he made the point that it should be like the Italian lakes, with white villas all around it, and I thought, ‘Oh wonderful!’ – but now I am not with him at all … I wouldn’t want Italian villas there.

– Lloyd Rees

In 2015, the NSW Government through Transport for NSW published a $200m proposal. Sadly, this design involved commercialising the wharves with upper level retail and made little improvement to the most critical public amenity to the Quay. Further work has since been undertaken by the NSW Government, including a ‘market sounding’ with the development industry. I await the outcome with anticipation and some trepidation, always with the hope that it is design-led and in the public interest.

As James Weirick has noted: ‘Circular Quay is the most important place in the history of European settlement of Australia. It has magical qualities which no amount of peripheral abuse could ever destroy – but it also presents great opportunities for us to do something better. We should make a start.’

This start can be simple. Increase the width and generosity of the northern promenade. Minimise the bulk and adjust location of the ferry wharves. Open up the station shifting solid elements to the west. Re-purpose or remove the Cahill Expressway. And above all, do not prevent the long-term undergrounding of the rail. Beyond the pragmatic, let’s make sure we don’t lose the ‘magical quality’ of the spirit of this most significant public place of celebration. A spirit that embraces citizens and visitors alike in expressing the essence and legacy of our harbour city. And of course, we can only do this with inventive and interpretative design thinking.

It’s time for another Institute-endorsed professional design competition – this one for a real outcome.

Ken Maher AO 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.

‘Increase the width and generosity of the northern promenade. Minimise the bulk and adjust location of the ferry wharves. Open up the station shifting solid elements to the west. Re-purpose or remove the Cahill Expressway. And above all, do not prevent the long-term undergrounding of the rail. Beyond the pragmatic, let’s make sure we don’t lose the “magical quality” of the spirit of this most significant public place of celebration.’
Gilding the public realm

Circular Quay and the Sydney Opera House

One of the competition drawings submitted by Jørn Utzon as part of the ‘International Competition for a National Opera House at Bennelong Point, Sydney’, 1956
Much is made of Sydney’s urban character including its charismatic harbour and most noticeable is Circular Quay, which has become a wonderland of misbegotten retail and ‘shi-shi’ hotels for the international market. Sadly this urban paradigm is likely to impact on the civicness of the Sydney Opera House. With a program of ‘improvements’ planned in time for the Golden Jubilee of the Sydney Opera House in 2023, it is worth considering how these interventions will reinforce or merely trivialise the key concepts of Utzon’s project. With a desire to integrate ‘The House’ with Circular Quay, Utzon’s concept for civic detachment, as a fundamental part of the project’s proposition, is fast becoming a lost metaphor.

HARBOUR FOCUSED AND WITH CIVIC BIAS

Winning the international competition for the Sydney Opera House with 12 zinc plate lithographic prints, Jørn Utzon adopted a cropped viewpoint in single line work for the required perspective view, though this sketch did not meet the competition brief. The image, which showed the podium and staircase between the two halls looking north, portrayed the space of the podium and shell roofs as an elevated civic space enhanced with blocks of white gouache and gold leaf applied to the shell roofs. This image rendered the surrounding harbour landscape as ‘infinite’, while the relationship with the commercialism of Circular Quay was undeniably excluded. When visiting the site for the first time upon his arrival in Sydney in mid-1957, Utzon noted that any connection with the city should take the form of a boulevard link as ‘nothing should be done in the immediate vicinity, which would nullify what might well prove to be one of the great buildings of our time’.

Of all the 222 entries submitted for the competition, it was Utzon’s enduring scheme that considered the site for its broad harbour setting, integrated with new civic spaces responding to the surrounding landscape. Second place, awarded to the young modernist architectural practice Geddes Brecher Qualls Cunningham from the USA, was less site specific, incorporating a free-standing drum building within a monumental plaza that extended uninterrupted to the south to meet the pavements of Circular Quay. Even third place – secured by relatively unknown British husband and wife practice Boissevan and Osmond and referencing London Festival Hall (1951) in elevational treatment – incorporated a similar urban design strategy. The harbour-focused landscape of Utzon’s proposal was unlike the other submissions, which incorporated building forms within an all-pervasive plaza.

When a detailed perspective of the Sydney Opera House was published in 1957, it showed a view of the western elevation from Circular Quay. Here the podium was shown clad in large format sandstone panels in stretcher bond pattern as an extension of the city’s underlying landscape. Using sandstone to visually ground the design also established a contextual relationship between the stone-work of Macquarie Street, the Tarpeian Steps and the sea walls of the Botanic Gardens. Importantly, the long stretcher-bond sandstone rampart of Macquarie Street with its semi-circular sandstone capping was still visible when Utzon arrived in Sydney in mid-1957. Exploring the realisation of this concept, Utzon made his way to Gosford Quarries to consider the suitability of the ‘local’ stone. Wanting an even-patterned stone in a warm colour, Utzon was surprised by the extent of figuration presented to him; on display was the equivalent of fool’s gold, not the prized ‘yellow block’ of the city’s ramparts.

The large format stonework of the podium is worth considering, as this lost design metaphor reinforced the building’s detachment from the commercialism of the city. This motif was evident in the 1957 Red Book. But by the time of the 1962 Yellow Book, the podium cladding had become large-format precast granite panels after sandstone was found to be less durable. With such a change in material the ‘construction reference’ of this vast assembly did not change the conceptual separation of the project from Circular Quay.

The exterior of the Sydney Opera House was substantially complete by the time of Utzon’s forced departure in 1966, and the design of the interior spaces was a series of advanced concept sketches. The interior spaces were redesigned by the encumbered architects Hall, Todd and Littlemore. When the 1994 exhibition Unseen Utzon established a yearning for the loss of Utzon’s interior concept for the major spaces, images of the major hall were represented as ethereally expanses of radiating golden waves.

J. Utzon (left) with E. Andersson (right) visiting Gosford Quarries on 15 August 1957. During this visit, the managing director H. G. Perry (centre and wearing a pinstripe suit) confirmed the importance of highly figured ‘local’ sandstone. Utzon, astonished by the colour range, would later decide not to incorporate ‘local’ sandstone as an external cladding on the vast assembly of the Sydney Opera House podium due to its limited durability.
Some of the existing public interior spaces within the Sydney Opera House are undergoing renewal in readiness for the building’s Golden Jubilee celebrations. One major project includes an adjustment to the Concert Hall as later redesigned by Hall, Todd and Littlemore. Here the Gold Medallist and Melbourne-based architectural practice of Ashton Raggatt McDougall (ARM) will insert timber ‘wings’ at high level to improve the acoustic performance. Elsewhere, new loose furniture designs by Arne Jacobsen and Hans Wegner will be selected from various trade catalogues. This means a lost opportunity for reconstructing the SISU furniture that Utzon designed specifically for these public interior spaces and registered as a trade name in Sydney in 1965.

In 1959 the NSW Government issued the Gold Book in commemoration of the project. Incorporating various testimonials, it is the statement made by Davis Hughes – who later became the minister of public works and would receive Utzon’s ‘resignation’ – that is of particular interest, for its demonstrated desire that the Sydney Opera House should remain culturally important and detached:

The Sydney Opera House marks the beginning of a new phase in Australian history. This imaginative structure in a beautiful setting will attract public and inspire the great artists of the world and stimulate the rapid growth of our native culture. It will be not merely a striking landmark on the shores of Sydney Harbour, but also a symbol that our cultural thought is keeping pace with national expansion. Country as well as City people will enjoy its benefits and the people of other States will watch its progress with interest and pride.

The sale of Sirius Apartments (1980), a public asset overlooking Circular Quay, is the latest in a long line of government actions that will redefine the public realm within NSW. It is claimed that the proceeds from the sale of this site will enable new public housing to be built elsewhere – that is, somewhere without a harbour outlook. What is certain is that this sale will mean the transference of public wealth to the private realm within the urbanity of Circular Quay. The bedazzling sales video for the Sirius site presents the commercial urbanity of Circular Quay; now included in this urban realm is the Sydney Opera House.

The Sydney Opera House reclaimed the public edge of the harbour at a time when the harbour was attributed no civic worth or cultural value, nor acknowledged for any Aboriginal significance. With the progressive redevelopment of Circular Quay fast becoming a privatised urban space, this strategy is now impacting upon the emblematic and civic character of the Sydney Opera House. The current approach to the redevelopment of the Sydney Opera House demonstrates a shift in focus from cultural and civic character of the Sydney Opera House. The current approach to the redevelopment of the Sydney Opera House demonstrates a shift in focus from cultural and civic character of the Sydney Opera House. The current approach to the redevelopment of the Sydney Opera House demonstrates a shift in focus from cultural and civic character of the Sydney Opera House.

Glenn Harper is a senior associate architect and urban design lead at PTW Architects. He is also a member of the NSW Chapter Heritage Committee.

2. Being notified of second place, Geddes Brecher Qualls Cunningham declared that it was their proudest disappointment. Refer to https://www.aasphiladelphia.org/news/memorial-service-planned-barney-cunningham-faa

‘The current approach to the redevelopment of the Sydney Opera House shows a shift from cultural landscape to a landscape filled with a range of commercial enterprises … the once grand boulevard concept, which sought to connect the dignified civic spaces of Bennelong Point with Circular Quay, has now become a “gatling of retail”:’
On a ferry from Circular Quay to Cockatoo Island with my siblings Siân and Michael, we recollected our family story that connects us to that place. As we passed under the Sydney Harbour Bridge we remembered that parts of our Country – Yuin Country on the New South Wales south coast – form its pylons. In fact, parts of our Country are all over Sydney, including the columns of the Sydney GPO, the Cenotaph in Martin Place, the base of the Captain Cook statue in Hyde Park, and the facade and side walls of the head office of the Bank of New South Wales.

Granite from Yuin Country was mined for the Sydney Harbour Bridge from the northern banks of Moruya River between 1925 and 1932 at the Moruya Granite Quarry. According to the bridge’s chief engineer John Bradfield:

The appearance of the [Moruya] granite was in its favour, the black biotite mica giving the stone a pleasing appearance, sparkling in the sun and so enhancing the beauty of the white quartz and feldspar. The quality was all that could be desired...

Like the granite, the concrete used in the construction of the abutment towers of the main arch and the piers of the approach spans were also made from crushed granite sourced from Moruya.

In the late 1800s, our third great grandparents were dispossessed of their traditional lands in Yuin Country, making an impossible decision to move north to a place called Eungai, which lies between Gumbaynggirr and Dungutti lands on the mid-north coast. They were following a familiar songline that has been travelled for millennia by our ancestors and runs between the Queensland and Victorian borders along the coast. They made the decision to take this journey amidst massacres of kin, governmental policy changes allowing the removal of paler children, and restrictive reserve managers. After moving they were unable to care for their Country as they had always done; for them and for us it has been heartbreaking to be off Country.

Yet if you scratch under the surface of this story you will find two sisters, Elizabeth and Catherine Marshall, who did whatever it took to keep their families together – dispossessed, certainly, but together. This decision shaped the rest of their lives, as well as those who came after them. Our third great grandmother Elizabeth Marshall was born in Moruya in 1859, and so we feel a particular connection with that land. Could she have known what impacts were about to be inflicted on her life and her Country? Mary Gilmore, wife of a Scottish stonemason who came to work in the quarry, recalled:

Where a few years before the only sound heard there was the call of the wild birds flying overhead to their feeding grounds in the swamp, the laughter of the kookaburra and the music of the magpies in the bush, there was now the roar of machinery and the sharp sound of automatic drills in the hard rock, cranes lifting boulders and the occasional blasting of the huge rock.
The changes wrought upon our Country were immense. The disembodiment of Country creates disturbed locations, as certainly were the changes for Gadigal Country, where the Harbour Bridge stands.

Nonetheless, there is a strange comfort in having parts of our Country placed within the structure of one of the most iconic landmarks in not only Australia, but the world. 173,000 blocks of granite were quarried, cut, dressed and numbered, then taken to the wharf by rail to be shipped to Sydney. This material, like my siblings and I, is dispossessed of its Country. This dispossession has unquestionably created a built icon, which helps to shape Australia’s identity. But it has made us, as Yuin people, hyperaware of the material aspects of Country; knowing where they are from and the stories they hold. We are supersensitive of the materiality of that site and its built structure, knowing it also as geology, culture and heritage. There is the memory of our Country encased within the construction, creating a heightened sense of connection for us. In capturing our Country in built form, we note the stories that are encased in the bridge itself and its site. Not only is our Country encased in this way within the structure, but many other Countries as well. Layers of knowledge are embedded into the form and for us as designers, design becomes our vehicle for revealing the latent stories and history of sites.

So too might other architects and designers engage with Aboriginal people and communities in their projects to unearth hidden stories of sites. Stories of Country lie waiting to be rediscovered and reconnected, and design offers a chance to elevate them. Architects can create individual connections with people from a community, with genuine engagement and allowing enough time to rediscover their stories and histories. Once again, bringing them into the light.

Danièle, Sían and Michael Hromek are descendants from the Budawang clan of the Yuin Nation. All three trained in design and architecture, and together they run a consultancy called Babana Djurumin Design.

1. John Bradfield in ‘Materials used in the Sydney Harbour Bridge construction’, Border Watch, 14 January 1928 (Moruya and District Historical Society Inc)
2. Quote by Mary Gilmore’s great granddaughter Christine Adams in ‘To make a bridge: where did the granite of the Sydney Harbour Bridge come from?’, Traces, 19 April 2014
Welcome to the Eora National Park

Jon Hazelwood and Sharon Wright

... the Grass was long and luxuriant, and there were some eatable Vegetables, particularly a Wild Spinage, the Country was well supplied with Water ...

This was how Joseph Banks described the Australian east coast on his return to England in 1779. Recommendations were made for establishing the first colony at Botany Bay, however, Governor Phillip formed a very different opinion upon his arrival nine years later. He found Botany Bay to have little to offer the fledgling colony, with swampy heaths, poor-quality timber and little fresh water.

Famously, Governor Phillip then took the decision to travel south. A day’s sailing down the coast, the colony settled at what has now become the CBD of Australia’s global city of Vincentia on spectacular Jervis Bay. If only he had stayed a while and explored Port Jackson and all it had to offer, things may have turned out very differently.

This decision means that now, 200 km north of Jervis Bay is one the wonders of the Australian natural world: the Eora National Park (formerly the Sydney National Park). For generations, the natural harbour of Port Jackson and surrounding pristine bushland have been a playground for the adventurous and those seeking an escape from Jervis and Newcastle.

Fringed by the sleepy coastal towns of Manly and Coogee, and the tree-change villages of Gladesville, Gordon and Ashfield, the National Park is easily accessed from the M1 as it cuts through sandstone escarpments to cross the Parramatta River west of Cockatoo (Wa-rea-mah) Island across the Jackson Bridge, a twin to the Hawkesbury River Bridge 50 km north.

At 12,000 km², the park is Australia’s fifth largest national park after Kakadu, Lake Eyre, Judburra and Rudall River National Parks, and stretches from the Tasman Coast to the foothills of the Blue Mountains. While the Park does not have the postcard-friendly draws of the Three Sisters, Uluru or the Twelve Apostles, it is the crinkles and curves of beaches and coves surrounding the harbour that define the Eora National Park and attract its one million visitors per year. These coves, with evocative names such as Warrin gà, Cooroowal, Kuba Kaba and Kiarabilli² offer deserted beaches and a variety of activities such as bush camping, snorkelling and kayaking.
EORA NATIONAL PARK
PORT LINCOLN AUSTRALIA
A SUCCESSION OF EARTHY PARADISES

Architecture Bulletin
... a succession of earthly paradises ... surrounded by wooded hills, of great variety of forms, and into which run deep coves right and left; their shores being beautifully overhung with woods.3

William Howitt wrote this seductive description on his arrival in the 1850s. There are few experiences that can beat the bush trek: with a night’s camping equipment on your back, scrambling through thick verdant vegetation and down steep and rugged sandstone terrain. You will take in the floral scent of Boronia, disturb flocks of rosellas and emerge from the wooded shoreline to find yourself alone on a small sandy beach, with the water glistening and shimmering in the sunlight.

These coves, valleys and forests are rich in Aboriginal history – a history of the Eora people and their descendants. One particularly favourite spot is the large Cove of Warrane, framed to the east by a low-lying peninsula known as Tubowgule, and to the west by a sandstone escarpment known both colloquially as The Rocks and by its Aboriginal name of Ta-Ra. The cherished Warrane campsite is located on the banks of a gentle water course that drains water from the Melaleuca swamps located upstream. The campsite is accessed by foot along the coastal walk and contains basic bush campsite facilities. This is a remote campground – please make sure you arrive well-prepared. But it is well worth the journey with much to explore in this area, rich in Aboriginal history and culture.

Warrane was an important Aboriginal meeting place for the Gadigal people, who are known to have inhabited The Rocks area for millennia. We recommend booking a guided tour with local guides who will arrive on boat and meet you on the rocky shore. They will describe where men speared fish from the shoreline and women line fished from their nowries (canoes)4 and you will discover flattened rocks that had been used for roasting whole fish.5

A walking track leads north-west from the campsite, scrambling up through The Rocks and out onto an escarpment. From here there is an awe-inspiring vista east and west along the harbour and across to the northern shore of Kiarabilli. A popular activity is to visit this site at night and let our guides take you on an incredible tour of the southern hemisphere sky. With no light pollution, this high point offers 360-degree views of our southern stars.

Walking east from the campsite will take you around the shoreline to a small tidal island. Cut off from the mainland at high tide, this rocky island with its little beach is a popular fishing spot to while away the afternoon as the sun sets over Port Jackson.

Of course, we have only touched on the delights that the Eora National Park has to offer. It is open all year and is immense, so please visit the Manly or Coogee visitor centres where guides can help you plan your trip. Whether it is the Western Parklands (dominated by the delicate Cumberland Plain ecosystem), or the Central Parklands (criss-crossed by the grandeur of the Parramatta River), or the Eastern Parklands (with the natural harbour of Port Jackson forming its centrepiece), you will never forget your trip to the Eora National Park.

Jon Hazelwood and Sharon Wright are landscape architects and principals of HASSELL. Both are based in Sydney and lead projects for HASSELL in Australia, USA, UK and Asia. Illustrations by Jessica Lock.

1. Journals of the House of Commons, Volume 37
2. https://australianmuseum.net.au/place-names-chart
3. Benson and Howell, Taken for granted: the bushland of Sydney and its suburbs, 1990
4. City of Sydney
5. www.TheRocks.com
What is Circular Quay? Reading the contributions of Peter John Cantrill and Ken Maher to this edition of Architecture Bulletin, we see it as an accumulation of urban and architectural choices made and not made by design professionals, as well as government agencies and private undertaking. Seen in historical perspective, all these choices are still but sketches. None of the ideas recalled in these contributions have lost their relevance for the choices available to us and the decisions we continue to make today. We continue to draft and redraft this place, and we will go on doing so. No opportunity is fully lost – not the shape of the quay, nor the elevation of the rail line, the connectivity of the street grid, the typology of the wharves, the topology of The Rocks. Nor even the materiality of the Sydney Opera House. The implicit risk is that we can continue to make bad choices or worsen historic errors. Our responsibility is therefore to continue to revisit and reassess all the choices made over the decades, so as to make better ones in the future.

The poorest choices available to us seem to be above all urban ones: running the rail line overhead instead of underground, the overlaying of the Cahill Expressway, the aborted attempts to remake The Rocks as towers and podiums. There is occasionally the (misplaced) expectation that good architectural treatment can compensate for bad urban decisions; that the willingness of architects to take up an ‘opportunity of a lifetime’ can always be relied upon to paper over the failure of more powerful agencies to reach more appropriate decisions. This is illustrated in the passage Cantrill quotes of Norman Selfe interrogating John Sulman on the latter’s refusal to accept elevating the rail line: ‘would it not be compensated for by the handsome view you would get of a good building from the water?’ We should not allow ourselves to be drafted into the service of poor urban decision-making by the promise of architectural licence around the edges.

Learning from Circular Quay

Kerwin Datu

Wallace Scheme for the redevelopment of The Rocks and Sydney Cove, 1970

ARCHITECTURE AS COVER UP

Image: Courtesy Place Management NSW
UNSQUARING THE CIRCLE

Many architects have been tempted to regard Circular Quay as a ‘water square’, a harbourside analogue of the finest café-ringed squares of Europe such as Rome’s Piazza Navona, the Grand-Place in Brussels or Rynek Glowny in Krakow. This reading has its apotheosis in the colonnade of East Circular Quay and what Glenn Harper has here called its ‘gatling of retail’. It is possible for Sydney locals to be too cynical about this colonnade and to forget that locals in those cities often have feelings toward their old squares that are just as mixed. It is more important to understand the limitations of this metaphor. Harper recalls that one of the key distinctions between Jørn Utzon’s competition-winning scheme and the runners-up was its treatment of the ground plane, which Utzon lifted up into a stepped podium in response not merely to the urban context of Circular Quay, but also to the specificities of the wider topography of the harbour. Harper draws attention to the irony that subsequent private developments surrounding the cove continue to capitalise on their proximity to the Sydney Opera House, while failing to respond to the wider topography of the harbour in similar fashion. Part of the public backlash during the construction of East Circular Quay was the perceived lack of connection between Circular Quay and the Tarpeian Way, demonstrating that this kind of sensibility to landscape is widely felt, and not just by other, envious architects.

This responsiveness to landscape is part of what makes the Sirius building – with its stepped, additive forms – more appropriate to the tumble-down nature of the Rocks than the tower-and-podium schemes proposed for the area in 1970. It will become intrinsic to how we judge the current generation of skyscrapers rising behind Alfred Street. And it highlights the limitations of the urban square concept. Yes, Circular Quay is an urban space and benefits from a sense of containment. But there is a point at which framing the space turns into separating it from its full harbour context; a point at which providing a front to the square means turning one’s back to the rest of the city, as Sulman recognised.

The extreme opposite reading – Circular Quay as only landscape – is provided in Jon Hazelwood and Sharon Wright’s extended counterfactual history of Port Jackson as Eora National Park. The appeal of such thought experiments shows how much we crave the legibility of the natural history and topography as inherent to our sense of place. We want to be reminded of them, even as we pile new skyscrapers upon old.

MATERIALITY PROVIDES MEANING

Just as we desire to preserve the legibility of our natural context, we also want to maintain the clarity of our cultural history and stories. Harper’s recollection of Utzon considering the stone for the Sydney Opera House is followed by Danièle, Siân and Michael Hromek’s depth of feeling for the granite uprooted from Yuin Country to clad monuments across Sydney. It demonstrates that materiality offers not only relation to a project’s immediate place as architects often use it, but relation to culture and wider networks of human activity as well. It makes it tempting to ask whether a place like Circular Quay might have a coordinated materiality strategy, and whether it even should. Would such a strategy cause monotony? Or could it indeed encourage more complex and meaningful connections to the surrounding street grid, to the wider landscape, to the greater Sydney region?

A TEST CASE FOR OTHER PLACES

Circular Quay is a narrow focus for a publication responsible to an entire state membership. But what it provides for other places across NSW is a well-documented history of urban and architectural decision making; an unusual concentration of state-changing major infrastructure projects; a surfeit of institutions and government agencies with overlapping responsibilities and uncoordinated execution of them; and a cross section of sometimes diametrically opposed ideas regarding topography, urban form and materiality, both implemented and unimplemented. Some aspect of the history of Circular Quay provides a test case for the issues arising on any other urban site in NSW. As long as we continue to read it as a history of decisions made, good or bad, that will continue to be unmade and remade into the future.

Kerwin Datu is a practising architect as well as a qualified urban and economic geographer. He is also a member of the NSW Chapter’s editorial committee.

‘No opportunity is fully lost … the implicit risk is that we can continue to make bad choices or worsen historic errors. Our responsibility is therefore to continue to revisit and reassess all the choices made over the decades, so as to make better ones in the future.’
CHAPTER
Best in show and advancing our built environment

Each year the named awards recognise the best project presented within a particular category. Sometimes an exemplary project will be successful across several categories. However there has been no formal acknowledgement of which of the named award winners is considered the best across all categories.

A number of other Chapters do have a State based ‘best in show’ award, such as the ACT with the ‘Canberra Medalion’, in Victoria with the ‘Victorian Architecture Medal’, in the Northern Territory with the ‘Tracy Memorial Award’, and in Western Australia with the ‘George Temple Poole Award’. So this year Chapter Council decided it was time to introduce our own ‘best in show’ award – the NSW Architecture Medallion. The Medallion is open to the named award winners in all categories and was decided at a special meeting of all the Jury chairs convened by the chair of juries, Peter Mould. The aim is to make the NSW Architecture Medallion the most prestigious award offered by the NSW Chapter and to recognize the exemplary project across all categories.

We are working to improve the reach and relevance of the awards across the state. This year we have tried to better integrate the Newcastle and Country Division Awards with the National Awards program so that more projects progress from regional to state level. We saw a record number of Newcastle Award recipients decide to proceed to the state awards, and I am hoping that in 2019 we will see a similar take up in Country Division awards recipients.

A special congratulations to Alec Tzannes, who was announced as the 2018 Gold Medallist during the National Conference ‘edge’ on the Gold Coast. And also to 2009 Gold Medallist Ken Maher who was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in the 2018 Queen’s Birthday honours. Architects do not always figure highly in our national honours, and yet the contribution to the national interest that our best and brightest make in the advancement of our built environment is certainly equal to that of the many politicians, celebrities and sports people that do make up the lists.

While many are happy to be quietly working at what they do best, and do not seek out public recognition, as a profession we need to be smarter in putting forward and nominating architects. Not for the aggrandisement of the individual, but as part of our public advocacy that architecture is important, and that those at the top of our profession are doing important work.

Within the NSW Chapter the Awards and Honours Committee is tasked with proposing suitable nominations for future Gold Medals and public honours. They are also tasked with nominating institute members to Fellow and Life Fellow status. I have been reviewing our current list and one fact stands out – only 10% of our Fellows are female. That is not representative of our profession and must be addressed. Your thoughts on suitable candidates are welcome.

Andrew Nimmo
NSW Chapter President – @NSWChapterPres

Winning the game

We didn’t lose the game; we just ran out of time.

Ever since I heard this line of Vince Lombardi’s at university, it has remained with me as a feeling that is synonymous with the making of architecture.

What I find interesting about it is that it portrays the prospect of losing as something not really considered; that to lose is only the unfortunate outcome of something somehow beyond one’s control. It betrays a sort of blithe self-confidence, conviction and purpose that the path to success is not only apparent, but also entirely attainable. (Does this remind you of any architects that you know?)

Perhaps this is why then, as this issue has considered the real-world context of Circular Quay, that it feels such an act of affrontery to suggest that Sydney has somehow lost, or is lost, or has been lost. Nobody likes losing, least of all this competitive city (without even mentioning Melbourne’s run in the liveable city stakes).

This issue reminds us that the making of architecture requires a great degree of faith: taking it on trust that the thing somebody else can see in their mind is the thing that you actually want; taking it on trust that that somebody will deliver to you what they say they will do.

What if the work currently underway at this Institute were conceived as a work of architecture? Like a client at that hesitant phase, the work that is being done asks for faith – faith from the membership-as-client in the design, even if the full reality of the composition is not yet apparent. And as any good client, the membership asks for plans, if not proof. These are laid out in the Strategic Plan, but here is the four-pronged game plan over the next three years to 2020:

1. Advocacy with impact
2. Respected leadership
3. Direct member value
4. A strong and viable Institute

In terms of this game, I’m running out of time. (I am leaving the Institute to return to architectural practice as of mid-December 2018.) Sydney however will go on, as will the Institute, and the changes and improvements that we have been bringing to you in the NSW Chapter, including this new look, self-published Architecture Bulletin.

This city, as much as this profession, asks us all to continue to step forward in faith, and all the more so as we look forward to 2019 and the election(s) that must transpire. Things are getting better, thanks to the good work that has been, and is being done. Let’s not lose the game.

Joshua Morrin
Executive Director, NSW
Government Architect NSW design guidelines

The Government Architect NSW is continuing its release of a suite of draft design guidelines for comment. We recently made a submission on the Design Guide for Heritage and are pleased to now have an Institute representative sitting on the advisory board to help develop this important element of the Better Placed framework through its subsequent iterations. We also made a submission on the Design Excellence Competition Guidelines. We consider the guidelines to be a solid platform for ensuring the requirements of consent authorities are balanced with both the objectives of proponents and the needs of entrants for procedural fairness and reasonable compensation. We are also pleased to see the appropriate emphasis the guidelines place on design integrity, which is an essential factor in assuring the progression of a proposal’s design excellence from winning submission to built outcome.

Advocating for heritage

The Institute continues its work advocating for appropriate recognition and protection of the heritage value of the built environment across NSW, with a special emphasis on 20th century architecture. In recent months we have issued support for State Heritage Register listing of the Regent Theatre, Mudgee (1935) and we have formally expressed concern about the proposed development of the Roxy Theatre, Parramatta, arguing that for a site of such public importance, a site-specific masterplan should be put together with the direct input of the Greater Sydney Commission and the City of Parramatta.

Sirius Building

SEPP Draft

Most recent published minutes of the NSW Heritage Council records its strong support for retention, development of site specific planning controls, and recommendation ‘that the SEPP amendments must contain greater incentives to retain the existing building’.

Newcastle’s Hunter Street mall redevelopment begins

Rejuvenation of Newcastle continues with start of Stage 1 of the Hunter Street Mall redevelopment involving a number of Sydney-based architects including SJB, Tonkin Zulaikha Greer and Durbach Block Jaggers. Local firm CKDS has been selected to be involved with Stage 2.

Bathurst Macquarie Medal for Heritage 2018

This prestigious medal has been awarded to Gianfranco Cresciani, honoured for his work in the protection, understanding and promotion of Australia’s Italo-Australian heritage.
New staff and projects at Tanner Kibble Denton Architects

Following strong growth in all sectors, Tanner Kibble Denton Architects increase staff to 75. Recently completed projects include the Adina Apartment Hotel in Brisbane, ACU Veritas Library in Canberra and the Warrumbungle National Park Visitor Centre (pictured above).

Allen Jack+Cottier’s Urbanbackyard

Urbanbackyard is an AJ+C urban research project that is investigating an Australian model for high density apartment living using the courtyard building form to provide a backyard for kids with trees to climb, a cubby and a lawn to play cricket. https://urbanbackyard.architectsajc.com

Australian Excellence Green Star rating for ANMF’s HQ by Crone

Crone’s design for the new Melbourne headquarters of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF), completed August 2017, has achieved a 5-star Green Star rating for energy efficiency and is tracking to reach a 5.2 NABERS rating for environmental performance.

BKA’s Watson’s Grove makes WAF shortlist & flagship project

BKA Architecture’s flagship project now under tender documentation is the $25 million Sports Hub in Penshurst. Watsons Grove (144 apartments) has been shortlisted for The World Architecture Festival 2018 in Amsterdam under the larger scale housing, completed buildings category.

50 years of NBRSARCHITECTURE

Specialists in the areas of education, life and culture, wellness and justice, NBRS’s goal is to shape society through creating life changing environments. Committed to design excellence, our 85-strong team provide architecture, landscape architecture, interior design and heritage expertise. The new Mitchell Building at Macquarie University showcases our cross studio culture.

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2018 New South Wales Architecture Awards

NSW Architecture Medallion – Joynton Avenue Creative Precinct by Peter Stutchbury Architecture in association with Design 5 – Architects for City of Sydney

Public Architecture
Sulman Medal for Public Architecture – Punchbowl Mosque by Candalepas Associates
Award – Joynton Avenue Creative Precinct by Peter Stutchbury Architecture for City of Sydney
Commendation – Barangaroo Ferry Wharf by Cox Architecture
Commendation – Coogee Beach Centre by Brewster Jhorst Architects

Educational Architecture
The William E. Kemp Award for Educational Architecture – Macquarie University Incubator by Architectus
Award – St Patrick’s Primary School, Lochinvar – Stage 1 by SHAC
Award – UTS Blackfriars Children’s Centre by DJRD with Lacoste + Stevenson Architects
Commendation – The Waranara Early Learning Centre for the City of Sydney by Fox Johnston

Residential Architecture – Houses (New)
Wilkinson Award for Residential Architecture – Cabbage Tree House by Peter Stutchbury Architecture
Award – Coastal Garden House by Neeson Murcutt Architects
Award – Three Piece House by TRIAS
Commendation – Killcare Beach Bush House by MORA – James Fraser Architect

Residential Architecture – Houses (Alterations & Additions)
Hugh and Eva Buhurich Award for Residential Architecture – The Rochford by Fox Johnston
Award – Bolt Hole by panovscott
Commendation – Italianate House by Renato D’Ettorre Architects

Residential Architecture – Multiple Housing
Aaron Eloit Award for Residential Architecture – The Triplex Apartments by Luigi Rosselli Architects
Award – Griffiths Teas by PopovBass
Award – Short Lane by Woods Bagot
Commendation – Inkmakers Place by Jensen Young

Commercial Architecture
The Sir Arthur G. Stephenson Award for Commercial Architecture – International House Sydney by Tzannes
Award – Barangaroo House by Collins and Turner
Award – Biripi Clinic by Kauntitz Yeung Architecture
Commendation – The Beehive by Raffaello Rosselli Architect with Luigi Rosselli Architects
Commendation – 333 George Street by Grimshaw with Crone Architects

Heritage
Greenway Award for Heritage – Joynton Avenue Creative Precinct by Peter Stutchbury Architecture in association with Design 5 – Architects for City of Sydney
Award for Heritage, Creative Adaptation – O’Connell Public by Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Architects
Commendation for Heritage, Creative Adaptation – Goonoo Goonoo Station by TKD Architects

Awards for Heritage Conservation – The Westpac Long Gallery by Design 5 – Architects
Commendation for Conservation – Emmett Residence by Orwell & Peter Phillips

Interior Architecture
John Verge Award for Interior Architecture – 75 Myrtle Street Chippendale by Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Architects
Award – The Waranara Early Learning Centre for the City of Sydney by Fox Johnston
Award – NeW Space, University of Newcastle by Lyons + EJE Architecture
Commendation – Frasers Property Australia Head Office by BVN
Commendation – All Hands Brewing House by Maddison Architects
Commendation – Wine Cave by McGregor Westlake Architecture
Commendation – Grimshaw Architects Office Fit Out by Grimshaw

Small Project Architecture
Robert Woodward Award for Small Project Architecture – Treetop Studio by Aileen Sage Architects
Award – Montoro Wines Cellar Door by Source Architects
Award – The Beehive by Raffaello Rosselli Architect with Luigi Rosselli Architects
Commendation – Paper Bird by Plus Minus Design
Commendation – Islington Park by Curious Practice

Sustainable Architecture
Milo Dunphy Award for Sustainable Architecture – International House Sydney by Tzannes

AWARDS

Punchbowl Mosque by Candalepas Associates
Photo: Brett Boardman
2018 Newcastle Architecture Awards

Newcastle Jury Prize
NeW Space, University of Newcastle by Lyons + EJE Architecture

Public Architecture
Award – Maitland No.1 Sportsground by Maitland City Council in association with the NSW Government Architect’s Office and CKDS
Commendation – Opal Hillside by dwp | design worldwide partnership

Educational Architecture
Award – NeW Space, University of Newcastle by Lyons + EJE Architecture
Award – St Patrick’s Primary School, Lochinvar – Stage 1 by SHAC

Residential Architecture – Houses (New)
Award – Brass House by Anthrosite
Commendation – Three Piece House by TRIAS
Commendation – Light House by Jodie Dixon Architect

Residential Architecture – Houses (Alterations & Additions)
Award – The Blue House by Welsh + Major
Commendation – Hund Haus by Jodie Dixon Architect
Commendation – Eighty-Four Gordon by SDA

Residential Architecture – Multiple Housing
Commendation – Corlette Street by CKDS Architecture
Commendation – Capri by SDA

Commercial Architecture
Commendation – Newcastle Private Hospital Kingston Extension by dwp | design worldwide partnership
Commendation – Nelson Bay Golf Club by EJE Architecture

Heritage
Award – King Street Adaptive Reuse by CKDS Architecture
Commendation – Maitland Town Hall – Auditorium Refurbishment by Maitland City Council and the NSW Government Architect’s Office

Interior Architecture
Award – NeW Space, University of Newcastle by Lyons + EJE Architecture
Commendation – Lyons House by EDH Group Pty Ltd – Architects
Commendation – MJH Group Workplace by SDA

Urban Design
Award – NeW Space, University of Newcastle by Lyons + EJE Architecture

Small Project Architecture
Award – Islington Park by Curious Practice
Commendation – North Avoca Studio by Matt Thitchener Architect

Sustainable Architecture
Award – Three Piece House by TRIAS

COLORBOND® Award for Steel Architecture
North Avoca Studio by Matt Thitchener Architect

NeW Space, University of Newcastle by Lyons + EJE Architecture Photo: Murray McKean

Award – The Beehive by Raffaello Rosselli Architect with Luigi Rosselli Architects
Award – Joynton Avenue Creative Precinct by Peter Stutchbury Architecture for City of Sydney
Commendation – Coogee Beach Centre by Brewster Hjorth Architects
Commendation – Macquarie University Incubator by Architectus
Commendation – Cabbage Tree House by Peter Stutchbury Architecture
Commendation – Paper Bird by Plus Minus Design

COLORBOND® Award for Steel Architecture
Award – Biripi Clinic by Kaunitz Yeung Architecture
Commendation – Barangaroo Ferry Wharf by Cox Architecture
Commendation – North Avoca Studio by Matt Thitchener Architect

Enduring Architecture
Award – Sirius by Tao Gofers, NSW Department of Housing with Alexander & Lloyd Architects

NSW Premier’s Prize – Biripi Clinic by Kaunitz Yeung Architecture
City of Sydney Lord Mayor’s Prize – Barangaroo Ferry Wharf by Cox Architecture
Lord Mayor’s Commendation – 333 George Street by Grimshaw with Crone
Lord Mayor’s Commendation – ‘Reflection’ Memorial by Johnson Pilton Walker and Jess Dare

Blackett Prize – St Patrick’s Primary School, Lochinvar - Stage 1 by SHAC

NSW Chapter Prizes
NSW Chapter President’s Prize – Deborah Dearing, President of the NSW Architects Registration Board
Marion Mahony Griffin Prize sponsored by Bespoke Careers – Oi Choong, Context Landscape Design
Emerging Architect Prize sponsored by AWS – Amelia Holiday and Isabelle Toland, Aileen Sage Architects
David Lindner Prize – Passive Security in Schools: Investigating alternative methods of achieving secure environments in schools by Jamileh Jahangiri, TKD Architects

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Rethink, Recalibrate, Regenerate

The NSW Country Division is preparing for its 58th annual regional conference in the Hunter Valley (2–4 October), with the theme of Rethink, Recalibrate, Regenerate: architecture in an evolving context.

Advances in technology and access to information are changing the world we live in. New construction techniques, social media, online resources, disruptive industries and the share economy are fuelling growth and transformation at a rapid pace. But what does this mean for the architectural profession and the wider construction industry? What are the risks moving forward? What are the opportunities? Are the current transformations reason for fear and suspicion? Or are we witnessing a natural evolution and a reworking of the boundaries in which architecture exists?

At the click of a keyboard new projects are available for perusal, new products and technologies promoted and opinions easily and widely shared. Buildings and information once reserved for architectural publications are now splashed all over Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, Houzz and even television. More than ever it feels that as a profession we need to be more critical. More critical in how and what we digitally consume and more critical about the role of architectural process and values.

Technology has led to the innovation of systems, software and processes, but it has also left us more connected to work and the rest of the world than ever before. Smart phones and iPads have meant switching off is harder than ever, with emails, alerts, phone calls and the abundance of news. People are constantly engaged with work and the wider world.

What does this mean for traditional office environments and working relationships with colleagues, clients, consultants and builders? More than ever, society needs to be more critical about what they consume digitally; how they interact with others in both professional and personal settings; and ultimately what is important.

In a profession that may have been considered an old person’s occupation, due to the time involved to build experience and recognition, the architecture and design worlds are being populated by a younger digital-savvy generation whose time is now.

Rethink, Recalibrate, Regenerate aims to be a diverse exploration of the education and practice of architecture within a technological-driven context. How do we adapt to the present? What do we take with us from the past? And where might we be headed in the future?

Award-winning architects as keynote speakers along with city and regional architectural practices and university colleagues will explore several topics. These include new construction methodologies and dealing with remote construction; flexibility of work practice around family and gender; and small emerging architectural practices producing innovative work.

The family-orientated Country Division conferences have served our profession for many years and allow architects to network with other like-minded practices and gain knowledge in a collegiate atmosphere. The event culminates with the presentation of the NSW Country Division Awards. Go to architecture.com.au/nsw for more information. We hope you can join us.

Cameron Anderson and Noel Thomson are the creative directors of the 2018 NSW Regional Conference and are architects based in Mudgee and Wagga Wagga respectively.
I am sceptical of Victorian Sydney and, to a large extent, the entire Victorian era – its success and those who reportedly led the charge into the 20th century. It was a time of extreme inequality, wealth and opportunity at the expense of poverty, adversity and disposssession for many. I am suspicious of the giants of our history and also confused by its architecture, its relevance and especially its appropriateness. But even so, I admire its virtuosity and its materiality.

In the book *A Life of Purpose: A Biography of John Sulman*, Zeny Edwards sets down a comprehensive account of the life and work of an enigma. Through contemporaneous commentary she illustrates a man who, while remaining peripheral to the ‘men of mark’, made indelible marks across multidisciplinary fields through the Victorian reign, until the second term of Joseph Lyons’ government in post-depression Australia. Readable and informative, Edwards races through 70 years of practice, 85 years of life, family, study, tragedy, loss, success, travel, slander, financial ruin, detail and generalisation.

In England after 15 years and more than 70 major church commissions, Sulman’s practice was flourishing but unreported other than by parish gazetteers. The work appeared constrained, critically and socially marginalised as ‘non-conformist’ – as likely was his career. No doubt Sulman’s move to the colonies – Adelaide, Melbourne then Brisbane, before finally settling in the Sydney suburb of Strathfield – was forced by his limited opportunities for education and acceptance amid the establishment, and by the frailty that afflicted Sulman, his wife and children. In Australia, Sulman suffered unspecified prejudice and marginalisation as well as illness; tragedy seemed to quarantine any collegiate affection. But Edwards does not dwell on the constraints that make up the character that was so prodigious.

There is enough graphic material to observe Sulman’s skill develop as fashion (or observance). Folly fell away and virtuosity surfaced, coinciding with an understandable change of discipline and emphasis. Sulman is shown as a more useful and respected teacher. His ideas are revolutionary, but reinforced by his tireless work ethic.

Sulman could plaster a wall as well as he could plan a city, curate the state collection of fine art, or fashion a waterproof tonneau for his son’s car. Edwards approaches hagiography, but only in that she washes away details to ensure a well-packed biography and for this reason, well-placed.

The book achieves what it sets out to do. Sulman deserves more recognition and more analysis of his contributions to the many facets of his endeavours. I enjoyed the story – I felt empathy, I understood frustration, I laughed, I was entertained and I was informed. I will certainly be on the lookout for more of Sulman’s work dotted across our urban landscape.

‘Freeland’s account of Sulman’s misdemeanours at the Institute during those few scandalous years ignored the fact that they were not in fact different from the antics of renegade architects behaving badly – almost the norm for such a competitive industry.’

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Peter Lonergan is a director of Cracknell and Lonergan, and a member of the heritage committee of the NSW Chapter.

*A Life of Purpose: A Biography of John Sulman* by Zeny Edwards is published by Longueville Media. The above illustration is one of over 150 illustrations and drawings in the book.
Archer Office is a collaborative design practice operating within the fields of architecture, urbanism, interior design and product development. We believe in the suggestive potential of architecture to inspire activity. This agenda is translatable between typologies and scales. The practice has grown organically through a series of projects starting with furniture, to temporary pavilions, to houses, and into complex and demanding projects for public and commercial clients. We place a high emphasis on context and the overlay of past, present and future.

Tomek Archer, winner of the 2017 Emerging Architect Prize, introduces his practice Archer Office and its development over the last 16 years.

Campfire Table, 2002
A first project: I designed and made the first Campfire Table as a second-year architecture student at the University of Sydney. This was soon after the targeting of the iconic Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York in September 2001. I was interested in a return to fundamental design and to make a place as a social catalyst for bringing people together. Produced by Roethlisberger in Switzerland, there are now thousands of small campfires hosting daily gatherings around the world. Photo: Kasia Werstak

The Wall 2.0, 2014
Furniture and other movable elements allow building occupants to create evolving formations that fulfil their needs. To embrace this attitude is to free architecture from solving every aspect of a brief, thus increasing flexibility and reducing the potential for redundancy in the architecture itself. The Wall 2.0 is a space-planning system that can form partitions, meeting rooms and storage spines that provide acoustic separation while maintaining light transmission. No architects or builders required. Photo: Tim Robinson

Poly, 2014
Commissioned by the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation and installed in their main gallery space, Poly is a communal pavilion made up of a series of movable, protective structures. Rather than prescribe a formal configuration, visitors to the gallery were encouraged to reconfigure the arrangement into social formations that respond to a series of planned and improvised events – ranging from film screenings and talks, to informal meetings or private reflective moments. The structures were digitally fabricated from discarded aluminium composite panel and assembled in the gallery by partners Tomek Archer and Toby Breakspear, in collaboration with gallery staff and visitors. Photo: Kasia Werstak

Darling Square Pavilions, 2015
A pair of pavilions located within Darling Square, a new mixed-use precinct developed by Lendlease. Working in association with landscape architects Aspect Studios as well as Kengo Kuma and Associates, who designed the adjacent market hall building, these pavilions were conceived as furniture-like structures to contain a small café and a library outpost. But alas, they will not be built. Image: Archer Office
EDG Forum, 2016

Located within the heritage-listed former Reader’s Digest Building (architect John James, 1967), this project was an opportunity to consider the potential of a transformative interior project as an effective, but reversible installation to meet the needs of the current occupants. A singular cotton cord interior lining was introduced to lighten the space and improve acoustics. This formed a ‘veil’ that monumentalised the interior form, giving views through to the heritage brickwork while allowing existing services to operate through it. Photo: Kasia Werstak

Camperdown, 2017

This warehouse conversion creates a flexible three-bedroom house within the raw concrete shell of a 100-year-old car assembly factory. Our proposal reveals the concrete structure and inserts a lightweight steel frame supporting a series of flexible living spaces including three bedrooms, with movable glazed partitions opening onto a central shared space.

Bronte House, 2016

The brief called for four bedrooms, three bathrooms, two living rooms and an entertaining kitchen and dining room opening to the garden, as an adaptation of an existing semi on a narrow site. The design takes every opportunity to expand each room to the outdoors, so that each room has a borrowed view with a different outlook. Perimeter sliding doors around the living room expand the extent of the space to the fence, to follow the setbacks while delivering ‘fence-to-fence living’.

House of Shelves, 2017

A home for a family who enjoy living amongst their accumulated objects. Rather than hide everything away, a system of open shelving provides a perimeter framework to be filled with the various utilitarian and nostalgic paraphernalia that accompanies each room. These shelves wrap through the section to form the structure that supports floor and roof.

Image: Archer Office

Woodgrove, 2017

A new restaurant precinct and public square for QIC in Melton, a regional town on the outskirts of Melbourne. The scheme inverts the existing internalised configuration of the shopping mall, which currently has a food court at the core. Instead, it remakes the building edge as the interface between hospitality and entertainment retailers and creates a new public square. This edge takes the form of an extended timber-framed colonnade that wraps the new section of building. It suggests an extendable strategy that may continue around the existing building as well. This singular yet flexible and continuous element brings together both the traditional regional vernacular of wraparound verandahs seen on Australian public buildings (‘pubs’) with the European colonnade surrounding a square.

As a modular, prefabricated timber structure, it is akin to an oversized furniture or joinery system that frames a diversity of functions along its length. Image: Doug and Wolf
For the 16th Venice Architecture Biennale, curators Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara of Grafton Architects tackle the vast former military complex that is the Arsenale with a cautious and consistent selection of recent works. In equal spaces through the entire length of the Corderie, architects invited by this Irish duo present samples of projects in response to the Freespace manifesto. The manifesto describes a ‘generosity of spirit and a sense of humanity at the core of architecture’s agenda’. What follows is a relentless display of large-scale models, peppered with a smattering of video projections, interrupting an otherwise monotonous trade-fair format. Perhaps Rem Koolhaas was right when he suggested architecture lacked the capacity to fill the space on its own.

The successes of this Biennale’s curated show came in the form of individual highlights. Hoards thronged around Peter Zumthor’s models, a beguiling greatest hits album with its exquisite display of model-building prowess. Flores & Prat’s 1:1 facsimile of their Sala Beckett theatre in Barcelona, replete with a backstage of rigorous process models and drawings, guarantees to disarm any architect and make them feel they’re not working hard enough. The short film House of Paros + the transmission of knowledge by Aurelio Galfetti is a simple story of this Swiss architect’s influence, practice and education. For curators Shelly and McNamara, it epitomises ‘how to communicate the true values of architecture’ in a thoughtful, yet passive manner.

John Wardle Architects’ finely made installation Some-where Other is reminiscent of an old-fashioned camera and is crafted from fragrant spotted gum. Wardle says: ‘it’s like a portal, deeply set in one place, while referring to another’. Its angled mirrors draw in the immediate context of the Arsenale, while the viewmaster-like eyepiece refers back to the Australian landscape. This idealises the notion of the perfect rural bush context that somehow defines Australian architecture to the outsider’s perspective. Over at the Central Pavilion, the Tasmanian office Room 11 filled a darkened space with bean bags and a wide-format video of three projects. Like Wardle, their work is legitimised by its inseparable connection to the Australian landscape.

Australia’s main entry Repair by Baracco + Wright Architects with artist Linda Tegg is an installation of 10,000 rare indigenous plants. In a wonderful aromatic gesture, Repair claims that a heightened awareness will help reconcile the vast amount of land and resources that buildings consume. The 65 species of plants were nurtured from seedlings in Sanremo, a coastal city in Italy, and are sustained by artificial lights inside the Denton Corker

Free spaces, repair

Matt Chan
Marshall-designed Australian Pavilion. If you don’t linger in the grasslands long enough, you’ll miss videos of 15 projects from around Australia. The exhibition’s publication deepens the thoughtful approach of the curators and participants.

Highlights from other national pavilions include Britain’s melancholic Island, by Caruso St John + Marcus Taylor. Island captures the Brexit mood while aptly responding to the Freespace theme. The empty pavilion, encased by scaffold with a plywood checkerboard viewing platform, provides stunning views over Venice.

While Britain scooped up a special mention for these efforts, Switzerland won the Golden Lion for their Svizzeria 240 House Tour. And Czech artist Kateřina Šedá rented shops in a tourist-laden town and invited ordinary people to do ordinary things, as if it were performance art. Portugal’s Public without Rhetoric, located in a palazzo outside the main venues, was a concise selection of brilliant work. The US Pavilion’s pointedly anti-Trump selection Dimensions of Citizenship includes a sci-fi styled yet fact-driven video installation, Globe / In Plain Sight, by Diller and Scofidio + Renfro, Laura Kurgan, Robert Gerard Pietrusko and the Columbia Center for Spatial Research. By overlaying night-time satellite images of cities, the installation reveals the inequality of global energy distribution.

Whereas previous editions of the Architecture Biennale were calls to action (Aravena’s Reporting the front, 2016) or critical readings of status quo (Koolhaas’s Fundamentals, 2014), Freespace rejects curation as a political act. Instead it opts to celebrate the ‘generosity of architecture’.

In sharp contrast to Freespace is the concurrent exhibition at Fondazione Prada in Milan. Titled Post Zang Tumb Tuuum. Art Life Politics: Italia 1918–1943 and curated by Germano Celant, it examines art exhibition’s efficacy during Fascism’s rise. Notably, it frames the Venice (Art) Biennale as a critical event binding art and politics during this turbulent period.

Yet in today’s ominous political environment, the Freespace theme is an elusive one. Its layered definitions seem designed to encompass everything, yet do nothing to assist the curatorial direction of the show. Well-intentioned phrases like ‘the role of architecture in the choreography of daily life’ and the ‘Earth as client’ are passive and fail to engage the highly-charged mood of our times. Freespace is a lost opportunity to chart a meaningful path for the wider profession on the international stage.

Matt Chan is the principal at Scale Architecture and an adjunct senior lecturer at the University of Sydney. The 16th Venice Architecture Biennale is on from 26 May to 25 November 2018.

All photos © Matt Chan

‘The Freespace manifesto describes a “generosity of spirit and a sense of humanity at the core of architecture’s agenda”. What follows is a relentless display of large-scale models, peppered with video projections … Perhaps Koolhaas was right when he suggested architecture lacked the capacity to fill the space on its own.’
As our cities continue to densify and more families chose to live in apartments, the question ‘Where do the children play?’ becomes increasingly pressing.

**THE RISE OF VERTICAL FAMILIES**

With the urban landscape of Australian cities shifting to higher densities, it is inevitable that an increasing number of families with children are choosing to live in apartments and medium density housing. In Sydney, ‘households’ with children make up 28% of high-rise residents and are projected to account for 32% over the next six years.\(^1\) Even though these numbers are significant, rarely are children considered in planning strategies for high-density living. With the exclusion of children from the compact urban fabric comes negligence towards the provision of safe travel paths, neighbourhood play strategies and appropriate apartment designs for families with children.

Apart from the changing landscape of our cities, the complexity of asking where can children play also arises from a broad shift in how children interact with their environments. As Lia Karsten and Willen Van Vliet note in their 2006 study ‘Children in the city: reclaiming the street’:

> In recent decades, important changes in home and neighbourhood environments have significantly impacted the play and peer interactions of children … Whereas children’s freedom at home has grown, their freedom outdoors has greatly decreased. Children’s daily territory – the places where children travel independently – has shrunk precipitously.

**THE MOST CHAUFFEURED CHILDREN IN THE WORLD?**

Research has shown that over the past 40 years, we have seen a significant decline in the number of hours that children spend playing outdoors and walking or cycling to school.\(^2\) Most Australian children do not meet the recommended minimum daily physical activity\(^3\) and the number of children using active transport (walking, cycling) has declined by 42% since the 1970s. Today it is estimated that 60% of Australian children are driven to school\(^4\) compared with only 16% in the 1970s.\(^5\) According to Dr Lyn Roberts, ‘Australian children are some of the most chauffeured children in the world’. Evidence has linked the sedentary lives of Australian children to the rise in health and wellbeing problems. Childhood obesity has risen ten-fold in the last decade with an estimated one in four children in Australia overweight,\(^6\) and almost one in seven children and adolescents have experienced a mental health disorder.\(^7\)

Apart from the decline in play and active mobility, research has shown that Australian children have far less freedom to roam when compared to children in other Western countries.\(^8\) With increasing numbers of children being chauffeured to school and extracurricular activities, there are fewer children freely walking around their neighbourhoods. With this comes a loss of incidental physical activity, informal play and social exchange between children, as well as a lack of belonging and spatial understanding of their neighbourhoods.

We also know that by granting children the independence to play and explore their neighbourhoods, they learn how to take measured risks and develop skills in problem solving and resilience, all of which are vital contributors to good mental health.\(^9\) With a growing body of research linking the benefits of play and active mobility to improved health and wellbeing, it is paramount that urban design considers strategies known to promote these outcomes.

**BUILDING A WALKABLE NETWORK OF PLAY OPPORTUNITIES**

Children’s day-to-day lives within the urban environment are often limited to three distinct zones: the home, the school and the playground or sportsground. Often these spaces are destinations to which parents drive their children and remain to supervise before chauffeuring them...
to the next zone. In contrast, child’s play for previous generations often occurred unsupervised in driveways, on streets and in underutilised pockets of urban space. Claire Freeman and Paul J. Tranter describe the result of relegating children to ‘child spaces’ in their book *Children and their Urban Environment: Changing Worlds*: ‘Their presence on the street, in public spaces and in natural spaces has become a source of disquiet; indeed, children’s visibility in many urban areas is conspicuous by its absence.’

My research paper ‘Where do the children play?: designing child friendly compact cities’ was produced for the 2017 David Lindner Research Prize. The research explores design strategies and responds to the disconnection between how and where children are playing and what we know is beneficial for their health and wellbeing.

One of the first underlying principles highlighted in the research is the need to dispel the perception that play should only occur in designated playgrounds. Instead, opportunities for play should be generously applied throughout neighbourhoods and envisaged as one networked playscape, which becomes a natural part of everyday life.

The research argues that apart from ensuring ample opportunities for learning and play throughout the neighbourhood, it is vital to consider safe travel routes to foster children’s independence. Children’s travel routes should be mapped onto the urban fabric and child-friendly initiatives concentrated within these routes. Community signage, traffic calming initiatives, safe pedestrian crossings and playful games should all be implemented along these routes. The report recommends that for every new and existing neighbourhood, a walkable child-centric network should be overlaid onto the urban fabric, designating walkable routes with opportunities for exploration, play and social exchange.

Given the increasing numbers of children living in apartments, provisions for play must also be considered in high-density housing. Shared spaces such as corridors, lobbies and courtyards can provide safe spaces for children to play and socialise. Design guidelines should ensure that shared outdoor areas are overlooked by balconies for passive supervision and allow direct access without physical barriers such as roads. Strata laws should also be revisited to safeguard play as an activity that cannot be either banned or discouraged from common areas.

Every element of the urban fabric should be considered as an opportunity to invoke playfulness and learning in children and child-scale details should be integrated throughout cities. For instance, double-height handrails, playful graphics and child-level windows to invoke curiosity and learning. The paper also asserts that any proposed physical interventions must be coupled with strong policies and programs to address the deeper social barriers that may prevent children from participating in their neighbourhoods.

Designers of the built environment know that physical landscapes can help shift behaviours. The shift towards eco-friendly, active lifestyles that better bike paths have produced is a case in point. Designers can influence the physical environment to inspire our cities for the future and give our children a richer start in life. Imagine if every designer and developer was asked ‘Where do the children play?’ when submitting a development application to council. How different would our cities be?


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8. P. Gray, ibid.
In defence of architecture

Angelo Candalepas

In our profession, we have a duty to act in defence of architecture; in defence of how it can transform the human condition. The familiar ideas of ‘narrative’ and other ‘distractions’ detract from the relevance of architecture as its own creative force. Our profession has relied too much upon adjunct ideas. Architecture should not, for instance, be made of gimmicks or tricks, nor strung on a line of subject-matter. So often the subjects surrounding architecture are used to laud architectural work, but this is a decoy. For example, if a work is environmentally excellent, this does not immediately make it a great work of architecture. It needs to be a great work of architecture before it is an environmental achievement. This does not belittle the environmental agenda, rather it contextualises it.

Much of the discussion about architecture concerns subjects not core to the discipline. For years our profession has attempted desperately to recognise ‘thinking’ in architectural pursuits. The most absurd manifestation of this is the persistent refusal by many university programs to impart architectural knowledge, favouring instead an over-conceptualisation and over-abstraction of architecture.

Our students are more likely to be asked to write a narrative about their ideas or to present a ‘concept’ than think about the relevance of human experience. This super-referential world was a postmodern idea of over half a century ago, but the consequence is that students are rarely given a chance to consider what architecture itself brings to the human condition. Seldom are we talking about the transformative nature of colour, space, material, movement, perception, scale, proportion. And dare we even mention construction detail … The resulting lack of architectural intentions within architecture is an affront to architecture itself.

There is too much ‘content’ or ‘explanation’ of work for any real architecture to emerge; too much information traps the architectural intentions well below the surface of a work where they cannot be experienced. With ‘content’ one can only expect footnotes, further meaning and a delving into self-referential and esoteric ideas that are generally irrelevant to the needs of greater society. This is in contrast both to the potential for poetic or expansive experiential pursuits and to the universal intents present in the great works of architecture across time. There should be much more emotion in architecture. Too many teachers ask students to remove emotion and this would never be the case if we knew that the sacrifice is architecture itself. I am trying to avoid literary devices in an architectural discussion, but a metaphor might serve to illuminate the concept I am describing if it is understood as operating in the tradition of metaphors (rather than the tradition of using narratives to explain metaphors in architecture). If a musical composer described their work outside the language of music before it was performed, it would be meaningless. And in poetry, how absurd it would be to describe a poem without the poem itself. In architecture, too, it would be belittling our discipline if the description of the work was more fulfilling than the experience of it. Yet this approach is not only allowed but sometimes expected, or worse-still, rewarded. We are struggling to distinguish great works of architecture because so few of us pursue core architectural ideas.

The only thing that can make architecture relevant to our time is architecture itself and our work may involve things as simple as the pursuit of a change in a person’s mood, a sense of comfort or awe. This is not to say that other subjects are less relevant to the world. But I argue that the elevation of other subjects above architecture, when there is a need to create an architecture, devalues the work of our profession – and no less seriously than do procurement methods devoid of our involvement. It is time to reclaim a position, to defend architecture and our work as a relevant profession within society. Our work has the potential to be transformative. It can offer an expression about how we see the future in the context of our present understanding of the past – and architecture alone must be our vehicle for this.

We don’t wish to be the generation that needed plaques to describe the intentions of our work. We don’t wish to be the generation that pretended we were philosophers so we could avoid being architects. We should aim to provide architecture in its own language: rich with an ability to transform our sense of worth; rich in its language and knowledge of construction detail, light, space, rhythm, layered space and historical intentions; and rich in its operation of making space and form.

Angelo Candalepas is the director of Candalepas Associates. Above is Angelo’s sketch of La Congiunta Museum (Giornico, Switzerland) by Peter Märkli.

Provoke is an opinion series written by a different guest writer each year. To express interest in being the Provoke author for four issues in 2019, please send your first suggested topic to bulletin@architecture.com.au with ‘Provoke’ in the subject line.

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‘There should be much more emotion in architecture. Too many teachers ask students to remove emotion and this would never be the case if we knew that the sacrifice is architecture itself.’
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CHAPTER BULLETIN.


THE BULLETIN'S FUNCTION.
In the past it has often been said that the Institute was as dead as the doke. The pros and cons of this statement will not be debated. The important fact is that as present the Institute—and particularly the New South Wales Chapter—is very much alive.

The present Council, with its energetic President, Mr. Cobden Parkes, is, with the assistance of numerous Committees outside its ranks, definitely achieving something.

The interim Post-War Development Report—only the interim report, mark you—has been a fine example of co-operative effort, and one, which, perhaps it is no exaggeration to state, has put the Institute before the Government and the public more than any other action for a number of years.

Architects are eagerly looking forward to the post-war period. They know that for the development to be successful they must play an important part, and what it more they are determined to see that they are not denied this opportunity of contributing towards the progress and expansion of the Nation.

It has been felt that much of the criticism of the Chapter in the past has resulted from the fact that the members are not aware of what it is doing, and, therefore, it has been decided to publish this monthly Bulletin, the purpose of which is to acquaint members, by means of short, pithy paragraphs, of the work, news and progress of the month.

In “Architecture” the Institute possesses its four corners of transactions. This, however, appears only quarterly, and has to embrace all the Chapters; thus this Bulletin, which only concerns itself with the N.S.W. Chapter, is in no way redundant, but is purely supplementary.

The Chapter aims to represent all architects in New South Wales. It is the only body that is competent to do this, and architects would be wise to wholeheartedly give their support to its efforts to make the public and the authorities “architect-conscious.”

The architects who are giving their time to the compilation of this Bulletin are endeavouring to do a service. We look to all the architects in New South Wales to likewise contribute to the advancement of the profession.

[Comment, letters, and criticisms will be welcomed. These should be addressed to the Editor, Chapter Bulletin, R.A.I.A., 16 Barrack Street, Sydney.]

A MESSAGE TO PAST MEMBERS FROM THE PRESIDENT.

My Council is firmly convinced that the Chapter must be a more fully representative body of the Architects in the State if it is to be of full value to the profession.

To bring this about we have examined the different avenues of eligibility for membership. In the past ex-members desirous of seeking re-admission were called upon to meet all less necessary to give continuity of membership from the time of severing association with the Institute.

The matter was brought forward at the recent R.A.I.A. Annual Meeting and the decision reached is that all past members will be considered for re-admission on the same basis as new members and be entitled to seek membership on the payment of the usual entrance fee of $1/3/0, plus annual subscription.

It is felt that past members will be interested in this progressive step and will take advantage of the opportunity now provided to extend their interest to the profession during the present difficult times.

The Chapter must be prepared to suitably meet the calls of the Post-War period and to do this the support of all past members is regarded as essential.

COBDEN PARKES, President.

NEXT MEETING

TUESDAY, 25TH JANUARY, 1944, AT 8 P.M.
at the Institute’s Rooms, 5th Floor, Barrack House, 16 Barrack Street, Sydney.
DISCUSSION ON R.A.I.A. ANNUAL MEETING
Come and hear the important decisions made and express your views.

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