Eyes wide open
The reality of architectural representation
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Patron case study: The Ribbon by Hassell

Review: Making 2014 Sarah Aldridge

Obituary: Kevin Schreiber

On the cover: Somewhere Else, Shanghai, 2012 from
Brett Boardman’s photo essay on architectural
representation featured on page 9.
Public sector procurement

Negotiations with the NSW Office of Finance and Services on the public sector procurement issue have been proceeding well in recent weeks. There is general agreement that the standard contract, AE312, with Amendment No 1 satisfies the requirements for architects and their clients. It also negates the warranty issue, which has been a major point of contention in recent years.

We anticipate there will be progress on a simplified standard contract for small projects and a consistent and fair prequalification system; both of these reforms will assist smaller practices to compete more equitably for public sector work.

It is important to acknowledge the valuable work of our colleague organisation the Association of Consulting Architects Australia (ACA) in compiling the Preparation of a Brief for Architectural Services document, available on the procurement website: https://www.procurepoint.nsw.gov.au/ before-you-buy/procurement-system-construction/standard-form-documents-construction/consultancy. This is a significant step towards the development of a consistent method of procuring architectural services across the public sector.

I also acknowledge the work of public sector agency representatives, Consult Australia and the ACA in developing a new contract construct suitable for public sector projects as another important step towards the standardisation goal.

I have commenced meeting jointly with the ACA so that our collaborative efforts will enable us to reach our goal as efficiently as possible.

Sydney Architecture Festival

It’s hard to believe this important event on the architectural calendar is now in its eighth year. That in itself is a tribute to the close and productive working relationship between the two organisations driving the event: the Institute and the NSW Architects Registration Board (ARB). You will know by now that the ARB’s energetic Registrar, Kate Doyle, has moved on to head up the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AAC). We congratulate Kate on this move and thank her for her diligence and advocacy during her decade with the ARB, and welcome Tim Horton, formerly President of the Institute’s South Australian chapter, to the role of Registrar.

The festival this year — connections: The Making of a Great City — will feature a colloquium, focusing on the role of our major transport projects in connecting Sydney’s growth regions, unlocking employment potential and shaping a better NSW. Sydney is currently embarking on its largest investment in transport infrastructure in its brief 200-year history, with many architects, landscape architects and urban planners involved in shaping the public domain of the future. Will they get the connectivity between street, precinct and city right as a whole?

For anyone interested in the making of Sydney, the colloquium will bring together architects, planners, policymakers and thinkers to look at the projects that will define the city of Sydney in 2020 and beyond. It is all related to the idea I mentioned earlier: making Sydney a better city, not just a bigger one.

Joe Agius
NSW Chapter President

Chapter Manager’s report

As we head into the second half of the year, our attention turns to the Sydney Architecture Festival, which will be held from 1 – 10 November coinciding with Sydney Living Museums biennial Sydney Open on Sunday 3 November. In partnership with the NSW Architects Registration Board, this year’s festival will focus on the integral part that transport and infrastructure plays in making great cities. The festival’s headline event, a colloquium hosted by the ARB’s Tony Jones, will be held on Friday 7 November bringing together place makers and policymakers – planners, architects, urban designers, developers, government and communities – to outline the shape of Sydney in the making.

The festival will feature an exhibition of photographs from five leading architectural photographers and on the theme of bridges, there will be a guided ferry cruise, Bridges Al coy, with live narratives of the unique architectural, engineering and related social histories of selected bridges that span Sydney Harbour and the Parramatta River. There will be another series of Architecture on Show talks held across the metropolitan area and several ArchFUN activities for children young and old.

This year’s Australian exhibition currently on show at the Venice Biennale, Augmented Australia, will also be featured at Customs House. Three of the unbuilt projects featured in Venice will be activated to create animations, interviews and 3D models exploring these unrealised projects.

This year’s ArchCAREERS day will be held on Friday 12 September. The four New South Wales universities will be represented, and a full day of informative sessions will be held to assist school students eager to learn more about studying architecture. The day will feature talks on: how to go about preparing a portfolio; flexible entry paths to studying architecture; where an architecture degree can take you; and postgraduate study and research opportunities.

Can I also remind you not to leave getting your CPD points until the last minute. There are several tours and seminars being organised for the second half of the year and they will be noted in the regular weekly enews.

We are pleased to announce that Kandis Von Holdt has joined the Newcastle office as Regional Events Coordinator. Kandis is highly experienced in all facets of event management and has worked with several not-for-profit organisations in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, including the Artcurial Institute and the Restaurant and Catering Association. Kandis will join Kate Griffith in delivering the New South Wales regional events programs.

Roslyn Irons
NSW Chapter Manager

Advocacy update

The Built Environment Committee had no sooner commenced a series of conversations with senior managers in the Department of Planning than then-Premier Barry O’Farrell made his farewell Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) appearance and the political cards were reshuffled. This left the department with a new, temporary chief executive and its bureaucracy abrutely married to that of environment, which made it difficult for them to provide the committee with an authoritative map for the future; nevertheless their willingness to meet with us gave us the opportunity to inform them to revisit when the dust has settled.

In the past few months the Chapter has made submissions on: the BASIX Target Review; the Building Professionals Board’s survey of building certification and regulation; urban activation precincts (both in general and specifically Carter Street, Lidcombe); the Royal Botanic Gardens & Domain Trust Master Plan; the City of Sydney’s draft cultural policy; and IPART’s Reforming Licensing in NSW draft report. The latter proposes retaining architect registration in New South Wales, a moment, as its abolition would render New South Wales architects uncompetitive with their interstate and international peers. These submissions can be downloaded from the policy and advocacy page of the Chapter website: http://www. architecture.com.au/about-us/nsw- chapter/policy-advocacy.

Heritage issues have been at the forefront in recent weeks. Here, too, the Ministerial reshuffles have had an impact. No sooner had NSW Chapter President Joe Agius written to the Minister for Family and Community Services, Pru Goward, seeking a stay of execution for the long-term residents of Millers Point than she was appointed Minister for Planning and replaced by Gabrielle Upton. In the same vicinity, the Sydney Ports Harbour Control Tower may live to see another day. As the Chapter President wrote in a letter published in the Sydney Morning Herald: “Retaining the tower not only makes sense from a heritage perspective. It also helps to link the new development at Barangaroo with other remnants of the city’s maritime past at Walsh Bay and at Millers Point. It’s an important part of the story we tell to residents and visitors.”

At the time of writing, an unfortunate court case redefine the public domain with imaginative and well-resourced public projects like the Prince Alfred Park – Pool Upgrade, The Wayside Chapel and Darling Quarter. The City of Sydney has set a high bar for other local governments to emulate.

A bigger and better Sydney

It was a pleasure to welcome NSW Minister for Planning Pru Goward to the ceremony and to have the opportunity to congratulate her and Premier Mike Baird on their decision to establish a Greater Sydney Commission that will provide a whole-of-government framework for the future planning and development of the Sydney metropolitan area. This is something the Institute has been advocating for many years; we need the Sydney counterpart of the Western Australian Planning Commission, which has provided the citizens of that state with an authoritative and comprehensive planning regime.

I took the opportunity of reminding the Planning Minister that as the city’s Planning Minister that as the city’s Planning Commission, which has provided the public with, and of the crucial and productive synergy between architects and landscape architects at the top of their game.

2014 NSW Architecture Awards

Another fine crop of entrants in this year’s awards confirmed for the public what we as practitioners already know: New South Wales architects are the equal of the best in Australia. Another fine crop of entrants in this year’s 2014 NSW Architecture Awards landscape architects at the top of their game.

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A bigger and better Sydney
Patrons news

Bates Smart has won an invited design competition for a new residential tower at Sydney Olympic Park (pictured above). This will be the third residential tower undertaken by the practice at the park. The 34-storey tower creates a new “vertical community” containing 378 apartments and a series of dramatic vertical communal sky gardens providing environmental benefits. The site is where Sydney Olympic Park meets Bicentennial Park in Homebush — where the city meets nature. It is simultaneously the edge condition, entry marker and gateway to Sydney Olympic Park. The design response is a unique triangular shaped tower that responds to its pivotal location. Its soft corners reflect the elliptical towers further along Australia Avenue, while vertical gardens continue the landscape of Bicentennial Park into the third dimension. Environmentally, the design cleans, filters and cools air while providing cross-ventilation to apartments and common areas; it also shades and cools air while providing cross-ventilation to apartments and common areas; it also shades. This building will be the next residential tower undertaken by the practice at Sydney Olympic Park (pictured above). This will be the third residential tower undertaken by the practice at the park. The 34-storey tower creates a new “vertical community” containing 378 apartments and a series of dramatic vertical communal sky gardens providing environmental benefits. The site is where Sydney Olympic Park meets Bicentennial Park in Homebush — where the city meets nature. It is simultaneously the edge condition, entry marker and gateway to Sydney Olympic Park. The design response is a unique triangular shaped tower that responds to its pivotal location. Its soft corners reflect the elliptical towers further along Australia Avenue, while vertical gardens continue the landscape of Bicentennial Park into the third dimension. Environmentally, the design cleans, filters and cools air while providing cross-ventilation to apartments and common areas; it also shades and cools air while providing cross-ventilation to apartments and common areas; it also shades.

Francis-Jones Morehen Thyssen’s (fjmt) Bankstown Library and Knowledge Centre (BLaKC) (pictured below) was officially opened by the Mayor, Khal Asfour, on Sunday 6 April. Commissioned by Bankstown City Council BLaKC sets new benchmarks in public building sustainable design, adaptive re-use, salvage, recycling and renovation of the existing Bankstown Town Hall. Located in the heart of Bankstown, the development serves to revitalise a dislocated site and create a rich spatial experience for community members and visitors. The design brief was twofold: “to create a sustainable building with a distinct architectural character and to develop an accessible and inviting public space”. As a result, the BLaKC is not just a repository for books but a hybrid community hub that plays a significant role within the Bankstown civic precinct. Sustainable design principles and innovative high-performance environmental systems were used and/or informed all design decisions to create an integrated and flexible cultural asset for the local community.

Cox is pleased to announce Philip Graus as the first Conjoint Professor for the Faculty of Built Environment at the University of New South Wales. This role will build connections between practice and theory. The company also congratulates Rob Meyer on his recent Member of the Order of Australia (AM), and both Philip Cox and Ian McKay in receiving the Chapter’s Award for Enduring Architecture for CB Alexander College, Tocal (pictured above). The jury noted the building as a “remarkable work of environmentally responsive architecture”. The principles embedded in this early project continue to inform Cox’s approach today.

Tanner Kibble Denton Architects (pictured left) won the official retirement of Howard Tanner in May. Tanner will maintain a connection with the practice, providing periodic advice as a Senior Consultant for specific projects.

Led by four Principals, Alex Kibble, Robert Denton, Megan Jones and John Rose, the office continues to build upon the strengths established over 40 years of practice. Emblematic of this transformative change, in late 2014 TKD Architects will move to a new single floor office at Level 1, 19 Foster Street Surry Hills. After 25 years at 52 Albion Street, the practice will renew and strengthen the workplace values of a successful and growing contemporary architectural practice.

NSW Country Division

The 2014 NSW Country Division Annual Conference will take place from Tuesday 30 September to Saturday 4 October at Rydges Port Macquarie. Beyond the Edge of Architecture is an exploration of future practice, design, materials and construction. Enjoy a break from the office, and bring the family to sunny Port Macquarie for this annual event, earn 10 formal CPD points and engage with guest speakers discussing topics such as the future for architecture, the design process, landscape design and transport planning, to name just a few. Registrations and a program of events are available online at www.architecture.com.au/cpd-events/.

The 2014 Country Division Architecture Award winners will be announced at the conference on Thursday 2 October.

Newcastle Division

The 2014 UrbanGrowth NSW Lower Hunter Urban Design Award winners will be announced at a gala presentation night at Tempus Two Winery in Pokolbin on Friday 5 September. Check out this year’s nominations and purchase tickets online at www.llhuda.com.au. Design+ Newcastle, a one-day event celebrating design, architecture and interior design in Newcastle, will take place on Saturday 30 August across two precincts, Newcastle West and Islington. For more information visit www.designplus.net.au.

SONA

The result of this year’s 1:1 collaboration at Walsh Bay Pier was, once again, a great success and I would like to thank everyone involved for creating the beautiful pavilions. This was the fourth year the event was run in Sydney and the second year nationally.

SuperStudio 2014 ran on 1-2 August at the University of Sydney with a brief focused on the experience of architecture. I hope everyone enjoyed their 24 hours, whether it was spent designing, sleeping rough or socialising. Good luck to the finalists, we hope you make it all the way to the Venice Biennale!

SONA National President

Peter Nguyen

DARCH

A degree in architecture does not quite prepare you for the complexities of practice. Not that any university education allows you to seamlessly transition into the workplace, not that any university education should, but it does raise the question of where graduates are supposed to seek this knowledge once they leave the hallowed halls of higher education. For most graduates the next logical step is employment. So you fumble your way through the doors of whomever will take you and so begins the next phase of your education. Little consideration is given to the profound impact this decision could have on your life, as you may have just entered into a job rather than a career.

In years gone by, the Institute has presided over a large part of SONA’s efforts have been focused on the advocacy issue of unpaid under paid internships. As part of our investigation we are currently running a National Student and Graduate survey, the results of which will form a policy to be submitted to the national office of the Institute. If you are interested in advocating for student rights, go to www.sona.com.au. There are also some great prizes for you to win.

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Cliché and context: architecture and gender

Cristina Goberna, a guest speaker at the Architect's 1st Symposium on Architecture and Gender at the University of Seville in March this year. She spoke with architect and academic Tarsha Finney, in Sydney in June 2014, about her experience and the continued inequity within the profession.

Tarsha Finney: Cristina, the Architect’s 1st Symposium was just one of seven or eight large international conferences that have been held in the past few years, all addressing what seems to be a global issue of disparity between the percentage of female students undertaking an undergraduate degree in architecture (about 50 per cent in the US and 44 per cent in Australia of first-year intake 2012) versus the number of women working in architecture and specifically as registered architects (18 per cent in the US). “The Missing 32%” is one US not for profit advocacy group arguing it. Looking back at these conferences, to 1974 for example and the Washington University in St Louis, Missouri conference on women in architecture, while there is some change in an emphasis away from establishing naturalised truths in the expression of gender and architecture, and a move in the past 10 years toward addressing more pragmatic issues of cultural change and leadership, workplace balance, unconscious bias and flexible work practices in the context of questions about participation – how is it that events, despite their high profile and ambition, seem not to be having much of an effect?

Cristina Goberna: I have this sense that the questions being asked at the moment are only addressing ‘the victim’; it often seems as if we’re telling men, accusing men of blame. It’s simply not productive.

What I think is more productive is the recognition that there are certain issues naturalised and silenced in the profession, certain clichés appearing over and over again. Architecture can be understood in two contexts: the first is a general issue of the production of architecture: the design, broadcast, writing, theory and building itself. I don’t see any difference at all – after 23 years in education and teaching, and after 13 years in practice – between the sexes and their relationship to the production of architecture – and I use sex as opposed to ‘gender’ here to indicate difference very carefully. Gender is a cultural concept and construct; it’s mobile. To speak about sex is to simply speak about a biological difference. In another sense, though, architecture is also logistics. Logic in this context can be understood as the politics of architecture, the politics of the office of universities, of buildings sites and of client and consultant relations. While there is no noticeable differentiation between sexes in the production of architecture in terms of capabilities and skills, in terms of the logistics of architecture the difference, and the reception of men over women is remarkable: differences in salary; differences in attention paid – to men working in teams over the women they work with; the absence of higher levels of leadership or in management support at the highest level of responsibility for women.

In order for the discussion to be more productive then, we need to create a space of discussion regarding practice itself, the studio practice, in a way that highlights issues that need to be made visible and pulled out of silence. There is a consistent tradition in art practice of work that unveils what is hidden by the general consensus. Like the work of Santiago Sierra for example, or the Carry It Girls, but not in architecture with the exception perhaps of the Feminist Wall of Shame2 and the latest discussions regarding Denise Scott Brown and Her exclusion from the Pritzker. Of course, art is very immediate. Architecture is much less so. Its complexities of production are quite different. But contemporary initiatives are starting to do similar things, such as the Tumbl blog Feminist Wall of Shame, which names and shames US universities that fail to address the issue of women’s appearances in things like the public lecture series.

Fake Industries work internationally, currently in New York, US; Bogota, Colombia; Madrid, Spain; and Sydney. In terms of how this all affects me, I find the problems appear with different intensities in different places; they involve the usual petty sexism of having information withheld. However, one consistency is the risk involved for women with maternity. It’s a very big injustice. Women take all the physical risk, they carry all the physical importance to the child, they do everything initially for the first two years: one-year of pregnancy and the one year of getting back to normal. In terms of one’s professional standing, the risk is huge. The whole situation relies on women – and the logistics of architecture specifically rely on women taking all of that risk on themselves. This is of course not an issue specific to architecture; it’s a much bigger societal inequity where it seems that the system is organised such that a woman uniquely needs to respond to someone else in that moment.

References

Cristina Goberna is an architect and educator. She is a founding partner in the practice FAKE Industries Architectural Agonism, who were awarded the 2014 American Institute of Architects New Practices New York Prize in 2014 and were finalists for the 2014 MoMA PS1 Young Architects Program. Fake Industries currently have projects under construction in Spain and Bogota, Colombia. Goberna teaches at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (GSAPP) at Columbia University and at the Cooper Union in New York.

Through the looking glass

The importance and impact of architectural representation is a topic of ongoing conversation. Communicating the impact idea is complex, and controlling how that idea is perceived even harder. In this issue of Architecture Bulletin, the editorial committee sought to investigate the issues that affect how architecture is seen.

Architects can see through a representation to glean an understanding of the underlying design, but how is this interpreted by others? Can a competition be won by a compelling graphic, or a city designed to suit a 3D fly through? When imagery is used in community consultation, how does an audience read an architect’s work? Can an architect ever really control how a representation is interpreted? The current language of architectural representation is a broad topic that touches on many subjects and perspectives; from architects themselves to people driving the production of media, including policymakers, publishers, renderers and photographers. Architecture Bulletin asked three competition-winning architects and a competition juror how important representation is to the success of winning a design competition. (page 12). Respondents believed ideas and strategies prevailed over representation. Or as Angelo Candela suggests, the ‘why’ is more important than the ‘how’. Apparently good juries see through the method of representation to the clarity of the idea, and the glossy hero shot does not necessarily seduce the juror.

Competitions seem to offer a rare chance for architects to explore and express pure design intent. Yet physical models play a limited role in competitions, possibly because they leave far less room to hide. Dorach Block Jaggers poetically describe the truth in a model that cannot be denied on page 16. Its ugliness is on show, so too its beauty, its resolution, made public for any and all to review and provide commentary. This commentary can add new authors to a design and, as such, illustrates how representation can inform architecture on its journey from concept to built form.

Architecture has long held up the single individual as design originator and genius. Everyone who has ever worked in an office whose number is greater than one understands this to be a fairytale. The authors of an office’s work are the many staff who contributed to that project; from principal to project architect, from technician and model maker to photogapher. Gare both the roles and impacts of these various authors in the process considered in the design outcome.

Matt Chan’s revealing interview with Doug & Wolf (page 18) clearly demonstrates the role ‘picture people’ play in fixing ‘picture problems’: simple omissions like the façade of a building or holes in a 3D model. The art of a hero shot contributes, for better or worse, to the representation of design and architecture. A subtext also emerges regarding the relationship between a practice and its ‘brand’. Is it really the
clarity of design ideas that separate uber architects, like OMA and MVRDV, from the rest of the profession, or is it simply that their style is instantly recognised by supportive jurors or clients and pulled above the pack?

Louise Mackenzie and Sarah Breen Lovett’s piece on the Cinecity project (page 22) is a fascinating insight into how film uses a spatial narrative to lead an audience to a direct or implied message. For an architect, a building conceived in their minds is only partially translated in the mind of others. The translation is heavily imbued with emotion and memory; memory of a spatial narrative that may never be realised except in cinema. Real or imagined it is relevant in the understanding of the representation.

This raises questions around an architect’s original intent. How representation is understood is complex and interpreted differently by different people — simultaneously. If there is no pure form of representation, perhaps, as Doug & Wolf suggest, it is much more fun when the design is loose and messy. There is the hope that good ideas should prevail against all hurdles. Jorn Utzon’s Sydney Opera House is an example; surviving a rejects list to be recalled by Eero Saarinen as the winner.

Trish Oakley and Roberta Ryan speak about perception and the importance of carefully considering messages (page 10). This time from a more serious angle. They see representation as a means to lead community engagement of the architecture and the planning system. They talk of representations that communicate to the people they are trying to engage. Highly resolved tricked-up architecture renders may not impress the local community who would prefer to see their images reflected within the space of the building rather than gaze in awe at rendered imagery that is only seen by planes and pigeons. Oakley and Ryan discuss understanding audience and responding to this in representation accordingly.

Katelyn Butler, Editor of Houses magazine provides an insight to the world of architecture media and how imagery is used and perceived (page 10). Once an image is made public the architect’s control of the representation and content is loosened further. The effects of potentially untrained and uncritical mass publications via new media should be considered. Rheines, Tumblr blogs, Instagram, Pinterest pages, Twitter and Facebook pick and regurgitate architectural imagery at a giddy pace. Does the titillation of archi-porn subjugate the ideas and the architecture? Butler provides advice on how to help build ‘brand’. How does an architect become the next OMA?

However, it is Brett Boardman’s photo essays (opposite page) that perhaps highlights the power and hopelessness in attempting to control architectural representation. His Somewhere Else imagery opens up the endless possibilities of interpretation that allow for the understanding of the complexity of architectural representation.

The intention of this issue is to explore the broad field of the representation of architecture in order to gain a better understanding of how it is used and perceived. The power of an architectural idea and how it can transcend all else if communicated effectively. But also the many hands involved in representation along the path to success. In this issue we hope to open your eyes to the many filters of interpretation an architect’s work goes through, from political to domestic to mass media consumption. We also hope to reveal we have less control than we actually believe; and wonder if that is such a bad thing.

Callantha Brigham, Matt Chan and Shaun Carter: Editorial Committee, Architecture Bulletin

“Here is the hope that good ideas should prevail against all hurdles. Jorn Utzon’s Sydney Opera House is an example; surviving a rejects list to be recalled by Eero Saarinen as the winner.”
When the NSW Department of Planning and Environment embarked on long overdue reforms to the state’s planning laws, it made much of its plan to digitise the planning system to help achieve the stated aim of putting “the community at the heart of the planning system”. The department’s former Executive Director, Communications and Engagement, Trish Oakley, and the Director of the University of Technology, Sydney’s Centre for Local Government, Roberta Ryan, led the community engagement on the White Paper: A New Planning System for NSW. They say this process produced clear evidence on how to represent the urban landscape to communities; evidence that explodes some commonly held myths.

In this year’s New South Wales Budget the State Government allocated an unprecedented $2.12 million to the Department of Planning and Environment’s new ePlanning system. The department is working around the clock to launch the Spatial Viewer and Interactive House programs; online tools that will create 3D visualisations of proposals at the big picture strategic level, as well as an ordinary house following construction.

Probably the most important objective of these digital tools is to enable the community to better understand the urban landscape. With more people involved, the debate will be more equipped to participate effectively in what is often described as ‘secret planning business’.

So or the theory goes. And, the theory goes further: if the community can better navigate the arcane world of planning, they will feel more equipped to participate effectively in what is often described as ‘secret planning business’.

First, 67 per cent of people will support growth provided a) the planning system delivers what they need in terms of infrastructure, and b) they are involved in big picture decision-making. So, the comments of self-appointed activist groups that insist the community is opposed to growth are, to put it simply, wrong. What is more, the people we worked with told us the activist groups were creating a lot of static, blocking the ‘real’ views of the community from being heard.

Second, people are not only willing but keen to participate in strategic planning. Strategic planning is the thrust of the direction of the planning reforms; reforming the system on upfront planning rather than simply ‘ticking the box’ for development proposals. The current view of the profession is that people will not participate because they don’t ‘get it’ until there is a building next door.

‘This myth has been well and truly ‘busted’ by our research. The key, however, is how you present the information to the community. Working with professionals as part of the engagement — architects, planners and urban designers, not just the community’s engagement — architects, planners and urban designers — we found they held the common view that the community wants glossy images of iconic buildings set in a Stepford Wives landscape.

Not true. The community is smarter than that. And we should ignore that fact at our peril.

What the community wants can be summed up in three points: quality information, no spin, and a genuine chance to be involved in and influence the big picture decisions.

What does this mean in practical terms? Start by taking people on a journey, explaining the process, rather than simply presenting tricked-up images; these go at the end, not the start of the process. It’s about knowing who the people in the community are, understanding their values and aspirations, and starting from where they are at. It’s not about the professional perspective.

Architects are understandably passionate about what their beautiful designs can do for a community. However, at the early stage, the people in the community may see architectural designs as vertical monuments to the corporate dollar rather than desirable additions to the neighbourhood.

Show that you understand the context: the community’s neighbourhood. Understand that not everyone in the community is the same; people have different beliefs, perspectives and fears.

‘The community very often wants to see themselves in the imagery rather than the concepts of the professionals. Imagination that shows what people love about their neighbourhoods and reflects the local vision is critically important. Focus on the ground plane and the places people actually use.

Imagery that is community friendly, hand drawn, and can be presented in a format that is capable of being drawn on can also help the discussion.

Make sure processes are educative and deliberative: provide an opportunity for people to work through the issues and attempt to reach consensus solutions.

If you follow these ideas — now well supported by evidence — you quickly unlock articulate views that provide unique insights into how new development can lay the groundwork for more liveable and prosperous communities.

Yes, 3D images are an extremely effective tool at certain points in an engagement, but they are not the right solution every time, and they certainly are not at the beginning. Like all tools they need to be used for the right purpose or they will not work. And for a last bit of advice: replace Stepford Wives-style public domain, with a bit of grit from The Wire.

An image celebrating architecture, rather than the creation of a community. Image: Wikipedia Commons.

An image more likely to resonate with communities. Image: New York State Department of Transportation.
Taking first place: the role of representation in winning competitions

With the prevalence of competitions to determine the design of many projects and developments, it is abundantly clear that architectural representation is fundamental to the success of a winning proposal. Or is it? Three architecture competition winners and a juror give us their views.

Matthias Hollenstein and Felicity Stewart, Stewart Hollenstein

For us, a project’s representation is driven from its idea. Architecture is a process of presentation, and, as such, representation is integral to its thinking. From initial sketch to final product, we see the design process as an invitation into the inhabitation of the idea. In this way, all forms of representation must be engaging, must tell a story of the place we intend to create and, most importantly, must be clearly understood by a wide audience.

The technique and medium of communication are critical to reaching our audiences. They become the vehicles by which our visions are understood by others. Before beginning any diagram, drawing or, indeed, any project, we ask ourselves a series of questions in order to unlock the values of the project and to find the key messages of the work and, in turn, the key mediums of representation.

Our initial concept page for the Green Square Library (a single A3 page), communicated nothing but the potential human activities for the entire site. The message of community and shared public activity was clear in this and the subsequent drawings for the project, which revealed the permanent and temporal layers of the design. The drawings embodied the key messages of the proposal: that human interaction and the creation of an urban living room were important in this particular context.

We harnessed a series of different mediums including axonometric drawings and cartoons to make our messages clear and accessible. Each medium of representation allowed a different understanding of the project, whether from a different scale, filter or viewpoint, whether subjective (three-point perspective) or objective (axonometric).

This approach is integral with the way we think about architecture, and the architect’s role, as one who imagines a version of the world and finds a way to share that vision with others.

Matthias Hollenstein and Felicity Stewart are Stewart Hollenstein, an emerging architecture practice established in 2010. The studio is committed to addressing the challenges of contemporary society through the design of the built environment and is a highly innovative and inventive practice who put meaningful human experiences at the centre of their design process.

“The technique and medium of communication are critical to reaching our audiences. They become the vehicles by which our visions are understood by others.”

John Choi, CHROFI

I would like to approach this question in an indirect manner as, in our experience, the strength of architectural representation has not been fundamental to competition wins. It has often been the ideas and strategies which are the decisive factor, even with a less resolved architectural response and visualisation.

Competitions can be as much about a search for the right question as a search for the right answer. And when the question is the critical factor, it often overrides architectural resolution. The value of strategy typically operates at a scale above the architectural. In this context, competition images convey the strategic logic as much as illustrating the proposal in itself.

In our experience, the most successful competition entries are ones that can connect with both logic and emotion. As implicit in the question, architectural visualisations are typically the most powerful communicators of the spatial and aesthetic qualities in the proposal. These perspective representations directly place the viewer in the scene and emotionally win over other abstracted forms of communication such as plans and diagrams.

John Choi is co-founder of CHROFI. Established in 2000, the practice is widely recognised for design innovation and urban strategy. Awards include 2006 New York Art Commission Award, 2009 Jørn Utzon Award for International Architecture, and in 2012, John was nominated for the Iakov Chernikhov Prize. He is Adjunct Professor at University of Sydney, and serves on the board of 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art.

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Graham Jahn, City of Sydney

The two-stage competition for the Paris Opera House (now Palais Garnier) called for entrants to envision a new meeting place and social hub for the growing elite. The four-week first-stage competition drew 171 entries, from which five were selected to go on to the second stage. The first-stage winners were listed in order from first to fifth. However it was during the two-month second stage the fifth prize winner, Charles Garnier, revised his concept to include new theatrical features such as — a much larger stage for 300 actors; studios; prop storage; a covered porch for carriages; a separate foyer for season ticket holders; a restaurant; and imperial chambers. As students of architectural history might know, the unknown upstart Garnier was awarded first place by a 21-person jury in the critical second stage. This is a still relevant historic moment in an architectural competition style repeated over the centuries. In Paris alone, highlights have included the 75th-day competition for the Hôtel Tower, which received 177 entries and where, instead of a prize, the winner was ‘awarded’ the task of raising all the money to build the 351-metre high tower. Another standout Parisian competition was the 417 entries for the Centre Pompidou in 1971, where the eminent jury of Philip Johnson, Oscar Niemeyer and Jean Prost advised on the little-known entrants chosen. Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano. Within 40 years, the affable Englishman and the charming Italian had both built towers in their own right in Sydney. Architecture competitions are inherently risky enterprises; they can make or break a career, they can anonymously prove the skills of a well-known entrant, uncover an unknown talent, or the jury may find no winner and start a new process — all in about equal measure. And so it was with the City of Sydney’s North Sydney Olympic Pool, the Andrew (Boy) Charlton Pool and the Ultimo Pool (now Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre), in that same order.

For over 15 years, the numerous competitions either run or required by City of Sydney for both private and public developments have aimed to elevate architecture and architects, as well as the landowner and developer’s aspirations. It has at the very least elevated conversations about building and urban design in Sydney that were unthinkable in the 1960s. In those days, where architectural aids were the wine lists of The Australian, Tapetervals or Masonic clubs, a handful of firms brought home most of the trophy and not-so-trophy towers. Harry Seidler, of course, was the exception — he didn’t do ‘launch’.

Experienced competition jurors are not wowed by expensive presentations; sometimes the most minimal and insightful presentations prevail. And the most articulate architect knows their project; they do not reach for a speech or refer to notes. Moreover, they know why the design is the best for the site and the user; they have carefully tested its relationships, settings, impacts and impressions, and, even though not necessarily resolved in detail, can demonstrate what design excellence sets out to achieve and the legacy it may bring to great city building.

Graham Jahn AM is Director of City Planning, Development and Transport at City of Sydney, and Adjunct Professor of Architecture at the University of Technology, Sydney. He has been past Chapter President and National President of the Australian Institute of Architects and his work has been recognised with the Robin Boyd Award. He has officially observed or participated as a juror in over 60 competitions.

Architecture competitions should be about aspirations and ideas. They should reflect the intentions of a city or proponent and engender in an architect a desire to do their best. Competitions are a great idea, perhaps based on an early concept of ‘competition’ espoused by the Reformulation and by John Calvin1 himself, says Max Weber2 who goes on to say, a ‘merit-based’ process with checks and balances is key to successful outcomes.

A good idea has the power to transcend space and time; the ‘thought’ that generates the impetus for a great work of architecture may indeed be more important than any way it is represented. In a competition the ‘thought’ should answer the question ‘why’ and the manner of its presentation should answer the question ‘how’3; and the question ‘why’ is more important.

Representation, therefore, may be less important than the question posed may have us believe. Most people fall into the trap of thinking that the ‘idea’ in architecture is the ‘picture’ itself. This is reminiscent of one end of the architectural critique-spectrum that sees a necessity to deal with ‘literary’ techniques instead of architectural intentions. The post-readings by Norberg-Schulz of post-readings by Norberg-Schulz of Christian Norberg-Schulz (1926-2000) and Christian Norberg-Schulz (1926-2000) and the Spirit of Capitalism10 and the Spirit of Capitalism10 and Christian ethics from the Reformation. Christian ethics from the Reformation. ‘A good idea has the power to transcend space and time; the ‘thought’ that generates the impetus for a great work of architecture may indeed be more important than any way it is represented.’

**Angelo Candalepas, Candalepas Associates**

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Entries must deliver a presentation that is arresting while also aspiring to provide something repossession for our way. It is, however, easier to make a ‘statement’ than to have an idea; and juries not conscious of this fail, in my opinion, to decide an appropriate outcome.

For my part, the sense of ‘representing’ something is less important than ‘presenting’ it, and good ideas are worthy of ‘presenting’ and require no ‘re-presentation’. Only a bad idea requires intense advocacy or representation; a good idea should sell itself. Ideas, therefore, can be more powerful than the work itself, if indeed they are about the work.

Images, to my mind, have a fractional part to play in architecture, and it is myopic to use the visual ahead of all other sense-experiences. A picture says a thousand words, but only to those that understand that the same picture means a million.

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Model truth

The continued importance of model making within the profession, and its legacy for conveying the characteristics of unbuilt form and laying bare a building for direct criticism and critique, is examined by Shaun Carter of Carterwilliamson Architects.

Architecture is three-dimensional. It is physical, real. Representing architecture in the sale of its worth, the expression of its ideas, is part of the trade for an architect. Imagery like a cleverly cropped photo or a craftily selected rendering seeks to distill the essence, the purity or perhaps the ideal of the proposal. But a model is not so restrained.

Model making is our way of working and seeing. A balsa model is sketchy, iterative and ‘un-precious’. It is made and remade, broken and repaired, painted and glossed and then made again. It is not deceptively seductive like a computer rendering. It is not limited to the private space of a personal computer. A balsa model is an object in its own right: it sits out there, open to passing comments, direction and suggestion. A balsa model does not hide its errors or ugliness. If beauty is there, it is genuine. If resolution is there, it is a way forward.

Durbach Block Jaggers
With the picturing of a project paramount to its success in pitching to clients and stakeholders, especially in a competition process, Scale Architecture’s Matt Chan and Nathan Etherington spoke with Christophe Hurgon and Julien Nathan Etherington from leading architecture visualisation firm Doug & Wolf about process, photorealism and pictures far removed from reality.

Scale Architecture: How long have Doug & Wolf (D&W) been around for and how did you find yourself in Sydney?
D&W: You never hear much about Australia when you live in Paris, so one of the great things about coming here is that it is a bit like living on the moon. Fifty per cent of [our] clients are in Australia and 50 per cent are overseas, mostly in the north of Europe. We both had different companies for 10 or 15 years before we decided to create D&W. We set up in Paris for one year, but the project was to come to Sydney, mostly for surf, but also for work. In fact, our first job was in Australia, for Durach Block Jagers’ North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club. We did it while we were still in Paris and it was a good test before actually coming here.

The model is really different to Europe as there are generally more competitions in France and in Europe. Here there are more commissions where developers are directly involved. There are more private projects too, open to everything, compared to Europe. But for architects, competitions are good because they have more freedom.

D&W: If you ask two very good photographers to shoot a building, you will have two different pictures. The creator of the building is the architect, but the creator of the picture is us. We are like translators, but we are not the authors. A picture is not a building, and is us. We are like translators, but we are not the authors. A picture is not a building, and we are the creator of the picture. The architect is the creator of the building. We try to express ourselves.

SA: Does that mean you are designing more than the architect at times?
D&W: We have to make choices, but the concept is from the architect; we try to understand what they want to do and then communicate it to everyone. We are not designing projects and we do not want to. We are designing pictures and, yes, sometimes we have to improvise a façade. You cannot call that designing as it is more copy-pasting references, but we still have to make choices while respecting the architect’s concept.

SA: Do architects ever tell you to create an image that distorts the truth, to make things look bigger or smaller?
D&W: We have to seduce and make the best impression, but we are not allowed to advertise in a false way. We cannot distort the truth, well not too much anyway. But when it comes to competitions, distorting reality is definitely okay as we are talking about sketches, concepts – just ideas.

SA: Do you think your images are separate from the architecture; an artwork itself?
D&W: If you ask two very good photographers to shoot a building, you will have two different pictures. The creator of the building is the architect, but the creator of the picture is us. We are like translators, but we are the author. A picture is not a building, and our problems are not architectural ones, just picture problems.

D&W: A lot of small companies go for photorealism because they want to show they know how to build, but you need to draw all the details in advance and it is very time consuming. On the other hand, offices like OMA and MVRDV are not using photorealism. In fact they do not even need renderings as they have such strong ideas, they can get away with using simple illustrations.

SA: We have always had representations of architecture, but the media is saturated with images now. We never needed photorealistic renders before, but now some clients need to know exactly what a project will look like before they invest their money in something.
D&W: Yes, this is a real problem now, but in the end it is a real job and we are good at it, I hope. We are also good at communication, sometimes architects are too focused on the project and they need someone outside to help them communicate the project, so we might be helpful to give advice (on) how to choose the best path. We try to sell the project in the best way, but on the side of the architect. Actually, that is why I quit architecture: because I prefer to have architects as clients.
Project PR: architecture in the media

An understanding of the relationship between the media and architecture is essential for the promotion of an architect’s work through any form of communication, from online blog to industry journal. Katelin Butler, Editor of Houses magazine, examines the various types of media platforms and explains the effect they have on the representation of architecture.

Many journals have made a critical contribution to the discipline of architecture. Professor Beatriz Colomina, Professor of Architecture and Founding Director of the Program in Media and Modernity at Princeton University, is a pioneer in expanding understanding of the relationship between the media and architecture, and suggests that architecture is actually produced within its own media representation. This comment relates to the work of Le Corbusier and Adolf Loos; Colomina argues that the work of these architects only became modern through engagement with mass media. Although Colomina’s argument is less relevant in terms of contemporary architectural media, magazines, journals and online publications are often the first means by which people engage with the latest in architecture and design thinking. The representation of the architecture in these publications is critical to the understanding of a moment in time. But while editors make educated decisions about which projects to publish and how to represent them, we cannot precisely determine how the viewer will perceive the whole – it is open to interpretation.

The advent of online media has provided many more avenues for discussion, and perhaps production, of architecture. Online publications such as blogs are democratic, whereby anyone can have their say. Long-form reviews traditionally seen in journals are now also published on websites such as architectura.com. In an interview published in Architecture Australia January 2013 (Vol 102 No 1), Colomina argues that “new media doesn’t kill old media… it transforms it.” Online platforms “challenge us to reconsider the relationship between forms of publication and forms of interactivity.”

Online media’s main advantage is that it is interactive, and social media is integral to this. At national conferences, discussions on hot topics unfold online in real time as people tweet live from the event. This brings a collaborative element to the interpretation of architecture – everyone is free to join in the discussion. However, it can sometimes be difficult to navigate the commentary. There is often a lack of critical analysis, and a perpetual recirculation of the same images and text. Therefore, like Colomina, I believe there is a place for both old and new strategies of analysis.

So how do architects negotiate all this public discussion and debate? And how can they use different forms of media to promote their work to potential clients?

It is important to first consider what you are trying to achieve: Do you want new clients (and what clients do you want)? Do you want respect from within the profession? Do you want to build your practice’s identity? This will determine what genre of publication you use and text. Therefore, like Colomina, I believe there is a place for both old and new strategies of analysis. So how do architects negotiate all this public discussion and debate? And how can they use different forms of media to promote their work to potential clients?

It is important to first consider what you are trying to achieve: Do you want new clients (and what clients do you want)? Do you want respect from within the profession? Do you want to build your practice’s identity? This will determine what genre of publication you approach.

Once you have chosen the publication you want to target, make sure you are in a position to sell your project. This means investing in professional photography; a project will not perform as well as it could if it has not been photographed properly. There are many great architectural photographers, each with their own ideas and perspectives. Also, contrary to popular belief, architecture magazines (at least at Architecture Media) prefer photographs of inhabited spaces so that we can convey how the building serves its function.

A good story will help in getting your project published. A summary touching on the most interesting parts of the project is useful in your submission: is there a famous client, an unusual brief or some other point of difference? Draw out narratives and connect these to architectural processes and intent, rather than simply describing form and concept. When pitching to magazines like Architecture Australia and Houses, it is good to also send floor plans and sections.

Touching base with an editor prior to your project’s completion is worthwhile. A good social media presence is an ideal way of doing this, and is helpful in building a brand for your practice. We have discovered many projects for Houses magazine on such platforms.

Aside from print and online, other forms of media are also worth engaging with. The Ghost Town exhibition in Melbourne last year was about the promotion of emerging practices to a wide audience, but it also promoted architecture and design itself. Entering awards programs – such as the Houses Awards, the Australian Interior Design Awards and the Eat Drink Design Awards – is another way to gain exposure. You may not win, but newspapers or blogs may pick up your project from the shortlist.

The publishing industry is a rapidly changing scene, and to promote yourself effectively you need to keep up with these changes, including embracing online media. But neither print nor online media is more important; the two ideally work together, and it is finding the correct balance and timing that will open more doors for your practice, and hopefully gain you more clients.

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Cinicity

Architecture and the moving image

Existing in cyber space and physical space, the annual Cinicity architectural film project is a competition inviting local and international participants to submit a one-minute film exploring a specific spatial theme. This year’s theme, Making, attracted over 70 submissions; which were curated down to a shortlist of 30 films screened in conjunction with the 2014 National Architecture Conference. Cinicity curators, Louise Mackenzie and Sarah Breen Lovett, discuss the representation of architecture and the moving image.

The representation of architecture is often taken, it seems, for the thing itself; we profess to know and love buildings we have never been to, and speak of them as if we had inhabited them. This is the power of the image, both the representative and mental. We are able to create buildings in our minds through representative images, such as photographs and drawings. The moving image contributes another layer of complexity to representation, continuing and extending relationships between the physical and the fictive.

The Oxford Dictionary’s definition of ‘representation’ suggests an object that is being described “in a particular way”. This is an instance of the real and ‘not yet’ real intersecting. That is, each particular representation adds another layer to our understanding of the thing being described. The moving image itself allows for this exploration. Typically, one might understand exploration of space/land in a colonial context, but here we can also think about it as an exploration through the time and space that the filmmaker constructs for us; in this case we “travel through” time and space not only to experience the film but to understand something more, or different about architecture and city, in terms of our relationships to it and our experience of it. This is taken in its broadest possible sense to quote sociologist and film theorist Lorraine Mortimer: “But we do not get far if we do not try to understand [that] what we call the political, economic, cultural and the historical are intertwined with what we call the imaginary, the emotional and indeed the somatic.”

Here Mortimer is discussing conflict between and within nation states, but this can also extend to other kinds of understanding. In understanding architecture one must necessarily consider, amongst other things, the rational and irrational, the material and immaterial, the imaginary and indeed the very human body. It is this diversity of representation and understanding of making architecture that the Cinicity project produced in 2014. This can be seen in films where various aspects of making architecture were explored, such as an interchange between building materials and the reflected image; making life, light making architecture; architecture making social constructs; and the making of cinematic architectural space.

The winning film from this year’s project was Sound and Vision by Francis Matthews. This film explores how the architectural environment is made up of layered, reflected and refracted images. How we are unconsciously embedded within, and constructed by these images, caught in the crossfire of their existence. The intrigue of the ‘making’ of architecture in this way is communicated in the ‘making’ of the image, where one’s mind enters the representative space, but in the end one is sharply returned to the image space and the construct of the representation.

A more absent and off-camera experience of architecture making life is evident in Dunwich Fishing by Eleanor Suess. In this film, the stillness of the camera highlights the slow and timely movement of the fisherman. The lone fisher suggests contemplation. This architecture without architecture also suggests conviviality if any fish are caught, which, set against the redundant: looking winch and upturned boats, points to a past industry – making a living this way is no longer sustainable due to the fished-out sea. This film implies a solace and, through the colours especially, a beauty in this life lived. The shed we see is a kind of architecture but to this film it is not as important as the architecture that remains unseen – that which is off screen where the fisher lives – the buildings and town that make his life and memories, that which works with both a material and immaterial context.

In contrast, Sabine De Schutter, in Sensing Space, also uses a still camera, but with an ‘unchanging’ scene. The image appears to hum in its stillness, pregnant with potential. A representation of this kind alludes to the thick, dense experience of light in architecture, which, while transient and temporal, has a heaviness. The fact that nothing happens in De Schutter’s film is the beauty of it, like architecture itself, appearing static, unchanging and unmoving, conversely, is full of movement imperceptible by the human eye. Through a sea of yellow raincoats and orchestrated movement “Putting by Lena Obergfell alludes to a more ‘active’ and socially constructed architecture. How people and their relationships across space and time can create the experience of architecture. How the temporal, tangential aspects of our urban environment have just as much hand in creating our urban and architectural environment as the bricks and mortar of its physical construction.

Using the moving camera, Spire by Susanne Chan at once shifts the representation of a ‘bridge’ to be an image space experience for the spectator. Through camera movement, spines of the bridge pass overhead, wrap around the viewer, making one simultaneously aware of the construction of the bridge, and the construction of the moving image in relation to the space of the spectator. In this way, Spire, like many other films in the Cinicity project, is not only the representation of architecture, but the construction of architecture through the reception of the moving image. As such, through these explorations, the films can enable new ideas, bringing new understandings.

Footnotes

The Ribbon by Hassell

Having won the competition to design a new commercial and community precinct in the heart of Darling Harbour, Hassell outlines the process from initial concept to final design.

Designers rarely have the opportunity to push a concept to its limits, but with The Ribbon it was demanded.

Grocon approached Hassell to develop a new vision for the current home of the IMAX theatre on the edge of Darling Harbour. The developer was looking for something special; a design that would make its mark on the Sydney landscape and establish a striking new gateway to the city.

A rare location, with Sydney’s CBD to the east, Darling Harbour to the west and very few planning restrictions, the site offered endless possibilities. The Hassell team, comprising expertise from studios in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne, embraced the challenge and got to work designing a new landmark building for Sydney.

Set in one of the city’s busiest public precincts, between two elevated roadways and with significant underground services below, the development presented its challenges. Despite there being no legislated maximum height for the site, it was important for the design to remain in context with its surrounding landscape and future adjacent developments, and enhance the public realm.

At a practical level, the building needed to accommodate the existing IMAX theatre, 40,000 square metres of commercial office space and support a more vibrant public domain with a mix of retail, food and entertainment outlets at ground level. But the primary objective in the initial stages was to produce a viable concept that Grocon could develop.

The Hassell team explored a variety of options for a design that would integrate with the highrise business district to the east, and yet be sympathetic to the ‘valley floor’ of the harbour to the west.

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Before, it appeared to peel back the surrounding roadways and twist them – like ribbons – into a striking facade that established a new connection between the city and the harbour.

While this early design process presented a very conceptual idea, it was also critical to establishing a clear vision for the project ahead. The time constraints did not allow for a long process of design and consultation. It required a considered and well-articulated design response that was both creative and achievable.

The design has evolved significantly since the early initiation phase in 2012. While the original ribbon concept remains clearly visible, the building has now taken a more sculptural, wave-like form, appearing to ripple and transform due to a textured ‘skin’ that wraps the building.

When built, The Ribbon’s bold, 20-storey form will stand proud on the edge of the CBD, cantilevering dramatically to the east and west and ‘contained’ between the surrounding elevated roadways.

During the past two years, Hassell has worked through a number of options to achieve a seamless visual transition between the building’s vertical and horizontal surfaces. A glazed curtain wall façade will encase the north and south elevations, while the building’s roof required complex engineering with the project team to achieve the fluid three-dimensional form that could withstand the significant heat load the building would be subjected to.

At ground level, design collaborator Russell & George has shaped the retail, food and beverage components of the development, while PMDA brought its expertise in IMAX theatre design. The input of industry leading technical specialists together with Grocon’s team in the early stages of the design process was invaluable to achieving a design that will be both visually spectacular and commercially viable.

Located in the heart of a major entertainment, cultural, tourist and commercial precinct, it was vital the design complemented the extensive redevelopment that is already taking place around Darling Harbour. The urban design team at Hassell worked closely with Grocon and landscape architects from Aspect Studios to open up new links between the CBD and Darling Harbour. With more than 100 metres of harbour frontage, The Ribbon will deliver a truly spectacular waterfront experience.

The final design outcome for The Ribbon would not have been possible without the absolute commitment of Grocon to achieving its vision. The developer was not interested in compromise. It was about pushing the design as far as it could go, putting complete confidence in the design team to deliver an international signature building for Sydney.

With the search now on to identify a tenant for the $700 million development, Grocon’s vision looks soon to become a reality. With planning approval received, The Ribbon is due for completion in 2018. And, judging by the commitment to this project to date, it is well on track to being delivered.

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Making: 2014

Chair of the NSW Country Division, Sarah Aldridge, reviews this year's National Architecture Conference, Making.

Any fears of the Institute faithful not being willing to travel to the most remote city in the world were clearly unfounded as outgoing National President Paul Berkemeier opened the 2014 National Architecture Conference to a 1,025-strong audience in Port, Western Australia on 8 May.

Making's creative directors Helen Norrie, Sam Crawford and Adam Haddow explained that the conference program, structured around the four themes Culture, Life, Impact and Connections, sought to celebrate the unique and examine how great architecture responds to place and people.

Having been declared 'so hot right now' (by Norrie), a bashful Andrew Burns took to the stage to launch the first Culture session with his observation 'architecture is materials, arranged according to geometry, to accommodate life'.

Next up and equally 'hot right now' was Richard Haskell from WHBC in Singapore. With the seemingly ever-increasing size of modern buildings challenged by earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis and proportion. Her assertion that ‘Chile is to America what monuments are to Europe’ reinforces the need for the preservation of the natural beauty through sensitivity. The Hotel Tierra Patagonia, located on a windy mountainous lake-side site, showcased this lightness of touch through its dune-like aerodynamic form nestling gently into the landscape.

In the first session after lunch, Impact, Tim Horten introduced the notion of ‘how we create beyond our own world’ through architects understanding the political economy in which they work. With architectural practice reframed by the shift in the structures, and the context redefined by the realities of rapidly changing technologies that impact just about everything, what is, or can be, the broader impact of architecture?

Justine Clark and Naomi Reid opened their session with the official launch of the Parkour Guide to Equitable Practice. Many myths about women in architecture were aired and shattered and the message to all of us was clear: gender is not just a women’s issue.

Beth Miller from Community Design Collaborative (CDC) in Philadelphia, US, explained the role of CDC as facilitator in the collaboration between communities and design professionals to deliver city-wide planning initiatives funded through the Design Grants program. In a city with 26 per cent of residents in poverty and 19 per cent vacant land, there is clearly still much to do.

The final session of day one was Connections, introduced by Emma Williamson of Fremantle practice CODA who used their work in defining local character in regional Western Australia to show how architects can broaden the debate beyond the boundaries of their own project site.

Sek San Ng from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, gave us a humorous and engaging taste of ‘making’ in the third world. Through close collaboration with clients and craftsmen on local projects, the practice seeks to better understand the subtleties of culture, weather, culture and workmanship. Using only locally available resources the projects invite risk and experimentation, and force a rethinking of much of what we take for granted in the first world.

Next up was Gurjit Singh Matharoo, who was equally as entertaining as Ng and left me wondering if I had stumbled into an architectural stand-up comedy convention by mistake. Surely national architecture conferences are supposed to be dry and serious?

Tales of monkeys vandalising buildings, lots of concrete and beautiful concept diagrams made this a fantastic way to end the day.

Day two’s first Impact session linked us by video to Alejandro Echeverri in Colombia.

After the briefest of introductions the need for social change in the violent, fractured and politically unstable city of Medellín was obvious, even from 17,000 kilometres away. Echeverri’s work to increase the connectivity of the city and chip away at the social problems through strategic projects is relentless, multifaceted and ambitious, but the ongoing fragility of the political situation casts a constant shadow over his work.

Jo Noero continued the theme of working within challenging political and social contexts with his ‘radical surgery’ in South African cities that he described as being ‘reservats of inequality and deprivation’. An example of just how radical he means, the saw-tooth form of the Red Location Museum in South Africa stands in stark contrast to its shack settlement context, the site of so much struggle during the apartheid years.

After a quick cuppa it was time for the much anticipated David Adjaye talk. In contrast to his early residential work in gritty parts of London, his now global practice is engaged in major projects of international stature, such as filling the last Smithsonian site on the National Mall in Washington DC. At around 39,000 square metres, the National Museum of African American History and Culture is the largest exhibition space in the US and for that alone it is impressive, even without the cast aluminium skin coated in bronze and the climatically useful water feature referencing Martin Luther King’s ‘I have a dream’ speech.

The second Connections session saw Andrea Marin discuss how connections with government, other architects, nature and history have informed his work in Indonesia. Again the focus was on craftsmanship, experimentation and climate responsiveness with textural, sculptural projects and seductive photography.

Lyndon Neri, half of Neri & Hu in Shanghai, China, took us on their journey from product design (the twin wall glass cup is theirs) to architecture, where they are now rethinking some of Shanghai’s fast-disappearing traditional building typologies and colonial buildings to produce new urban destinations.

The final session was Life, with Vo Trong Nghia showing some innovative ways of dealing with the environmental and social issues of Vietnam. The Stacking Green project and House for Trees in Ho Chi Minh City are radical solutions for integrating planting into buildings to reconnect the inhabitants with nature in a heavily polluted city with only 0.25 per cent of green space.

Marina Tabassum ended the conference by seeming to weave together many of the threads of the other speakers. Her Liberation War Museum in Dhaka, Bangladesh, sympathised with Noero’s ‘slow architecture’ movement in the political context of a struggling democracy, while the density and lack of green space seemed familiar after Nghia’s talk.

Any worries that the beer running at the opening party was a bad omen for the event proved groundless. Congratulations to everyone who made Making such a huge success.

Sarah Aldridge
NSW Country Division Chair / Space Studio

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Kevin Schreiber, Managing Director of Schreiber Hamilton Architecture (SHA), with offices in Newcastle, Abu Dhabi, UAE, and Tunisia, regrettably passed away on Monday 9 June 2014. True to form Kevin lived his life to the fullest right up until the plans were due; in fact he could not have fit any more ink on the page.

Graduating from the University of Newcastle in 1993 after a long and distinguished career as an international photojournalist, Kevin was quick to immerse himself in the pragmatics of private practice to accelerate his architectural career and deepen his understanding of the built environment. Kevin was an articulate individual with a sharp eye for proportion and colour balance coupled with measured business acumen. Kevin was adamant in his desire to the new $15 million Raymond Terrace GP Super Clinic HealthOne, now complete, has yielded a practice with depth and capability far beyond its years. Kevin took SHA Newcastle to Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the UAE, Qatar, Oman, China and Tunisia. Kevin led SHA to collaborate with PTW, BVN, GHD and various renowned practices both in Australia and overseas to ensure each major project had the optimum team appointed to deliver design excellence. His body of work includes the following projects: Indigenous community and health centres in Armidale and Taree; Albury Airport Expansion; an 85-bed ecotourist resort at Blacksmiths Beach; and a $100 million Military Leadership Centre in the Middle East. His final site visit was to the new $85 million Raymond Terrace GP Super Clinic HealthOne, now complete, for which he was proud to be Design Director.

Kevin was a realist, and knowing that an unwanted retirement may be forced on him sooner rather than later, worked with myself and the SHA team to ensure that the project had the optimum team appointed to deliver design excellence. His body of work includes the following projects: Indigenous community and health centres in Armidale and Taree; Albury Airport Expansion; an 85-bed ecotourist resort at Blacksmiths Beach; and a $100 million Military Leadership Centre in the Middle East. His final site visit was to the new $85 million Raymond Terrace GP Super Clinic HealthOne, now complete, for which he was proud to be Design Director.

Kevin was a realist, and knowing that an unwanted retirement may be forced on him sooner rather than later, worked with myself and the SHA team to ensure that the company is well placed to continue producing first class architecture into the future. The Schreiber Hamilton Architecture team remains deeply honoured and inspired by the professional legacy cemented by Kevin Schreiber.

Justin Hamilton
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