Parks, Pools & Recreation

THE LEISURE ISSUE

A CENTURY OF ZOO DESIGN
Taronga Zoo celebrates its centenary

IN CONVERSATION
John Choi, Philip Coxall, Nick Wood + Sarah Clift

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ACROSS THE CHAPTER

Editor’s message
President’s message
Chapter news

IN FOCUS
Leisure in the Age of Technology
Andrew Nimmo
A Century of Zoo Design
Rachel Couper
A Swimmable City
Sarah Clift
in conversation with
Nicola Balch
Coastal Leisure
Scott Hawken
Space to Play
Philip Coxall + John Choi
in conversation with
Shaun Carter
Our Central Park
David Tickle
A Life Aquatic
Michelle Tabel
How Soon is Now?
Sam Spurr, Ben Hewett + Cameron Bruhn
in conversation with
Anthony Burke
David Lindner Prize Essay: Something Fishy
TYP-TOP

IN MEMORIAM
Stuart Murray + Ken Woolley
Michael Bogle

OBITUARY
Jennifer Taylor (1935 – 2015)
EDITOR’S LETTER

In celebration of the warmer weather, holiday season and longer days, Architecture Bulletin has come to focus on the role architecture plays in shaping our leisure time. The editorial committee met to ponder - how do we as a profession design for the experience of leisure?

Leisure can encompass many ideas: relaxation, luxury, cultural engagement, distraction and wellbeing. There is always a transaction or transformation associated with leisure spaces and environments; the visitor is transformed – either relaxed and rejuvenated, or inspired and entertained. So how do we create the spaces that inspire these notions?

The legislation of a 40 hour week, paid annual leave and long service leave in Australia during the 1940s inspired a new and acceptable form of leisure. With its population’s increased desire to separate from the everyday, working self, NSW increased its parks, pools, beach pavilions, hotels and motels.

Leisure continued to become a focus for architectural interpretation, and we were delighted to discover that by coincidence Architecture in Australia had run a leisure-themed issue exactly 50 years ago (see illustrated - January 1966, Vol.54 No.4). But how have these early interpretations of leisure developed to adapt to a contemporary audience?

In this issue of Architecture Bulletin Scott Hawken looks at the current refurbishment of Sydney’s iconic coastal typology – the beach pavilion – and Rachel Couper takes us on an architectural journey of Taronga Zoo it celebrates its 100th birthday.

Shaun Carter speaks with John Choi (CHROFI) and Philip Coxall (McGregor Coxall) about their innovative collaborations on park designs. David Tickle continues the park theme, focusing on Sydney’s Central Park development and its take on inner city leisure.

And Nicola Balch sits down with Sarah Clift from the Parramatta River Catchment Group to discuss making a swimmable river in Sydney’s west.

Andrew Nimmo reminisces on Brisbane’s Expo 88 and ponders the myth of technology allowing us increased leisure time. Mark Szczepicki speaks to recent DROGA resident, Nick Wood, about his research into the Australian awning. And Michelle Tabet looks to the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale with her reflection on the swimming pool.

We also take a look at other Institute programming: Andrew Daly from TYP-TOP reports on the Lindner Prize research from 2015 and Anthony Burke catches up with the creative directors of the 2016 National Conference to hear the latest on their plans for Adelaide. And finally we say farewell to Stuart Murray, Ken Woolley and Jennifer Taylor.

Andrew Nimmo Chair of the Editorial Committee
Hannah McKissock-Davis
Editor
Australians pride themselves on their laid-back culture; we like to think of ourselves as no-nonsense, practical and straightforward. For us the beach and the bush, sporting fields and the great outdoors are the places we feel most connected to because they exemplify the values of openness, play, freedom and our delight in the natural environment that we all share.

Leisure is the highly appropriate theme for this summer issue of *Architecture Bulletin*. When you consider international tourism is the world’s biggest commercial service sector industry it’s not surprising that much of the work of architects do is in some way related to leisure. Think of the number of architects involved in restaurant and café designs, as well as hotels, airports, parks, retail, zoos and all the other facilities at the big end of the leisure scale.

Our laid back lifestyle helps us to create welcoming, relaxing environments, so leisure is an area of work in which Australian architects are highly competitive.

Continuing on the theme of leisure this year, for the international audience we will see the realisation of Australia’s pool-themed exhibition at the 2016 Venice Biennale - which expresses our love of water and how we relate to it. This exhibition is our opportunity to demonstrate to the world the varied and creative ways we have integrated and interpreted the pool into some of our best building designs. See the article on Page 26 for more on this major project.

The past year ended well for the Institute’s role in advocating strategic improvements in the built environment. I am pleased to applaud the first appointments to the Greater Sydney Commission’s key roles. I am confident that the team at the top - Lucy Turnbull as Chief Commissioner and Sarah Hill as Chief Executive – will steer the Commission in the right direction.

Even more important for us, the appointment of Institute member Rod Simpson as Environment Commissioner is an extremely positive move. Rod’s experience and expertise make him admirably suited for this new role. He led the urban design and spatial planning component of the City of Sydney’s Sustainable Sydney 2030 Strategy and has been Director of the Urban Design Program at the University of Sydney for the last four years. Prior to these achievements he developed the Green Olympic Village concept, was Manager of Urban Design at the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust and was involved in the development of the ‘City of Cities’ metropolitan strategy for Sydney.

Another esteemed Institute member was recognised in a major appointment late last year. Helen Lochhead has been appointed Dean of the Faculty of Built Environment at the University of NSW, replacing Professor Alec Tzannes in February this year. Helen is moving on from her roles as Deputy NSW Government Architect and Adjunct Professor at the University of Sydney. Previously she has also taught at UTS and internationally at Harvard, MIT, Columbia University and the New York Institute of Technology.

Helen is a previous recipient of both Fulbright and Churchill Fellowships, and most recently completed a Loeb Fellowship at Harvard University interrogating proposals and governance models for more resilient and liveable cities. She is a Fellow of the Institute and is Honorary Secretary of the National Council.

Congratulations to both Helen and Rod on these prestigious and influential appointments.

Shaun Carter
NSW President
DARCH

DARCH kicked off the year with a 2016 commencement party. This is a new initiative that aims to welcome recent graduates to the profession and to introduce them to DARCH and the Institute. Held on a rooftop in Darlinghurst, the event was a great success, with approximately 100 people in attendance. We would like to thank Will Fung of CO-AP for generously allowing us to use their office rooftop.

DARCH continues its support for the registration of graduates with the first of two Registration talks held at Tusculum in early February. Focused on demystifying the process of registering, these talks invite recently registered architects to speak alongside the NSW ARB Registrar, an APE examiner and the convenor of PALS. We thank Timothy Horton, Eva-Marie Prineas, Tony Kemery, Nikki Butlin and Ksenia Totoeva for their time.

DARCH would like to acknowledge the contribution of out-going committee members and thank them for their years of dedicated input - Jenna Rowe, Albert Quizon, Laura Meyer, Matthias Hollenstein and Joseph Loh. We are also very excited to welcome Casey Bryant, Steani Cilliers, Georgia McGowan, Andrew Le, Kristina Sahlestrom, Mitch Walsh and Luke Gerzina as new DARCH committee members and look forward to working alongside them in 2016.

Tim Hastwell and Ksenia Totoeva
Co-Chairs, DARCH

Newcastle Division

The Newcastle and Country Divisions are undergoing a period of significant change, and the NSW Chapter has put in place a Regional Taskforce to address these changes. The Newcastle representatives on the Regional Taskforce consist of myself as Chairman, Glen Spicer (past ND Chair), David Rose (past ND Chair) and Peter Kemp (ND Committee member).

The Regional Taskforce had a spirited, yet constructive, first meeting on Tuesday 2 February 2016, with Ken Maher (National President Elect) Shaun Carter (NSW Chapter President), Jamie Penrose (General Manager, Member Engagement) Country Division representatives and the Institute’s NSW administration staff in attendance. At the meeting there was a frank and open discussion as to the financial position of the Institute and the recent changes implemented by National Council. The Newcastle representatives expressed our concerns as to the impact upon our members.

As a result of the meeting, we achieved some positive agreement and positive outcomes. All of our core Institute-based events programming will go ahead in 2016 (with the exception of the LHUDA program). The Newcastle Division has advised the NSW Chapter that we intend to remain involved and committed to supporting the Lower Hunter Urban Design Awards program - as we have for the past forty years. The LHUDA program will be supported directly by the Newcastle Division without funding involvement from NSW Chapter.

We look forward to a successful 2016 Newcastle Architecture Awards program and many other 2016 events for our members. The Newcastle Division Committee will continue to work with the NSW Chapter to ensure appropriate continuity of services to our members throughout 2016 and beyond. We note that while we are not happy with the way in which National Council has managed the recent changes to the Newcastle Division, we feel it is to the benefit of our members to remain a part of the Institute and use this opportunity to fight to improve our services to members, rather than withdraw or establish an independent entity.

We feel that by staying within the Institute we will have a stronger presence, and will benefit from being able to retain our representative voice and vote on NSW Chapter Council. This will allow us to continue to advocate for our Newcastle members at state and then national level within the Institute. As a continuing division of NSW Chapter the Newcastle Division will also be able to more broadly support the profession.

The Newcastle MBA office, the University of Newcastle and the Newcastle Architecture Foundation have all pledged their ongoing support for the Institute’s Newcastle Division and we look forward to working with these and other related organisations towards a sustainable, and active future for the architectural profession.

At this time, I have recently stepped away as Chairman for personal reasons and my committee colleague, Peter Kemp will be acting in my absence. The Acting Chair, the Regional Taskforce and the Committee will be working together to secure the continuity of our vibrant, active Division.

Debra McKendry-Hunt
Chair, Newcastle Division

Country Division

Country Division is going through a readjustment phase after the closure of the Newcastle office. As a result we have cancelled our March event and have turned our attention to the May seminar, with details to be issued soon. Planning for our annual conference, which will be at Salt on the Tweed coast this year, has been taken up by the National events team and is well advanced.

The Special Projects Grant program will continue to run in 2016, with the winners being announced at the annual conference. The grant recipients from last year have been hard at work and attracting media attention for their innovative projects. We are looking forward to seeing even more positive outcomes from these excellent grass roots advocacy projects later in the year.

Sarah Aldridge
Chair, Country Division
Patrons news

AJ+C
Allen Jack + Cottier (AJ+C) is currently leading the design of a number of Sydney’s most significant urban transformation projects. Within these higher intensity urban projects, AJ+C is integrating active open spaces with sport and leisure facilities that will positively affect the health and general quality of life of the community, while also dramatically increasing the return on economic and social investment. These projects bring together all of AJ+C’s experience in retail, entertainment, sports, child care, aged care and residential buildings to create active, healthy, whole of life community living.

AJ+C is also experimenting with a series of indoor sporting stadiums which incorporate numerous physical and mental health support services within the building, with the aim of reducing youth related social issues including incarceration, depression and suicide. These initiatives also reduce both social and financial costs for the state.

Bates Smart
Bates Smart recently won an invited design competition to convert the Clocktower Office Development in The Rocks into a boutique hotel and new public square. The Rocks has a diverse and eclectic mix of architectural styles and scales, with an intimate network of pedestrian laneways and stairs. The Clocktower is currently out of scale with The Rocks, and severs all fine grain pedestrian connections around it.

Our vision was to create an authentic place that captures the essence of The Rocks. A large public square connected to the intimate laneways that are the lifeblood of The Rocks creates a focal point and place to meet. Connected on all corners to laneways this place will be a dynamic urban experience and with an evening outdoor cinema there will be 24 hour activity. Restaurants, cafes, and providores activate the space over three levels. Hotel guests arrive via a discreet entry off Cambridge Street, creating a sense of discovery and uniqueness. Each building has been individually articulated to respond to the scale and materiality of The Rocks. A palette of authentic natural materials draws on the vocabulary of The Rocks, creating an architecture of parts designed as a contemporary interpretation of The Rocks.

HASSELL
When we talk about skyscrapers, we tend to focus on their impact up high – from their mark on the skyline to the quality of their view. But what about life on the ground? This question was the topic of a presentation by HASSELL Principal Ken McBryde to delegates at the Council for Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat (CTBUH) international conference, held in New York in October.

McBryde cited the HASSELL design for Brookfield Place (pictured), which succeeded in creating a “sticky destination” that draws people in – and keeps them there – to dine, shop or simply explore. By being carefully integrated within the city fabric and its public domain, the development has restored and enlivened an area of the city that was dormant for more than 30 years. The project was recognised with the Australia Award for Urban Design last year.

In recent local news, our proposal for 60 Martin Place – a similarly skyline-defining and place-responsive building – was granted development approval by the City of Sydney.

TKD
Working with National Parks and Wildlife Services NSW and community groups, Tanner Kibble Denton Architects (TKD Architects) is finalising the concept designs and documentation for the new Visitors Centre at Warrumbungle National Park. The design theme, Fracture, embraces the volcanic dykes and formations of Warrumbungle and includes contemporary rectilinear forms broken by sinuous monolithic walls.

The new Visitors Centre will replace the original facility lost in the devastating 2013 bushfires. It will house an exhibition of geology, flora and fauna and Indigenous and European history. The outdoor viewing platform overlooks the stunning Grand High Tops and provides interpretive landscape. TKD Managing Director, Alex Kibble, is the project pirector for this new Visitors Centre, with Chloe Rayfield as project architect. Construction for the Visitors Centre is anticipated to commence mid-2016.
Leisure in the Age of Technology

Brisbane’s World Expo 1988 depicted our future as a technology-based utopia with increased leisure time and holiday pursuits, Andrew Nimmo takes a reality check 28 years later.

Back in 1985 I was a student working at Hulme and Webster Architects in Brisbane. One of the more interesting projects that I worked on was the World Expo 88 Information Kiosks completed in association with Rex Addison. They were shiny tin and timber structures showing off the local vernacular, all be it through Addison’s idiosyncratic reinterpretation.

Leisure in the Age of Technology was the theme of Brisbane’s World Expo 88, the highlight of Australia’s bicentennial celebrations. The event did much to change Brisbane. It attracted 15.8 million tourists (double the expected numbers) through a city that for most was seen as little more than the seat of government for the Great Barrier Reef. It introduced outdoor dining, which until then had been outlawed for hygiene reasons. Nightlife started to flourish beyond the sleaze of The Valley’s “Moonlight State” brothels and gambling dens. For the first time people walked (instead of driving) across the Victoria Bridge, over the Brisbane River, from the city to the Expo site in South Brisbane.

Most importantly, it put in train the redevelopment of what is now known as South Bank, which continues the leisure theme of the Expo from 27 years earlier. It cemented forever the city’s rediscovered relationship to the Brisbane River that was initiated by Robin Gibson’s Cultural Centre (from 1982) and Harry Seidler’s Riverside Centre Tower (1983-86).

Culturally Brisbane and Queensland were ready for change. Premier Jo Bjelke-Petersen had already been removed in favour of the mild-mannered Mike Ahern, with the unfolding events of the Fitzgerald Enquiry straddling the Expo celebrations. Brisbane and Queensland were never going to be the same again.

The Expo was also a chance for Australian...
The monorail at World Expo 88, Brisbane. Photo: Jitdhikorn.

architects to shine on the world stage. The Australian Pavilion, symbolising the colours of Uluru (then Ayers Rock), surf and rainforest was by Ancher Mortlock and Woolley and featured a funky 3-D Ken Done super graphic spelling out A-U-S-T-R-A-L-I-A. Robin Gibson and Partners designed the Queensland Pavilion and Denton Corker Marshall the Queensland Newspapers Pavilion. This was all under a respected master plan developed by Bligh Maccormick 88, (a consortium of Bligh Jessup Bretnall - a precursor to BVN - and James Maccormick, (Maccormick designed the iconic Australian Pavilions at the World Expos in Osaka 1970 and Montreal 1967)). The theme of leisure found expression in the fanning shape of large fabric and mast structures that snaked their way through the site providing much needed relief from the Queensland sun. They were playful forms that were transformed each night with colourful light projections.

It all had the feeling of Disney’s Tomorrowland.

It all had the feeling of Disney’s Tomorrowland. There was a monorail, now relocated to SeaWorld on the Gold Coast (completed a few months before Sydney got to regret having one). Upon entry, glowing humanoid robots greeted visitors in 32 languages and parades featured computer-operated diorama floats. In the Victorian Pavilion, a robot demonstrated domestic chores such as ironing, while the Japanese Pavilion featured 3 metre wide by 1.7 metre high HDTV (high-definition television) broadcasting Japanese scenery. They were described as “the visual medium of the future”.\(^2\) The US pavilion included a virtual golf driving range. The Swiss pavilion featured “text internet” and a ski slope made of artificial snow – very novel in Queensland. Most took the leisure and technology theme to heart.

Strangely enough the most popular pavilion was New Zealand, with its animated Footrot Flats show and glow worm cave, which sometimes took up to six hours to gain entry. After six months of partying, Expo 88 closed with a performance by The Seekers of their hit song, The Carnival is Over.

After the Expo packed up and moved on, there was much discussion on how the site should be redeveloped. The original River City 2000 development plan had a Barangaroo-esque flavour to it, (complete with a casino, upmarket apartments and a World Trade Centre), with development consortiums driving proposals and the public squeezed out of decision-making. But the public had a taste of riverside public space and did not want to give it up – they wanted the “People’s Park”. Under increasing public pressure, eventually the Queensland Government formed the South Bank Development Corporation under the chairmanship of Sir Llew Edwards. They released a new plan for comments and consultation late in 1988 - it did not include a casino.

Plans for the South Bank continued to evolve, partly in response to failed endeavours, stalled investment, changing governments and changing priorities. In 1996 a new board shifted the focus further toward design excellence. John Simpson was appointed as master architect and a design advisory panel formed to assess all proposals. In 1997 Denton Corker Marshall were engaged to prepare a new master plan which forms the South Bank Development Corporation under the chairmanship of Sir Llew Edwards. They released a new plan for comments and consultation late in 1988 - it did not include a casino.

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World Expo 88 Information Centre, Brisbane by Rex Addison. Photo: Michael Keniger.

World Expo 88 sails, designed by H. Muehlberger in association with Bligh Maccormick 88 (master plan architects). Photo: Jitdhikorn.
structure of what is now there. They also designed the beautiful kilometre long Grand Arbouf of curling steel columns covered in flowering bougainvilleas. All that remains of the Expo is the Nepal Peace Pagoda, which was moved to a riverfront location at the conclusion of the Expo and remains as an official souvenir. (Skyneedle, the 88 metre high light tower, was procured by local celebrity hairdresser Stefan and relocated to Stefan HQ in South Brisbane – despite catching on fire twice, apparently due to birds chewing on the lighting, it will now form the centerpiece of the proposed Skyneedle Apartments.)

One of the highlights of South Bank now is the city’s beach, called “Streets Beach” (as it is sponsored by the ice-cream company) - 2,000 square metres of free-formed concrete surrounded by 4,000 cubic metres of pristine sand. It is here on the Clem Jones Promenade that the wet and semi-naked come face to face with the cocktail set attending shows at the neighbouring Performing Arts Centre. It is urbanism as only Brisbane can do it.

Again, there are many similarities here with Barangaroo and the headland park, where public leisure space appears controlled by corporate interests. As Louise Noble wrote in her excellent article in Architecture Australia (September 2001): “The ambiguities between public and private space are inherent in a project conceived in the age of corporatized infrastructure. Is it a democratic space? Could it be described as the ‘People’s Park?’”

Leisure in the Age of Technology, at the time this seemed an insightful and relevant theme. From the Celebrate 88 website, “Technology and the sciences have been common themes for 20th Century Expositions, however, the marriage of Leisure and Technology was, for World Expo ’88 a world-first - signifying a new prosperous age of man - where leisure time became an increasingly important part of each day’s living.”

Nearly 30 years after Expo 88, it is interesting to ponder on how leisure has made its way into our modern lives. In Brisbane, the legacy is real – where that greatest symbol of Australian leisure – the beach – has been recreated within the heart of the city.

Beyond this, there is definitely a shift in how the markers of leisure are incorporated into modern architecture – especially the workplace. Work is no longer only conducted at the workstation or the conference table. We have break-out-spaces with ping-pong tables, beanbags and swings. Kitchenettes have transformed from a dank and smelly cupboard off the corridor to a casual bar – complete with coffee machine, flat screen TV, lounge chairs and a glass-fronted fridge. This is also where meetings can occur. Larger corporations have their own gyms, childcare centre, cafes, and roof top urban farms. It is all about making the workspace look less work-like. Our surroundings might suggest resort, but we are still working just as hard.

Andrew Nimmo
Director, Lahznimmo architects
Chair, Editorial Committee, NSW Chapter
Adjunct Professor Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Design, University of Sydney

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A Century of Zoo Design

Taronga Zoo, one of Sydney’s signature leisure destinations, is celebrating its 100th birthday. Rachel Couper guides us through the architecture that has shaped the zoological park over the past century.

Taronga Zoo is a much-loved recreational attraction of Sydney. Positioned on Sydney Harbour with spectacular views of the city, the zoological park is an iconic cultural landmark. The architectural development of Taronga Zoo over the past 100 years charts a unique perspective on the zoological park’s evolution.

Originally the project of the NSW Zoological Society, Taronga Zoo was officially founded in 1916 after the Society relocated its Moore Park Zoo, which it had outgrown, to a larger site on the harbour. There were 228 mammals, 552 birds and 64 reptiles transferred from Moore Park to Taronga. The project made headlines, particularly the transfer of Jessie the elephant. Jessie was walked (alongside two circus elephants to keep her calm) from Moore Park through the city, to the harbour and then shipped to Taronga Zoo on a barge; finally, she was winched onto the steep site via a crane. Her journey captured the imagination of Sydney and ceremoniously marked the transition to the new zoo.

The founders of Taronga Zoo, particularly the Director Albert le Souef, had seen the steep grade and natural sandstone terraces of the new site as a fantastic opportunity to embrace a different style of animal exhibition. Originating from Hagenbeck’s Tierpark in Germany, the style utilised a system of hidden moats to create a theatrical display of bar-less enclosures, staggered across a manufactured terrain carefully constructed to resemble the natural environment.

The design was revolutionary because it presented zoo-goers with a series of spectacular panoramas in which predator and prey appear to harmoniously inhabit the same scene. The architectural design became influential worldwide because it redefined the parameters of what constituted a culturally acceptable vision of animals in captivity. Seeing well fed, healthy specimens exhibited as if at liberty in outdoor, open-air enclosures was considered a vast improvement than the traditional vision of animals in cramped cages and barred enclosures.

Taronga Zoo embraced these new design philosophies and the natural terrain lent itself to the installation of a series of open-air mock rock enclosures, nestled into the terraces. Mock rock was a method of construction that involved the application of ferro-cement over a sculpted arrangement of metal bars and galvanised mesh (chicken wire) create a rock-like appearance. It allowed the artificial terrain to blend somewhat into the existing landscape, creating the impression that the animals were exhibited in a natural setting.

By contrast, many of the buildings within Taronga Zoo were designed to stand out as architectural landmarks. The most recognizable, the main entrance, was designed in the elaborate Edwardian Baroque style with Beaux-Arts planning and featured a copper domed entranceway and ornate plaster decorations of flora and fauna. The Taronga Conservation Strategy suggests that the choice of this aesthetic spoke of: “the prevailing Zoo philosophy to amuse...”
Much of the zoo’s early design (1913 – 1914) has been attributed to architect and army officer, Colonel Alfred Spain of Spain and Cosh. The Public Works Department continued what Spain had begun, and in 1915 established the upper and lower entrances, administration offices, Indian temple, bear and carnivore pits and aviaries.

Taronga Zoo had a strong emphasis on recreation and leisure during the early years and the grounds included a range of very popular picnic areas. Several small “hot water shops” supplied picnickers with pies and sandwiches, and were so called because they also filled billies for tea. The early zoo also had a large Federation Arts and Crafts style refreshment room that was famous for its freshly baked scones and bread rolls. By the 1930s amusements at Taronga Zoo included a bandstand for live orchestral performances, a miniature train track, a merry-go-round, swings, a sandpit, a kindergarten petting zoo, and a circus arena to showcase performing animals. Elephant rides around the zoo were still very popular at this time and daily events included two orangutans, Freda and Freddie, “enjoying” a tea party. Recreational features such as these were very much in keeping with international zoo practices at the time.

By the 1940s, however, several of the moats surrounding the open-air enclosures were filled in and mesh barriers installed instead in order to allow people to get closer to the animals. This departure from the Hagenbeck style signaled a change in the architectural philosophy of the zoo. When Sir Edward Hallstrom took the helm in 1941 the zoo’s focus shifted to hygiene and cleanliness and many of the enclosures were redesigned in stark concrete to make them easier to clean and to better protect the animals from the elements.

Though these designs were more practical, the overall character was very stark and sterile, which did not fare well in a 1966 review completed by Heini Hediger, an international expert in animal psychology. He made a swathe of recommendations for improvement, the most controversial of which was that no major zoo should be run by one person, particularly one without zoological qualifications. Though Hallstrom, who had generously invested a large amount of personal funds into the zoo during his twenty-six year tenure, found this assessment particularly confronting, many of the recommendations were eventually accepted and implemented by the Trust.

The review initiated a period of regeneration at Taronga Zoo and under the guidance of Ronald Strahan (zoo director from 1967 – 1974) the overall philosophy of the zoo shifted from recreation to education and animal conservation. In 1971 a masterplan was completed which bore the hallmarks of a Sydney School approach. The term “Sydney School” is used to identify a loose knit collection of local architects who celebrated the Australian landscape and aimed for an
architecture that receded into the surrounding landscape. Those associated with it featured a common approach to form, siting, landscaping (with an emphasis on maintaining existing native vegetation), as well as materials which included clinker bricks and timber which was often left exposed in a rough-hewn or natural state.

Common to Sydney Regional style design was a response to place and the use of naturalistic landscape design with local Australian species in plantings. Its introduction at Taronga Zoo was an appropriate match for the program, allowing better and more prominent display of Australian native animals. The whole area was landscaped and several buildings constructed for native fauna during this period. The overall architectural philosophy was to provide close access to the animals without disturbing them. Two particularly iconic buildings of the period were the Rainforest Aviary and the Koala House by NSW Public Works Department Project Architect Don Coleman. Opened in 1972, the Koala House was designed around a spiral ramp that encircled a cluster of trees housing the koalas, allowing visitors to view the residents from a variety of different heights. Lightweight in character, the hardwood timber structure features exposed trusses and a semi-circular shingled roof that covers the upper viewing platform. The Koala House was located to take advantage of an area of remnant bushland and further planting of native trees stitched the enclosure to its site.

This period marks a transition in which the Australian character and context of Taronga Zoo is celebrated and as the zoo matured, its prevailing philosophy expanded from recreation and leisure to include zoological research and education. Taronga Zoo championed a new zoo philosophy of animal welfare and wildlife conservation and a series of major capital works were undertaken throughout the zoo to bring it in line with international standards. The primary architectural approach embraced immersion design, in which animals are exhibited in geographic zones, in environments as closely representative of their native habitats as possible. Techniques utilised, such as in the altered lion and tiger enclosures, included glazing and lighting arrangements to allow visitors to get closer to the animals without disturbing them.

In 2004, BVN Architecture was commissioned to devise a new design for Taronga Zoo’s main upper entry including visitor arrival and parking facilities, as well as the heritage refurbishment of the upper entrance building and tram shed. New buildings that resulted from BVN Architecture’s commission include a shop, a café and a facilities building. The overall design took into account the sandstone plateau and the established fig trees, in addition to the historical tradition of the pavilion in a garden. In 2012, BVN Architecture was awarded the Institute’s Lloyd Rees Award for Urban Design for Taronga Zoo’s upper entry precinct.

Jackson Teece is responsible for a number of Taronga Zoo’s most contemporary projects. From 2006 - 2011 they designed and delivered the Wild Asia exhibit (2006); the male elephant holding facility and the Great Southern Oceans exhibit (2008); and the makeover of the chimpanzee exhibit (2011). The Great Southern Oceans is a 1.2-hectare exhibit featuring seals, sea lions, penguins and pelicans; the design incorporates the heritage feature of the former aquarium entrance.

In December 2013 Taronga Zoo opened the Lemur Forest Adventure, designed by Hill Thalis Architecture + Urban Projects in collaboration with Jane Irwin Landscape Architecture. Located

[Image: Elevation of the Koala House by NSW Public Works Department, 1970. Courtesy of Taronga Zoo and also held by PWD Plan Services.]
on the site of the former seal pools, the project includes a forest walk through, lemur walk through and night quarters.

Last year the NSW Government announced a ten year Centenary Master Plan for Taronga Zoo. This $150 million master plan includes projects, cofunded by Taronga and the government, to improve visitor experiences and create animal habitats. One of the first projects implemented as part of the master plan is the Sumatran Tiger Experience, designed by lahznimmo architects, an expansive new exhibit that will enhance Taronga Zoo’s breeding program for the critically endangered species will begin construction in February 2016.

The variety of architectural approaches adopted during the evolution of Taronga Zoo reflect the corresponding growth in zoo philosophies globally. The architectural design also mirrors changing attitudes to the Australian landscape and native animals, providing a unique reflection of the cultural development of Sydney.

Rachel Couper
Architectural Historian

FOOTNOTES

Nicola Balch: The Parramatta River Catchment Group (PRCG) has set admirable targets, can you give us some insight into how this campaign came about?

Sarah Clift: The PRCG was established in 2008, primarily from the need for coordinated regional management of the Parramatta River and its catchment. In terms of governance the catchment has 13 councils all managing aspects of stormwater and pollution, Sydney Water managing the sewer system, Roads and Maritime Services managing the main river itself, and many other agencies managing aspects such as planning, regulation, research and monitoring. If you’re actually going to be serious about managing a catchment you have to have a co-ordinated group of stakeholders in the room saying, “how are we going to do this?”

Over the past 20 years and particularly over the next 10-15 years the change in demographic along the Parramatta River and the growth in Sydney means there is huge opportunity to really shape what the river looks like for those communities. The PRCG developed a vision that Sydney deserves a world class river, based on the premise that Parramatta River catchment is 50% of the Sydney Harbour catchment. If we want world class beaches and a world class harbour, you need to have a world class river that feeds that.

NB: So the catchment group runs largely as a steering committee of coordinated council members across the catchment?

SC: Yes, we are essentially the collective of our members. We are a low resourced group in terms of the coordinating body, but high resourced when you think we are the combination of 16 agencies, which is 13 councils and 3 state government agencies. When it comes to projects, the governing body of that land co-coordinates the works but we guide the direction as to where those works should be taking place. We essentially provide them understanding of how the river works.

NB: Does having all the councils around one table on the topic of water quality put the pressure on other local government authorities to compete, or inspire to live up to the agenda?

SC: It gives them a focus and a reason to work with each other. The difficulty with boundaries is that you have some councils that have the foreshore and that are directly engaged with the river itself, and then you have those that are managing the catchments. Ultimately if the councils are not managing their catchments really well then not going to get the [desired] water quality outcome.

NB: What you are describing is exactly the water quality problem that McGregor Coxall faced with the Parramatta City River Plan. We put water quality initiatives at the forefront of the design. However, in the end it came down to what was happening upstream in the broader catchment. We were not going to get primary contact in isolation, it wasn’t going to do the trick. You can’t, however well-
intentioned, decide to improve the city area for swimmability, because it’s connected to this broader complex system into which many of the 13 councils are still injecting stormwater and sewerage overflow.

SC: You’ve just explained beautifully the difference between creating a liveable edge and a living river. Councils can do really well in a particular geographic location but if they are reliant on something that is a regional issue then you need that regional coordination. There are two stages to making the river swimmable again, [first] we are going to identify six pilot sites that we will be making the central focus of a Parramatta River Masterplan which we are working on over the next 12 months. They will be the areas we target for the 2025 plan [second stage] where we will focus on what is going to have to happen on a regional basis to get those sites swimmable again.

NB: With the second stage you are targeting the development of a water quality management system.

SC: Exactly, we’re calling it the Riverwatch Program. In the 1980s there was a huge community uproar and campaign and turn around in terms of how sewerage and stormwater overflow was being managed around Sydney’s beach areas to bring them back to world class beaches. We are trying to draw that west along the river.

Sarah Clift

In the 1980s there was a huge community uproar and campaign and turn around in terms of how sewerage and stormwater overflow was being managed around Sydney’s beach areas to bring them back to world class beaches. We are trying to draw that west along the river.

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NB: If this happens within the 10 year program you have set out, the impact on urban change will be incredible - creating segments of the Parramatta River foreshore that you can truly physically engage with. It will be exciting to see what that does to the land, the form, the housing value and the liveability of suburbs west of the CBD - particularly in tandem with all the work that is being put into knowledge job generation in western areas.

SC: Yes, well it’s essentially everywhere from Cockatoo Island west. That’s the point, to have the capability to look at the activation at some of the harbour beaches and establish similar sites further west. Not everyone needs or wants to swim but it creates this magnet of social activity.

NB: The main thing the media picked up on for the Parramatta City River Strategy was the beach, McGregor Coxall hadn’t even heard of it.

SC: It was funny actually because it’s just one small segment of the entire of your plan. But it turned out to be this amazing precursor for us launching this campaign to make the river swimmable again. Because part of all the media about the beach was “why would you want to go to a beach if you can’t swim?” It’s a big question as to whether you can make the CBD section swimmable in that time.

SC: That’s really what we need to work through with the masterplan this year, we will conduct water quality modelling around the six sites. We have never actually had water quality modelling done that integrates both sewer and stormwater. For the first time we will develop an integrated model to identify what key things you would need to do and specific targets you would need to achieve within the catchment in order to get those sites back to swimmability. The plan is to come up with the scenarios then take them to the community and stakeholders and ask which of the options to achieve swimmability in those areas they prefer. That comes down to an urban design overview, to look at where and what is required and let the community and stakeholders to make an informed decision. If they are not prepared to choose one of those options, then we won’t be able to make that site swimmable and we need to consider alternative sites.

NB: It is becoming a prolific leading city agenda, we are witnessing this historical transition in cities worldwide, that were essentially born from their major river physically and environmentally turning their backs on them, decimating them and slowing reorienting themselves to recognise these systems as an asset once again.

NB: Do you have any fixed targets that you need to achieve in order to get the 2025 vision happening.

SC: Exactly, the connection is a clear one, if you have a look at our online voting system you’ll see all the sites the public have selected were in fact historic bathing sites along the Parramatta River. Dawn Fraser’s brother used to take her down to the water to teach her to swim - that is where people went. The Parramatta River’s history of activation dates back to our Indigenous population and how they engaged with the river.
Coastal Leisure

The Australian beach is a complex cultural landscape with a rich history of outdoor pursuits, tourism, mass culture and community activism. Scott Hawken takes a closer look at the architectural heart of this iconic site, the beach pavilion.

In the early years of the 20th century the beach evolved as a defining Australian cultural landscape. For a now well established colonial population, the outback represented an unforgiving and alienating landscape of inland battlers of toil and hardship, in high contrast, the beach signified a new culture complete with aspirational figures found in the heroic life saver and the blonde, muscled surfer. The foundation site for this cultural mythology is without a doubt Bondi: the location of Australia’s first life-saving club, the legendary Icebergs, and the epicentre of the surfing and surf swimming craze.

Although there is certainly a Bondi Beach mythology, this monolithic image masks a careful understanding of change. Far from being timeless, Bondi has witnessed at least two waves of change since the turn of the twentieth century and is about to experience a third ($38 million...
dollar upgrade) with designs currently on the drawing board for a revitalised Bondi Pavilion and surrounding park. Constructed in 1928 during the interwar phase, Bondi Pavilion originally served as a practical monument, housing numerous changing sheds, for the flourishing mass culture of “surf bathing”. This golden age lasted several decades before the pavilion lost relevance in the more casual post-war period. In the 1970s local grass roots activism saw the institution reborn as a community based complex, idealistic, authentic, and distant from the aspirational glamour of the pavilion’s early years. These phases of change are emblematic of the politics of coastal leisure that persist today. Over the last century Sydney’s beaches have been a battle ground for local issues as much as they have been sites of mass tourism.

Relatively recent listings of Bondi Beach as a cultural landscape and on state (2008) and federal (2008) heritage registers acknowledges its value as one of Australia’s most loved places. It is certainly popular with 14 million people visiting the beach each year. For most, the beach is experienced as a site of summer pilgrimage, much as it was when Bondi Pavilion was first built. During the 1920s and 1930s beach pavilions like Bondi were established on beaches in Sydney and along the NSW coastline. These temples of hedonism were, like architectural chrysalises, places for reappraising white Australian bodies as they emerged from the modest and stiff Victorian era to discover the bright Australian sun. This transformation in attitudes was striking. Prior to 1902 swimming during daylight hours was illegal and many beaches were inaccessible. It was only through activism in the early twentieth century that public access to Sydney’s beaches and their waters, was achieved. In the early years attire was very conservative by today’s standards. At Bondi after changing from your stiff street clothes into a concealing swimsuit you were able to walk to the beach in a “modesty tunnel” that emerged in the sands of the beach. These tunnels were demolished for defensive reasons during the Second World War.

Beach architecture, such as Bondi Pavilion, is a clear reminder of the emergence of beach culture in the first decades of the 20th century when as many as 50,000 people came to visit Bondi on a summer’s day. The Bondi Pavilion was one of many built during the interwar period. Some have been demolished such as the South Steyne Manly Surf Pavilion, a design that followed its difficult cliff-side site to great effect, with an expressive L-shape plan and a sleek modernist design that won its architect, Eric W Andrew, a Sulman Award in 1939. Thankfully many others remain such as the Cronulla Beach Surf Pavilion in interwar stripped classical style (1940); Bar Beach Surf Pavilion in the Spanish Mission and Art Deco styles (1933); Manly Cove Pavilion in Mediterranean style; the Balmoral Bathers Pavilion (1928) in “Moorish” Mediterranean style and restored for adaptive re-use by Alex Popov in 2000; Newport and Freshwater Beaches in Mediterranean style; The Entrance Surf Life Saving Clubhouse (1936) in Mediterranean Style and the North Beach Bathing Pavilion (1938) in Wollongong built in the Intervar Functionalist style. In Wollongong a decade long project involves refurbishing a whole stretch of coastline sea walls and heritage architecture in a project known as The Blue Mile. The Blue Mile project has resulted in a new appreciation of beach heritage. For example the North Beach Bathers Pavilion was heritage listed after an outcry over an insensitive two storey development proposal. It has subsequently been carefully restored for adaptive re-use by Wollongong City Council and Conybeare Morrison in a complex and time consuming operation that required the replacement of the building’s foundations.

Of all-the 1920s beach pavilions, Bondi is the largest, being the size of a small city block. Built in 1928 after a design by Leith C. McCredie of Robertson Marks Architects, the building was conceived as a shining City Beautiful monument fronting the sublime Bondi Beach and sited in the centre of an extensive landscaped area with a promenade and a new encircling road called Queen Elizabeth Drive. The Mediterranean style of the building, common to interwar beach architecture of the time, shows the influence of the University of Sydney’s Prof Leslie Wilkinson who promoted such stylistic concepts with his belief that they were more suitable for the local climate, evident in the light stuccoed walls, window shutters to shade the bright summer sun while filtering breezes, and the use of arcades and columns to make architecture more open and permeable for
outdoor living. The Spanish Mission style, also common during the interwar period, was closely related to the Mediterranean style. It referenced the glamour of Hollywood, California and was favoured by many of the well to do of the time.

The economic sustainability and physical condition of Bondi Pavilion had been a concern for many years and the proposed adaptive re-use is both a refurbishment and a rethinking of coastal culture. Peter Tonkin, of Tonkin Zulaikha Greer (TZG) Architects who is working on the project, explains that the adaption of the heritage structure will act as a new beach gateway. It will engage the pavilion with Campbell Parade through a new civic space and a strong axial structure linking cultural facilities such as a re-located theatre, art galleries, café dining and a green oasis. The cluttered elements of the current building will be consolidated and the closed nature of the building will be replaced with an easy permeability in both the north-south and east-west direction.

In contrast with other heritage projects TZG have worked on, such as their award winning adaptive re-use designs for Eveleigh Carriageworks and Paddington Reservoir, Bondi Pavilion does not have a lot of patina or texture. Coastal environments are so brutal to the building materials that constant maintenance has prevented the creation of such a patina. The old parts of the building will be refreshed with new finishes although the new materials palette will be consistent with the Mediterranean style of the building. The 1930s heritage fabric is kept and respected and new elements are placed to complement the original fabric in scale and form while being expressly modern in their design and materials. A new glass pavilion element is to accommodate the theatre in a new ground-floor location to the northern side of the pavilion. The glass will be both patterned and etched in a way to disguise the salt spray that builds up on beachside buildings and will also reflect the sky and the surrounding columns. Similarly new columns echo the rhythm of the existing columns but with striking contemporary geometries reminiscent of a paddle or slender fish fin.

The refurbishment of the Pavilion is one of several recent projects such as the new North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club by Durbach Bloch.
Jaggers with its extraordinary interplay of seemingly carved voids and mosaicked solids. New amenities designs and refurbishments are being constructed at both south and north Bondi, Tamarama and Bronte by Sam Crawford Architects. Each of these projects has a different form and is based on existing site structures and conditions, but shares a common material language of timber battens recycled from a demolished warehouse in Green Square. Sam Crawford’s North Bondi project promises to be an interesting green roofed architectural structure that integrates a historic pumphouse with toilet amenities into one building. (One wonders if some agreement could have been made with the surf lifesaving club to integrate the toilet’s rather than having them as a standalone building.)

The positive aspects of co-locating such amenities are evident at nearby Tamarama which has had complete makeovers by lahznimmo architects and Waverly Council. The co-siting of the toilets and the café was a controversial decision, but an outcome that affirms community and social space in contrast to detached and fearful public perceptions of amenities blocks. Lahznimmo’s breezy toilets and showers directly look to the sandstone cliff and open out to a communal circular wash basin which everyone shares, like a local well or watering hole. The adjoining café is elegantly a continuation of the structure and deconstructed to offer light in and views to the cliff through a window. Alan, café owner and local personality acts as an informal caretaker for the structure, park and amenities.

The sensitive and slight pavilions skirt the cliffs to maximise the open space of the park, improve movement patterns and encourage social interaction. Annabel Lahz (director) and Hugo Cottier (project architect) of lahznimmo architects emphasise that the outcome was the result of a long highly politicised process with a fiercely vocal local community that was opposed to change. But the long process offered several positive and surprising outcomes. The result is two minimal buildings that allow the dramatic topography to dominate. The materials of the structure reference the local environment while maintaining expressly modern geometries: timber battens are designed to weather like driftwood and precast concrete is coloured to match the sandstone cliffs.

The range of new architecture, for Sydney’s beaches, demonstrates a new cultural sophistication. Such experimentation with program and form suggests a different future for Bondi and Sydney’s beaches and a redefinition of Australian icons. Such cultural renewal is vital if local mythologies are to evolve into more ambitious and yet authentic realities.

Dr Scott Hawken
Urban Designer and Landscape Architect
Lecturer, Faculty of Built Environment,
University of NSW

FOOTNOTES
Space to Play

The collaborations between Philip Coxall (McGregor Coxall) and John Choi (Chrofi) have set a new standard for parks in Sydney. Shaun Carter met with them to discuss their agenda-setting approach to community leisure spaces.
Shaun Carter: You guys have done a lot of work together. My great reference point for that work is Ballast Point Park. Your collaboration there reminded me of all my childhood adventures playing in the bush and in creeks. Suddenly, there was something a bit wild about it - there was topography, there was texture and there was materiality. You were making walls that were reading the topography of the land and bending and folding those walls around. My daughter got there and straightaway she rolled down the hill and then she said, “Come on, Mum and Dad. Let’s all do it.”

Philip Coxall: Let me tell you the interesting story behind that. That’s exactly what the grass knoll was designed for. They came asking for a play area up there. I said, “The whole park is a play area, but I’ll give you one little dedicated play area.” I always remember as a little kid rolling down the hill. Do you know what happened? They laid it two weeks before the opening and so the grass didn’t bite. [When it opened] first kid that arrived and the first thing they did was roll down the hill. By the end of the day, the grass had worn down.

It’s still there, by the way, but they hadn’t been able to maintain it because they can’t get the people off the grass to get it back to where it should be.

SC: It’s almost too successful! For a city park it is really interpretive. You left elements of where the tanks were and you’ve got the wind turbines. You walk on things that were remnants - I thought it was an extraordinary interpretation and that beautiful piece of architecture that was the bathrooms.

PC: We worked very closely together on Ballast Point Park and we went away one weekend to work on it. John had this idea over the weekend which brought in this floating canopy. We were looking at how we could put something in there (that was) recycled. That was our tenant for everything. We had to recycle everything so anything we touched had to be recycled. I kept on thinking it was sticks or twigs and then John came in, and he laid it out the canopy, it was one of those moments where you look at it and you just go, “You had me at hello.” He goes, “And guess what? They’re recycled seatbelt straps that had failed the safety test. Then it all comes together because (of) the stripes. They originally said they wanted [Antoni] Gaudi. Remember that?

John Choi: They wanted the toilets to be Gaudi-esque. I’m fascinated by the process. Various people in the community express what they want through precedents and aspirational words. I think the great value of the profession is to be able to translate these spoken and unspoken desires into something tangible. We help people decide what they want by showing them what’s possible.

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John Choi

The future is a difficult business, particularly when you are proposing something quite different from the norm. To some people it never becomes tangible until it gets built. That was the case with Ballast Point. No matter what we showed and said, many people had the image of a [simple] green park with trees. Afterwards the same people that were very cautious or had other thoughts of what it needed to be ... Some of those community members came up to you afterwards saying, “Look. In essence, we didn’t know what we wanted.”
SC: It's the great leap of faith. Isn't it?

JC: I guess it's in making those aspirations and possibilities tangible enough that decision makers, whether it's the community or elected people on behalf of the community, can make decisions.

There's a good opportunity for the profession to imagine how we can add value in today's context, but you need to make greater leaps to have things like the Highline or Thomas Heatherwick's Garden Bridge. These examples, where either the designer or a community group imagine a different kind of experience you can have in the world. And then somehow finding a way to bring it to reality, and then once something is deemed successful every city wants a version of it.

SC: I would imagine you've probably heard a couple of times, "Guys, let's do a Highline.

PC: Yeah. That's right.

JC: Which brings me to Parramatta and Western Sydney. You are obviously doing something that is different and new, and that city makers want you to be involved in their projects.

PC: It's an interesting thing. Out of all the work that we have done collectively, the most successful in terms of generating more work is Pimelea Parklands [Western City Parklands].

JC: The design takes the traditional model of the open space barbecue, shade structure, bush-type scenario and cleans it up, putting it in a framework that is easy to respond to. All the councillors from various councils go out and have a look at it. When they see it they say, “Oh, we want one of those.” We get quite a lot of calls on that. I don't think I've ever got a call on Ballast Point Park.

SC: What is it do you think they seeing in that park that makes them want to have one of their own?

PC: It's beautifully constructed and designed. It's not too confrontational, not too radical or out there. Ballast Point Park can challenge you a little bit.

JC: Pimelea is a softer form of place-making. How there is natural fostering of certain kind of activities - it's more a non-physical design - functions that are curated and partly shaped by the physical space, but also by the arrangement of it all. Providing the larger activity, the small activity, more active/passive, and that naturally…

SC: …Gives space between things.

JC: I think if I look at the way architecture is evolving, it's increasingly having a broader understanding of all those nonphysical aspects of what creates an experience. How people understand, enjoy and interact, all those things are equally important … and these can define a place independent of the physical design.

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That's why I think we enjoy collaborating with landscape architects.

We're coming across new opportunities in terms of how society interacts with a park. The built structure around leisure and experience economy isn't really that evolved. It's a reasonably recent sort of pattern. So there's lots of opportunity to imagine new kind of experiences.

Lizard Log Park (formerly Pimelea Park) by CHROFI and McGregor Coxall. Photo: Simon Wood.
SC: One of the things that jumps out for me when we talk about these things is risk. I see two different risks. There is this fear of the unknown in the conceptualising for government and councils. There is the experience of risk when interacting with the park – the excitement that comes with jumping off a rock or going through that culvert or rolling down that hill. All those things are things that made these great childhood memories.

PC: I think that’s beautifully said. In fact, one of the nicest compliments as well. That’s in essence what it’s about – when you go to a place and you have to have an imagination. You’re crawling through a culvert, but you’re not really crawling through a culvert. You are challenging yourself.

JC: It’s a tunnel. It’s makeshift. There is water. There is noise, cold.

PC: Co-creating – that you are making those excellent, important memories for childhoods rather than the bland pastiche of going through a plastic playground. How is that in any way, shape or form something that’s going to really embed you and start you thinking in a different way other than “I got it done and it’s over”?

SC: I think those experiences increase self-esteem and they allow children to judge risk and in adult life that’s an important factor. There is greater social and cultural benefits of having things that are more experiential, more challenging.

It’s fascinating and if we think about risk on that other side so governments or councils or groups of people that want something different or they’re really tantalised by the prospects, but just in this conservative time not necessarily allowing themselves to take that leap, even to engage you guys to do concepts for them.

JC: No risk no gain. If you want to be a leading city, you have to lead. It’s going beyond mimicking ‘best practice’ and having the collective confidence to take the leap and inspire with new possibilities.

For me, all this is a move away from defining architects or landscape architects as designers of just physical things. More and more, [we should be] defining the profession as designing relational structures. Expanding our traditional role of arranging materials in space to also arranging nonphysical relationships which collectively shape & define places, economy and identity.

Our Central Park

This mixed-use development in Chippendale has built a new neighbourhood, David Tickle takes a look at what has defined its success.

There is the citation from the Council for Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat who in recognising the main tower as the Best Tall Building Worldwide in 2014, spoke as much as about the amenity surrounding the building – the extension of landscape, the creation of “planted plateaues” and “green urban sculpture”. And then there is the project website, with its team of architects – from Foster and Nouvel to Tzannes and JPW – who speak of the aspiration to create more than just buildings: a new model of city neighbourhood, an urban landscape, a contemporary place.

And, of course, there is the name.

The park is, well, central to the story of Central Park.

There was never doubt this was going to be a significant project for Sydney. It is a major inner urban site, sandwiched between city centre and rough-and-tumble Chippendale. Locked away from public access for decades, but in the minds of many, a public asset – a beer factory, a multi-generational employer and a place of social and physical heritage. It was a two-billion dollar development exercise, a 5.8 hectare site, but first and foremost an opportunity to do urban renewal well.

With all such projects in Sydney, the realisation of Central Park has taken a long and convoluted path, through a rotation of developers, design teams and approval authorities. Australand first purchased an option to develop the site in 2003, but following an invited master planning competition and some wrangling with the City of Sydney, withdrew from the project two years later. Singaporean-based Frasers acquired the site in 2007 (and ultimately, Australand some years later), and with a refreshed design team, sought approval via the state government instead. The vision for the site, led personally by Frasers’ chairman of the time, Stanley Quek, promised a whole new paradigm in urban living.

The revised plan was able to accommodate two seemingly contradictory outcomes – an increase in floor space as well as green space. This was done by contracting building footprints, pushing floor space higher into towers (elevating the value of the residential also, no doubt) and trading in street and pavement for landscape. It was a clever move, one that optimised the commercial outcomes of the site, along with the promise of greater community benefit.

The earlier masterplans for the site, including that supported by the City of Sydney, envisaged
its main open space as a linear park, running north-south between Broadway and Chippendale. As this plan evolved, a key decision was to reform this space – a simple rectangle, placed against the Chippendale edge. Thus, the central (more accurately, off-central) park was born.

The relocation of the park was key. It no longer was the mediator of two urban conditions; liberated from its city edge and any aspiration for this to be a civic space. It was now a local park, a space for residents, both new and existing. It needed to be more open, more unrestrained, more Chippendale.

The space itself is simple – crossed by two orthogonal pathways that define a number of grassed terraces. The park’s amenities include a barbeque to the side, a water cascade and an understated artwork. The detailing is unfussy and robust, with a restrained palette of materials. And importantly, the edges of the park are open, allowing access at almost any point. This openness means that the space is used by dog walkers and joggers, picnickers and pop-up marketeers, dance battlers and cos-players. It is a space that understands that the most critical ingredient for the success of a place is simply people.

Then there are all the other spaces – a sunken courtyard for eating and drinking, the newly opened Spice Alley, a shopping centre that doubles as a games arcade and art gallery. These are places of intimacy, compression, intensity, in contrast to the simple openness of the main park space.

In total, Central Park has delivered more than 30,000 square metres of open space. For comparison, the new Barangaroo Headland Park is 60,000 square metres. If we measured such things, the open space ratio of the site would be 0.5:1. This is quite a feat for a dense, inner city development site.

The name Central Park clearly invites the comparison with its New York namesake, and despite the difference in location, age and scale, there are some interesting parallels. The original Central Park was created in the mid-nineteenth century as New York was rapidly growing – a landscape foil to the noise and congestion of the city. Its urban edge is now intensively developed on all sides. Green and grey work as a complementary pair: the generosity of the park, the multitude of activities and experiences it houses, allow for greater building density; in turn, the buildings define and enliven the park. Our Central Park is almost a scaled-down version of this model – where the spaces between buildings generate as much interest and value as the buildings themselves.

While Central Park, New York was envisaged and delivered as a public project, it is managed by the Central Park Conservancy, a not-for-profit private organisation. The Sydney version also relies on the partnership of private and public interest – not in the formal sense, but in understanding that a market-driven development can also deliver meaningful public spaces for the city. In fact, it relies upon them – not just to justify higher densities, but to create more authentic and engaging urban places.

It is an inclusive and optimistic view of urban renewal, one where commercial and community outcomes are seen as complementary, not competing, forces.

David Tickle
Principal, HASSELL

_It was a two-billion dollar development opportunity, a 5.8 hectare site, but first and foremost an opportunity to do urban renewal well._
A Life Aquatic

As a co-creative director of the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale for Australia, Michelle Tabet has immersed herself in the experience of the pool. She reflects on the depths of discovery that have been made on the poolside-path to Venice.

I can remember it as if it were yesterday. In fact, it may have been yesterday. Sitting by a backyard pool in Bronte, eating cherries off their stems. Feet dipped in the water of this small lap pool. When it got too hot, we both plunged in a bit further. It was the perfect setting for a conversation between friends, the right place to just shoot the breeze and relax. Nothing in the diary, no urgent matters, just the time to let an afternoon turn into an evening.

The pool was the backdrop for this careless misuse of what would otherwise be precious and guarded time. It is where all this surplus time that appears around summer holidays was to be spent. Alan Berliner, an American filmmaker who analysed and compiled thousands of hours of home videos into a one-hour documentary film called Family Album came to this conclusion as well. Berliner commented,

... we have built our curatorial framework around a set of eight pool stories told by eight storytellers who recount memories, associations, ambitions or desires for our country told through the metaphor of the pool.

The pool as leisure space is one of the many dimensions of the pool that is raised in our upcoming exhibition for the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale. With co-creative directors Amelia Holliday and Isabelle Toland, we have built our curatorial framework around a set of eight pool stories told by eight storytellers who recount memories, associations, ambitions or desires for our country told through the metaphor of the pool. These are just eight of the many stories that could be told and many more have been shared with us through conversations and social media since we started the project.

For Olympians Ian Thorpe and Shane Gould, the pool is a workplace, a stage, a meditative space marked by the repetition of the laps and the rhythm of their breathing. For Anna Funder, the pool is a quasi-religious and civic space: the great leveler of difference and a potent symbol of the values that underpin our democracy. For Romance Was Born, the cult fashion label led by duo Anna Plunkett and Luke Sales, the pool is about remembering childhood, a carefree view of the world and the environment that surrounds us as children.

Unsurprisingly, the beauty and simplicity of the New South Wales coastal pool is a leitmotiv throughout our research and curation. There is a nostalgic quality to these basic architectural forms, their concrete edges, the proportion of the diving blocks, the relationship between the bleachers and the water. These are spaces of great beauty yet of staggering simplicity. In a recent article for Conde Nast Traveller, Anna Funder describes the rockpool, as a typology that dots Sydney’s edge with the ocean, as “one of the few instances where something man-made dares to
improve on nature, and in doing so honors it.”

In September 2015, Alejandro Aravena was announced as the overall creative director for this year’s Architecture Biennale. He announced his theme, Reporting From the Front, which is an invitation for national curatorial teams to make a statement about the social agency of architecture and to report the “tiny victories” we are making towards creating a more equitable world through architecture.

The announcement of this theme came at a critical point in our research, when having amassed examples of pools around the country, delved into their backstories and talked to those who were passionate about them, we uncovered the pool as a platform not only for democracy, but also for social justice. It may seem counter intuitive, but amongst the most disadvantaged, leisure is not always a given. Lacking infrastructure, cultural barriers, or even difficult physical access to leisure infrastructure is still an issue in contemporary Australian society.

This was an issue that was most particularly important to one of our storytellers, Hetti Perkins. Hetti is the daughter of the late Charles Perkins, Aboriginal rights activist who led the charge of the Freedom Ride which took a group of Sydney University to the rural towns of New South Wales to protest against racial segregation. Her account of when the Freedom Ride reached Moree is almost as vivid as if she were there herself.

The pool at the Moree Artesian Baths was one of the spaces where signs of racial discrimination were plain to see. Aboriginal people were segregated from the Artesian Baths and could only swim there at certain times of the day. Busting through the gates of the Moree Artesian Baths with a group of eager kids from the nearby Aboriginal station, Charles Perkins established a new social frontier for Indigenous people in Australia by defying segregation.

But for Hetti Perkins, the pool is not only the backdrop to this important civil rights moment in Australia’s history. She points out that access to the pool and to leisure in general continues to be an issue of equity in Australia. A truly egalitarian society is one where everyone has the right to have fun and be carefree. She comments: “Pools are really oases, psychologically as well as physically. We’re not only waging a war on racism, we’re also trying to deal with the effects of racism on communities and provide an oasis where people can forget the concerns of their daily lives.”

Our research has captured not only the nostalgic and emotional qualities of this architectural typology, but also the social catalyst that this space has become.

physical access to leisure infrastructure is still an issue in contemporary Australian society.

This quest for the right to leisure is one that Hetti Perkins still actively pursues by tying her interests in art to the legacy of her late father and continues to support through various means the establishment and maintenance of pools in remote areas, as important building blocks of community life.

The depth of the pool as a metaphorical device is undeniable. Our research has captured not only the nostalgic and emotional qualities of this architectural typology, but also the social catalyst that this space has become.

Michelle Tabet
Independent Strategy Director

FOOTNOTES
How Soon is Now?

With the National Conference only months away, Anthony Burke sat down with this year’s creative directors Sam Spurr, Ben Hewett and Cameron Bruhn to discuss what they have planned for Adelaide.

Anthony Burke: Your conference is focused on time, How Soon is Now? Why is it important to focus on a temporal attitude towards the conversation of architecture, rather than some kind of thematic?

Cameron Bruhn: I think it comes out of a more bottom-up rather than top-down approach to how we talk about and think about architecture. The theme emphasises what happens in the room on the two days. The briefing the speakers have been given will enable them to reflect on what’s happening at their desk right now, and to articulate how this will impact on the future of architecture.

Ben Hewett: Also, I think the themes that have emerged help structure the title, How Soon is Now? and that idea of the temporal, or time, or now, or future. Those themes have emerged from conversations with the people that we’ve been meeting and interviewing and inviting [to speak].

Sam Spurr: We saw the opportunity of the conference as more than a singular event, to see it as a way of opening up a discussion around the key themes that would evolve from bringing these international speakers [together] in one place. The aim was to develop a conversation and see that as seeding the start to a bigger discussion, as opposed to creating an end product.

AB: What is it about being in Adelaide that’s significant to your conference, and how are you thinking of that interaction between the conference and the city as a great thing for us all to be a part of?

SS: That was another central part of the original [conference proposal] bid - an argument around the specificity of doing it in Adelaide and what Adelaide brings. We saw the conference as events happening within the convention centre but that would spill out, that there would be a lot of fringe events and that we would engage in a very serious way with that local context. Adelaide is a space where a lot of innovative, new ideas have been tested.

BH: My experience of being there [Adelaide] was there’s something about that scale and focus that allowed the intersection of a whole host of disciplines to occur. To foster that social innovation and really the intersection of city-making, planning, policy, music culture, a bar and café scene, and restaurants.

AB: Let’s talk about the three of you … You come from very different slices of the architectural pie, if I could put it that way. Government, academia and I would say, high
theory in some ways. Cameron from media and the public relations and advocacy side of the coin. How are those strengths that each of you sort of champion, how have they worked together as a team?

BH: What’s been interesting is that we knew very quickly that we weren’t drawn from the centre of the profession. As a result, I think we’ve been super conscious and focused on that side of things: what is being done now? What is being realised now? What is being built now?

CB: It’s almost like this bird’s eye view of what people are talking about: how these different conversations happen in Perth, in Brisbane, in London.

SS: It’s a classic scenario of any kind of collaboration which works incredibly well when there is mutual respect for each other’s skills and abilities, but where you’re actually coming from three quite different backgrounds.

AB: Let’s talk more specifically about who is coming. Who might be the right people to host or respond to those conversations?

BH: We’ve certainly targeted the person we want as our final, keynote speaker to follow up those broader conversations on the second day and that’s Tom Fisher, who has written a whole host of books and given lectures on ethics, sustainability and resilience, the notion of the profession and what it needs, how it needs to position itself into the future to deal with broader societal and environmental issues. We feel he’ll be a great speaker to weave things together or provide a framework for that conversation to continue.

Sadie Morgan, from dRMM, a practice working in the U.K. across development and public work. A mid-scale practice in [a] design review role of infrastructure, working in a collaborative environment. To us, [dRMM is] a very good example of contemporary practice.

CB: On the other side of the Atlantic, but an expat Australian, we have Julie Eizenberg, from Koning Eizenberg Architecture [in] Los Angeles, a practice that we admire greatly for their public work, for their work in housing and in small, highly adaptable public buildings. These are projects done without the flashiest of budgets, but that can wring a civic quality out of what might not appear [at first] to be a possible.

Probably the youngest ever keynote at a national architecture conference is Amica Dall from the practice Assemble. They’ve reinvented a format of practice in their own right. It’s not about a downturn in the economy, or not wanting to work for a boss or all the reasons why practices often start. It’s actually just about a different idea and pursuing it in this kind of, what would you call it ...

SS: Very collective. I think they’re a nice example of the twenty-something architectural profession collective, who are not interested in the kind of typical constraints and categorization of what makes an architectural practice. [This] also allows them to be able to do some really incredible work in terms of urban regeneration and working with communities and councils.

Finally, we have Nasrine Seraji who is at the Beaux-Art in Paris, originally from Iran. She’s definitely someone who’s involved in the kind of nexus of [academia and practice we’re interested in] and is incredibly articulate about making arguments around a theorization of the city, around place, and around time, and what that means in terms of the contemporary architectural condition.

AB: I wonder, what are you expecting from the speakers? You’ve given four themes for the panels: Resilience, Transforming Populations, Creating Equity, and Advocating Futures.

BH: [The panel themes] have emerged from conversations with the speakers. We’ve pitched the idea of the conference, the broader theme - the emergent model if you like. Then talked
about the sort of things we’re interested in. Populations are changing, demographics are pretty important to understand, affordability is a massive question in Australia. We’re always talking about our role in terms of architects advocating for a different sort of futures.

Then our speakers came back with their own thoughts on what those issues means to them - how they need to be connected to other issues or bigger questions. From there we workshoped them and decided that four themes would be a useful way to lend structure.

SS: It’s worth saying that those descriptions around the panels will change. We want to be developing this conversation prior to the conference, during the conference, and after the conference.

AB: Certainly with people like Tom Fisher, there’s an overt looking into the ethics of practice today. The building resilience, transforming populations and so on, seem to bring a very strong social dimension, but also an ethical responsibility of the practice of the profession, back onto the table. Do you feel that’s an important dimension of this conference?

BH: I’m glad that it’s evident. Perhaps it’s also in allowing [ethical responsibility] to be articulated, actually having that conversation around it and testing it and pushing it and prodding and examining that. Is it a strong enough framework for the contemporary context of practice?

SS: There’s also a resurgence of interest in the idea of architectural ethics. In the same way that we’re seeing a more critical engagement with terms such as sustainability, we’re also seeing a more critical engagement with the idea of an ethics around architecture which spans from the personal through to the professional.

AB: The last question, the one that simply has to be asked, you’ve spent six months or more now, thinking this through. How soon is now?

CB: The answer is every architect attending How Soon is Now? has to have a different idea about when now is. It goes to the different scales of practice. For a practitioner doing residential architecture as their daily practice, now is pretty close, because they’re working, they’re building every year. They’re getting projects done.

AB: It’s Monday morning.

We’re always talking about our role in terms of architects advocating for a different sort of future.

Ben Hewett
Something Fishy

In 2015 Kevin Liu and Andrew Daly were jointly awarded the David Lindner Prize for their research proposal focusing on the Sydney Fish Markets and its role in the redevelopment of Sydney’s urban environment. Andrew Daly summarises the impetus of their research and findings on the road to understanding authenticity and experience in the city.

The David Lindner Prize was an opportunity to develop a research project that could inform the conceptual agendas of an emerging practice. Initially our interest lay in exploring hybrid development methodologies sensitive enough to integrate non-residential programs into the densification rationale of the inner-city, particularly given the increasing pressure for residential mixed-use developments. The Bays Precinct and the Sydney Fish Markets (SFM) struck us as a particularly salient opportunity to explore bigger concepts of the project of the city itself in light of their imminent redevelopment, focusing around two key concepts: authenticity and experience.

We started as urban-archaeologists, piecing together a picture of Barangaroo’s procurement to understand the status quo. Presented as a graphical timeline, a fragmented picture of major projects in NSW emerged, mapping out recurring individuals, events, governments, planning instruments and regulatory changes that make up Barangaroo’s DNA. By tracing out this wider context we sought a simple understanding of the likely pressures on the upcoming development of the Bays Precinct. It seemed simplistic to believe that the Bays Precinct and the SFM would be exempt from an equally complex web of influences, but what also emerged was the feeling that contemporary city-making and urbanism have some thorny issues that remain unaddressed, hidden under the banner of progress.

The relationship between the commodification of our cities into consumable leisure activities and the increasing homogeneity of architectural types employed to this end encapsulates problematic notions of progress, experience and authenticity in how we conceptualize cities. Increasingly constructed as choreographed and consumable experiences for the leisure of its inhabitants, we found strangely productive parallels between contemporary urbanism and theme parks - a relationship between leisure-consumption and profiteering that conspire to produce a veneer of authenticity that obfuscate development windfalls. Depending on your point of view, it’s either deplorable or seductively euphoric.

Experience and authenticity underlie contemporary city making. There is a unifying question for everyone involved: how can we create equitable and sustainable cities that manage the negative aspects of density in a way that maintains continuity with the cultural and social practices that provide that elusive quantity - authenticity? Our research started with this possibility: that the SFM, sitting at the nexus of a number of industries (primary, food processing, retail, tourism, logistics) is a resilient site capable of being developed while maintaining its experiential authenticity. However, like a theme park, in the contemporary city the line between authentic and simulated experience is blurred to the point where it is unclear whether it exists - or matters.

There is a necessary suspension of disbelief at the SFM that allows us to willingly ignore that choreographed relationship between authenticity and functionality. Our desire for an authentic experience of burly fishermen on a rugged harbour foreshore mending fishing nets seems at odds with fish delivered by the truck-load, of picturesque but non-accessible wharves, of a dysfunctional carpark where tourists stand helplessly while psychotic seagulls make short work of unsuspecting sashimi. Does, can and should authenticity really matter in the contemporary cultural landscape?

The concept of amenity in contemporary development, particularly in relationship to public space, is a key battleground where authenticity, experience, leisure-consumption and simulation play out. As a bargaining chip, a quantifiable definition of amenity seems to be the sole remaining currency in ensuring long term benefits like parks and public spaces are there to produce some public benefit alongside the profit of private interests. Increasingly, amenity is a regulated concept, particularly in relationship to residential developments. The SFM also presents interesting challenges here – noise, odour, traffic - begging the question is the site even appropriate for redevelopment?

That the SFM itself isn’t really a working harbour but a simulated and choreographed experience sits at the heart of its attractiveness and bears further examination. Suggestions of moving the markets elsewhere in the Bays Precinct are somehow both practical and disappointing: logical in solving problems but at the cost of an opportunity to diversify concepts of amenity and urban regeneration. By reducing amenity to quantifiable traits over experiential qualities, a future city that takes advantage of both new and continuing practices and experiences is limited by the regulatory framework established for it. What we find regrettable is that the types and forms of amenity that are acceptable have taken on a homogeneity and expectedness. The processes of recent public procurement have so challenged our faith in the possibility of what we want translating into what we get, instead we are happy – lucky – to be getting something as straightforward as a park. Somehow scrounging back this level of public outcome is seen as a watershed moment.

The play between authenticity, experience and simulation is at the heart of any development of the Bays Precinct and the SFM. Recent concepts, reports and studies recognise this important common ground between stakeholders: the SFM is a place reminiscent of Sydney’s working harbour history and its ongoing function as a working fish market is a key outcome of its future for both its stakeholders and the public. This is also the SFM’s greatest challenge. In a society where the lines between historical authenticity and simulated experience are increasingly part of a commodified procurement process, maybe to maintain that authentic feeling the SFM needs to somehow both practical and disappointing: logical in solving problems but at the cost of an opportunity to diversify concepts of amenity and urban regeneration. By reducing amenity to quantifiable traits over experiential qualities, a future city that takes advantage of both new and continuing practices and experiences is limited by the regulatory framework established for it. What we find regrettable is that the types and forms of amenity that are acceptable have taken on a homogeneity and expectedness. The processes of recent public procurement have so challenged our faith in the possibility of what we want translating into what we get, instead we are happy – lucky – to be getting something as straightforward as a park. Somehow scrounging back this level of public outcome is seen as a watershed moment.

Partner, TYP-TOP Architecture
An overview of the Bays Precinct and Fish Markets Axonometric Drawing by TYP-TOP.
Nick Wood, founder of UK practice How About Studio, is the third recipient of the DROGA residency. He spoke to Mark Szczerbicki about his research into the Australian awning.

Mark Szczerbicki: What led you to applying for the Droga Residency in Sydney?

Nick Wood: My application to the Droga Residency was a continuation of my recent studies on the regeneration of London’s High Streets, supported by the Mayors Outer London Fund. I had visited Sydney in 2013 and had been captivated by the awnings as an element of street architecture that we do not have in the UK. I started to consider the potential of what these structures could be, and this formed the core of my proposal.

MS: How did you perceive the general attitude of the local planning bodies to awnings and awning design prior to your arrival here? What you found, did it match your expectations?

NW: Before my arrival I was able to explore various online and historical resources regarding Sydney’s awnings. The articles I initially uncovered showed the awning as an element that had not undergone significant review in recent years beyond that of its structural integrity.

On arrival I was slightly surprised to find the lack of conversations that were being had about the awning. Local practitioners, policy makers and public all agreed on its necessity for the Australian climate, and there was a fascination with its heritage, but it seemed perhaps overlooked as an active element of the street. Current awning legislation, such as the City of Sydney Awnings Policy 2000, is aimed at providing maximum coverage in relation to pavement width, and its main reference to its neighbour exists as a maximum step height.

MS: Can you comment on the element of making in your research? I was particularly impressed with your idea for the mirrortop trolley, which was like a miniature piece of architecture in itself, and allowed for a new way of engaging with awnings…

NW: Perhaps as designers we take our ability to imagine ideas and spaces for granted, but it is the way we decide to communicate these to clients and users that is key. Making objects and prototypes to aid these discussions creates a transparency and establishes a relationship.

Within my research I have presented the awning as a third architecture that alongside buildings and landscape can make an invaluable contribution to the human scale experience of the street. The mirror trolley was developed as a practical way of engaging the public with...
conversations about the awnings on the street, as well as a way of me exploring ideas of the awning as journey.

I think 1:1 making plays a key role in my design process because of its focus on the human scale. I also like to embrace the expressive object in preference of the glossy images in the formative stages of a project.

MS: I understand that you looked at the Marrickville area during your time here. Why was this part of Sydney particularly suitable to your research?

NW: I began my explorations in Sydney by foot, keen to explore its [the awning] changing condition across different parts of the city. In the first week I walked from the city centre to Redfern and then continued down King Street to Marrickville.

Marrickville already has a traffic-calming setup, where they have reduced the size of the road and increased the space for cafes and businesses, which has started to include urban gardens and hedges. I think that these street-level changes are going to be happening more and more throughout Sydney as people see the importance of bringing human scale back.

I chose a context [Marrickville] where the street situation was looking reasonably healthy, and to be in an area where you’ve got, as far as awning telling the story of a local area, a very diverse mix of light industrial, natural areas, and some residential areas. So I felt that Marrickville, as a place, could represent the character of a lot of different parts of Sydney.

MS: What are some of the ways that awnings can contribute better towards the leisurely enjoyment of our streets, beyond the simple functions of protection from weather or nighttime lighting?

NW: Awnings can get swallowed up by a conversation about café culture and thinking about consumers. While there is an idea about having these public spaces to go and meet people, there’s also a need to provide private spaces and private moments within the street – so if people perhaps don’t have a private space in the home they can find one of their own in the city. Benches line the retail streets of Sydney to provide a place to rest, but the awning can create unique moments to want to stop and just enjoy sitting there...

During my residency there were a number of street festivals – popular amongst residents, these were celebrations of local culture. With small design adaptations awnings could support these events by providing something to which they could literally “plug in”. The idea that you could create rows of power points opens interesting opportunities, like a pop-up use.

I think there is a general opinion amongst the public that aside from a need to upgrade the finish of the awning, as an element of the street experience it performs well in shielding pedestrians from the strong Australian sun. The first step is therefore to engage the community in its potential beyond this, which could perhaps start with a reminder that each awning is unique in its location and relationship to the sun.

Study models by Nick Wood looking at new forms of corrugation and their potential for diffusing natural light through a surface.
MS: There have recently been a number of proposals and visions for the improvement of Sydney’s streets, in which everyone’s thinking about the street surface. Awnings seem to be a forgotten player and a missed opportunity in the rush to make our streets better...

NW: I guess the reason for that is that there is a kind of ownership by councils of the streetscape, and their ability to overview and control the pavement, but awnings are still individually owned by the building owner. There are a lot of requirements placed on the private owner by the council, but not so much in the way of lighting or continuity. It is a pity that owners just want to do something low-maintenance that will last a long time…

I think this is one of my key findings – not treating the awning as a building, where it becomes cantilevered and almost seamlessly attached to its host, and loses status as a temporary structure. If you look at awnings in historical photos they come across as temporary, very different to the buildings behind them, and I think there needs to be more of an openness to adapting awnings to their immediate situation underneath.

MS: How are you planning to collate the results of your research, and what would be the next step in realising the potential of some of your ideas?

NW: I am currently collating my research into a publication which will highlight some of the key findings and questions as well as recording the design and build of the 1:1 awning prototype with students from UTS and UNSW.

No one argues that the awning shouldn’t be there due to their incredible amenity and protection, so they always will be part of the street in Sydney and the Australian culture. There were some moments during my residency where I would step back and think “Well this would never happen anywhere else in the world…” However, the next step lies in the hands of some ambitious developers or landowners to commission awning designs that begin to question the existing regulations using high quality design, but ultimately I think the guidance provided to designers of awnings needs to be reviewed to align with identified future potential.

Marrickville was adopted by Nick Wood as a site on which to overlay research questions. When establishing the feasibility of using the awnings for community wayfinding, he mapped the location of Marrickville’s public green spaces and their distance from awning-lined streets.
Boheme

Bondi is a world renowned leisure destination and home to many Sydney-siders. Philip Vivian explains how Bates Smart’s Boheme development embraces this beachside community.

Bondi Beach is the archetypal leisure suburb. Bates Smart’s design for Boheme is a mixed use development in the heart of Bondi which caters for locals and tourists alike. In contrast to the beachfront tourist areas, we sought to engage with the local community to create an authentic place, which would become the heart of the Bondi’s built environment. To achieve this the building has been designed to be as open and accessible to the community as possible while maintaining privacy for residents and guests.

Boheme comprises restaurants, retail, serviced apartments and residential apartments that are integrated with Bondi’s local culture. The development has spaces that provide activation all year round, day and night. Boheme invites the community in through a retail lined site link; art by local artists animates the public spaces and hotel areas; while the architecture evokes Bondi’s context through the use of materials, colours, street scale and rhythm.

Retail tenancies activate the Hall Street and O’Brien Street frontages on different levels. A two level through-site link aligned with Chambers Avenue is lined with retail and creates a genuine open air mid-block connection. An outdoor restaurant pavilion with a landscaped roof sits in the courtyard.

The 113 room serviced apartment hotel is located in a three-storey U shaped podium which complies with the DCP. Above the podium there are 44 residential apartments in the four storey volume of the former Halkoah Club with views of Bondi Beach and the neighbourhood. This form is above the Waverley DCP; thus to reduce its visual impact it is setback from the street front and curved to minimise its bulk.

The hotel has a dedicated lobby extending from the street to the outdoor courtyard. A sandstone wall constructed from stone quarried on site during the excavation connects inside to outside, while separating the public courtyard from the hotel lobby & pool.

The podium recalls the masonry context of Bondi Beach using randomly arranged precast panels to create a solid appearance. These panels are pigmented to authentically reflect the pastel colours of Bondi, without resorting to a paint finish. The podium is divided into 12m long coloured volumes relating to the historic subdivision pattern and the streetscape scale and rhythm.

The residential tower is expressed as a glasy, ethereal volume that conceptually floats above the masonry context and scale of Bondi. Its curvaceous form recalls art deco buildings, while reducing its visual mass. Continuous balconies provide solar shading, while glass balustrades extend below the floor slab for additional shading.

Numerous artworks have been incorporated into Boheme’s public spaces, including the through site link, and the carpark. The artworks of Bondi and Sydney based artists were selected to further activate these common spaces.

Boheme’s architectural strategy has enabled it to be fully integrated into the Bondi Beach environment and as a result it has been embraced by the local community as well as tourists as a place to shop, dine, live, stay, or relax.

Philip Vivian
Director, Bates Smart

Michael Bogle reflects on the influence of Stuart Murray and Ken Woolley, and their impact as principals of Ancher, Mortlock, Murray and Woolley.

The loss of Stuart Murray and Ken Woolley in December 2015 lowers the curtain for the original principals of Ancher, Mortlock, Murray & Woolley. Sydney Archer had died in 1979 and Bryce Mortlock followed in 2004. This fabled practice is now integrated into Conrad Gargett Riddel Ancher Mortlock Woolley (CGR AMW).

Stuart Murray studied at Sydney Technical College (STC) where he attended classes led by Henry Pynor, the Melbourne-trained architect once described as by Walter Burley Griffin as “our right hand man from Melbourne”. Pynor must have facilitated Murray’s earliest architectural appointment as an assistant with the W.B. Griffin and Nicholls Sydney practice from 1945-1947. Murray later joined Sydney Ancher’s solo practice as an assistant in 1947, and by 1951 he had become a partner in the re-badged Sydney Ancher & Partners. He was introduced to Ancher (b.1904) after taking coursework under him at the STC.

In the 1930s, the STC’s architecture course was a four-year program that incorporated three years of “Styles in Architecture” (Classical, Renaissance, Late Victorian) that was integrated into the “Architectural Design” studio. Ancher was always vitriolic about “Styles” stating in a 1936 attack “too much time is devoted to a study of the architecture of the past and too little to a study of the present-day trend.” The published record shows, however, that Ancher was very adept in developing and drawing period-based designs for the STC student yearbooks.

Ancher led a rigorously disciplined postwar practice (he was demobilised from the Australian army with the rank of Major) and through several years of European travel, he had been captured by the Franco/German modernist obsession with an architectural system for design. His travelling scholarship report on The Evolution of Modern Architecture confidently stated, “The basis of the modern aesthetic is knowledge and system from which spring all the characteristics of clarity and exactness…” Ancher heretically announced; “There are no really good British architects,” to the Sydney Morning Herald in a 1936 interview.

Bryce Mortlock (b.1921) joined Sydney Ancher & Partners in 1953 after study at Sydney University. He said in a published interview “Syd thought that there were objective rules, although he didn’t know where they came from.” Mortlock, reveling in argument, found himself in opposition to system-based architectural analysis, once describing Le Corbusier as a “nut”. Mortlock later expanded his characterization of “Corb” to “evil”. These issues activated and entertained the office. At Ancher, Mortlock Murray & Woolley’s morning teas, “Syd would down tools and announce the topic for the day,” Mortlock explained. “He would ask, ‘What do you think of this?’ Or ‘What would you do under the circumstances?’ And off we would go.”

When Ken Woolley mentioned he was looking for another position after his stellar career with the NSW Government Architect’s Office (NSW GAO), Mortlock informed Ancher and was immediately told to “Get Him, get him”. He was duly got in 1964 but Ancher soon found Woolley marched to a different drummer. “Syd used to come in and find Ken wasn’t there and ask us about the empty drawing board? … Ken would be out doing something useful for the practice…”, Mortlock observed. With the breadth and depth of his NSW GAO commercial-scale experience and domestic architecture work, Woolley was an ideal fit for the office.

As Mortlock commented, Woolley’s arrival changed the tenor of the office and the Ancher Mortlock Murray & Woolley practice began to grow in new directions. Some years later, Ancher decided to retire and withdrew in 1968-69. The firm began to gather larger commissions, especially within the education industry with New Brutalism buildings drawn from the philosophy of Alison and Peter Smithson at Sydney and Macquarie.

As Saunders and Burke wrote in 1976, “A large portion of the earlier part of Stuart Murray’s career … in the firm was occupied with developing designs which were not initially his… His major works belong to the later years.” It is tempting to see Murray’s design work flowering as Woolley consolidated his presence in the practice and Ancher departed.

Among Murray’s best-known commissions are the Ernst May-inspired Northbourne Avenue housing complex in Canberra of 1963 (with Ancher); the University of Newcastle’s Great Hall (with Woolley) of 1968; and his own 1967 Deepdene development (110 Elizabeth Bay Road), drawing on the precast concrete systems similar to those used by Woolley for his 1955 St Margaret’s Hospital Chapel. Murray had also had exposure to prefabricated concrete construction processes while working in Britain in the late 1940s. Murray had begun withdrawing from the practice c.1970 when he

![The Park Hyatt Hotel in Sydney by Ancher, Mortlock & Woolley.](image-url)
established the North Sydney Planning Consultancy and later practicing solo as Stuart Murray, Architect after 1976.

Unlike Sydney Ancher, Ken Woolley was no systems architect. As he said in a late 2015 interview, “My generation was starting to question the international style and its conclusions.” Some of the earliest critics of modernism’s fascination with system-guided design had also railed against it. “[Architects] must understand the special requirements of each task. We cannot set up systems, we have to start again and again … right from the beginning.” For Woolley, every new building demanded a new solution. The design and planning of the Park Hyatt (1989), Hickson Road by Ancher Mortlock & Woolley is a notable example of Woolley’s problem-solving abilities.

When Woolley began his career under Harry Rembert in the NSW GAO, he and his colleagues, among them, Michael Dysart and Peter Webber, developed an in-house Manifesto of Natural Materialism. Woolley said elements of the manifesto were written but now appear lost. It was the subject of much debate in Rembert’s “Design Room” where the Young Turks of the era were yarded. Woolley describes “directness” in the use of materials as an underlying principle of the manifesto.

In the NSW GAO, Woolley explained, “We set the idea that the run-of-the-mill building that had little structural demand might be entirely brick, with concrete emerging here and there like lintels … Then the next step was that the building started to have spans and they had heights and they had forms that required structure more than brick. So you added the concrete in a more [direct way] and the brick became perhaps an in-fill.”

In his career, Woolley experimented with tilt-slab construction (St Margaret’s Chapel, Surry Hills), enameled steel (chemistry building, Sydney University), copper-alloy cladding (Fisher Library, State Office Building), reinforced concrete (everywhere), steel (Garden Island Missile Launching System building), wood (Agricultural Society Dome, Homebush) and other more traditional materials. Woolley’s new architectural forms and his use of materials always created new content.

Woolley’s contribution to his profession is encyclopaedic and his aptly titled book, Reviewing the Performance: The Design of the Sydney Opera House (2010), his more recent design proposals for a permanent sound shell in Sydney’s Domain (2012) and his evolving radical concepts for a new Opera House concept on Bennelong Point (2014) illustrate a creative mind delighting in the ruminating on architectural problems. The original Ancher, Mortlock, Murray & Woolley solved many architectural problems throughout their original practice and many of their design solutions continue to inform the city’s planning and design.

Michael Bogle
Design Historian

FOOTNOTES
5. Paul Alan Johnson and Susan Lorne-Johnson, eds. Architects of the Middle Third: interviews with New South Wales architects who commenced practice in the 1930s and 1940s, v.4, 1992-1996, p.175
6. Architects of the Middle Third, v.4, p.193
7. Architects of the Middle Third, v.4, p.181
8. Architects of the Middle Third, v.4, p.182
9. Ken Woolley later became acquainted with Alison Smithson in the 1980s.

● The ABC Ultimo Centre by Ancher, Mortlock & Woolley. Photo: Max Dupain.
Although she had been appointed as a lecturer at Sydney University the year before, Jennifer Taylor used often to joke that she and I were “first years” together in 1971. The Dean, Peter Johnson, had assembled an extraordinary team of teachers, from radical theorists to leading practitioners, a group in which Jennifer stood out for her scholarship, warmth and dedication, and for her unusual awareness of the international at a time when Australia was still very much an outpost.

She had returned to Sydney with her family after living and studying in the UK and the US, and lived in a Victorian house with a lovely flowered garden sloping down to the harbour, where, hour after hour, cigarette after cigarette, she carefully and critically supervised the messy pile that was my undergraduate honours thesis.

Over arguments about grammar and meaning, we developed a friendship that lasted for more than 40 years, through shared meals and visits, critiques of work and writing, until her unexpected death late last year.

Uniting a deep understanding of the history and theoretical basis of architectural design in a local and international context, with an avoidance of jargon or abstruse technicality, Jennifer’s teaching, her design studios and her writing possessed an accessibility that was never facile, a humanity that was never simplistic, and a rigour that was never unfair.

Jennifer was instrumental in defining an international position for Australian architecture, cataloguing the now with a deep awareness of the past and what was happening elsewhere. Her work on Sydney modernism and recent Australian architecture, ranging from monographs to broad historical studies, will remain as a major memorial, especially her landmark 1986 publication, Australian Architecture Since 1960, the careful taxonomy of which remains the most successful analysis of our own recent architectural development.

Jennifer is quoted as saying “You do well in things that you really love.”1 Her genuine love for architecture and for all of the people who created and enjoyed it was a defining aspect of her life, and there is no doubt that she did extraordinarily well at her chosen job. She is missed by us all.

Peter Tonkin
Director, Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Architects

Architect Jennifer Taylor, widely published scholar, highly acclaimed teacher and critic of international standing, returned to Queensland from Sydney in 1998 to take up her appointment as Adjunct Professor at the School of Architecture at Queensland University of Technology. In this post, Jennifer’s generous spirit, exacting standards and informed world view continued to frame Australian architecture for us in the broader regional context of the Asia Pacific.

Jennifer’s contextual insights began in the process of gaining two architectural degrees at Washington University, USA in the late 1960s where she took a course by Professor Teiji Ito on the architecture of the Japanese house and garden. This course contributed to her interest in Japan, Asia and the Pacific, where she travelled extensively for research after returning to Sydney in 1970.

In the 1970s she was awarded Two Japan Foundation Professional Fellowships and in 1975 met Fumihiko Maki who became her mentor while she undertook research work in Japan. During this period she also introduced architects from Japan and China to students and architects in Australia. Following publications in the 1980s and 1990s, Jennifer’s book Fumihiko Maki: Space / City / Order / Making was published in 2003.

Her contribution of the section about Oceania in World Architecture 1900-2000: A Critical Mosaic, Volume 10, was published in 1999 and in the process of writing revealed the lack of available research on architecture in the Pacific region, stimulating her appetite for a new challenge. In 2003 Jennifer, together with co-author James Connor, began the pioneering fieldwork in the South Pacific with extended visits to each of the island countries. They discovered many buildings were in a fragile condition and archival material was rare or unavailable, requiring intensive, on-site documentation and interviews. After many years of work, Jennifer and James’ Architecture in the South Pacific: The Ocean of Islands was published in 2014. This work is both a highly significant contribution to the culture of the region and adds to the recording of world architecture.

Jennifer should have the last words here. In the year before she died Jennifer summarised the overarching vision for her architectural scholarship, teaching and practice in a recent interview by Jan Howlin:

“Australia must recognize where it is in the world,” she says. “We probably have the richest mixing pot of anywhere in the world. We have European heritage, Aboriginal heritage, South-East Asian heritage and South Pacific heritage, and it seems to me that out of this should grow a wonderful and special architecture”.2

Brit Andresen
Architect LFRAIA
Emeritus Professor, The University of Queensland

FOOTNOTES
1. Interview by Jan Howlin, Indesignlive website
2. Ibid
Innovative solutions from Hunter Douglas Architectural Products Australia have been leveraged to enhance a range of ground-breaking projects across the country.

Perth Airport’s Qantas Terminal 4, Westfield Chatswood (NSW) and Mirvac’s new Harold Park residential redevelopment (NSW) have all harnessed solutions from Hunter Douglas Architectural Products to achieve leading edge outcomes, Wolfgang Hemmer, Hunter Douglas Commercial General Manager - Australia & New Zealand, confirmed.

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