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*Australians don't need architecture, they should be outside merging with the land*¹

Urtzi Grau &
Guillermo Fernández-
Abascal

1. Peter Brew's essay "Australians Don't Need Piazzas, They Should be Home Watching TV," in Doug Evans (ed), *Aardvark: The RMIT Guide to Contemporary Melbourne Architecture* (Melbourne: Department of Architecture, RMIT, 1992), 10.

2. Other practices including 227768c, MAPA, Archer Office, Bloxas, Future Method, Searle x Waldron, Bennett & Trimble, WoWoWa, Archival, Architecture Architecture or Supercontext were in the initial long line-up.

Sydney/Melbourne: Does this rivalry exist? Does it translate into architecture and landscape architecture? And why the hell are two Spanish dudes trying to make a case about it? The reviews, the documents and the essays presented in this book take up these questions, as well as many others.

Let us start with how this project began. In the spring of 2018, we organized a series of dialectical battles between emerging practices:² one from Sydney and one from Melbourne at the UTS School of Architecture. During the semester, Richard Stampton and panovscott, Edition Office and Andrew Burns, AKAS landscape and Mike Hewson, Andrew Power and Other Architects, and Sibling Architecture and Trias all had disorganized conversations based on the following topics: Australian references, first works, global precedents, 'under construction' and a free topic. The initial premise was simple, grounded on the speculation that the most interesting recent periods in Australian architecture had occurred when there were substantial differences in the design approaches of the two cities.

Melbourne's extravagant postmodernism and Sydney's radical minimalism; Melbourne's flamboyant parametricism and Sydney's sensible low-techism – opposed each other and pushed the boundaries of the discipline. However, it was our hypothesis that the new generation of practitioners are responding to the built environment in the same way as each other, even though they have been educated within the context of these oppositions. The series advocated for discussion so that the multiple micro-paradigms reigning in these two cities could be questioned. The differences between the two cities needed to be dissected in order to understand and recover the intellectual tension between them. These disparities, although outdated, understored the Sydney/Melbourne discussion and brought into question the role it plays in Australia's cultural life.

Our persistence led to this publication. It brings together some of the conversations covered in the series and further explores their themes. The illustrated introduction; the ten short reviews; the sixty architectural documents; the twelve commentaries – all of these parts work together to generate an intergenerational narrative (which is probably confusing whilst hopefully being exquisite) of this historical debate – one that may or may not exist any longer. The combination of these different formats overcomes the handicap of the single essay; as a whole the book aims to transmit an ambiguous account of the discussion.

The reviews and documents summarize the lecture series and introduce the work and influences of this new generation of practitioners. It is a surprisingly congruent group that politely refused to put things into crisis during this experiment. Sydney architects generally allowed the buildings to talk for themselves in an 'it is what it is' attitude. The Melbourne firms consistently tried to position their work within wider socio-cultural discourses, but without the forced ugliness of the previous generation, as some of the images in this book can attest to. All of them proved to have a great commitment to

architecture, and we are referring to architecture as something that means more than the construction of shelters.

The short essays that follow are diverse. Many subjects are discussed, tracing the history of this pretentious half-truth debate. Some contributors value the Sydney/Melbourne opposition as a necessary fictional battle strengthening the academic and cultural roots of this isolated land. Yet, others see this discussion as boring, myopic and self-congratulatory – interlocutors point at Brisbane, Hobart, Darwin, Adelaide and beyond in response to this as no duality works – and a provincial one even less. Other writers frame the discussion not around the cities, but around key thinkers in each city who have addressed critical issues affecting both places. Starting with the narrow view of Freeland and continuing with Boyd and Seidler, Corrigan and Murcutt until today. Many participants advocate for an appreciation of the local, referring to both the terrible recent projects produced by foreigners, particularly in Sydney, and the imported oddities that fail to interact with local cultural ecologies. They propose a more hybrid approach to architecture that is able to recognize the criticality of the culture and the geopolitics of this place.

Finally, this overture seems the appropriate space to elaborate on our very own interpretation of the discussion. Let us be honest, one of the motifs of this book is to push our critique of Australian architecture, and the lectures were perhaps only a selfish and initial pretext to push this agenda.

When Kenneth Frampton first visited Australia in 1983, it seemed a good idea to position its architecture in the critical regionalism conversations.³ According to Frampton, Australian architecture was calling for a critical mediation on the forms of modern civilization and of local culture, a mutual deconstruction of universal techniques and regional vernaculars in a way similar to what was taking place in the Nordic countries or Spain. A simple vernacular architecture with a strong relationship with nature allowed him to offer a simple critique that has dominated the Sydney discourse since then. Yet, in Melbourne, the increasing influence of Venturi seemed to be the only way to respond to the savage arrival of postmodernism at that time. In this short essay, we would like to offer an alternative reading of that period (starting from the 70s) as an attempt at a different understanding of the present condition.

In order to pursue this task, we will opportunistically use our position as visitors, in a way similar to Frampton, as maybe only outsiders are able to pick up certain threads of Australian culture. To sustain some of our considerations, we will manipulate some of the arguments of the book's contributors and many other experts deeply involved in the architectural discussions of this country.⁴ For us, there is no distinction between the attitude of Glenn Murcutt and Edmond and Corrigan, nor that of Richard Leplastrier and ARM. All of them are merely responding to their immediate context, and whether the formalization is simple or complex, rendered white or colorfully painted, their architecture is the result of close attention.

3. Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in Hal Foster (ed.) *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Post-Modern Culture* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983).

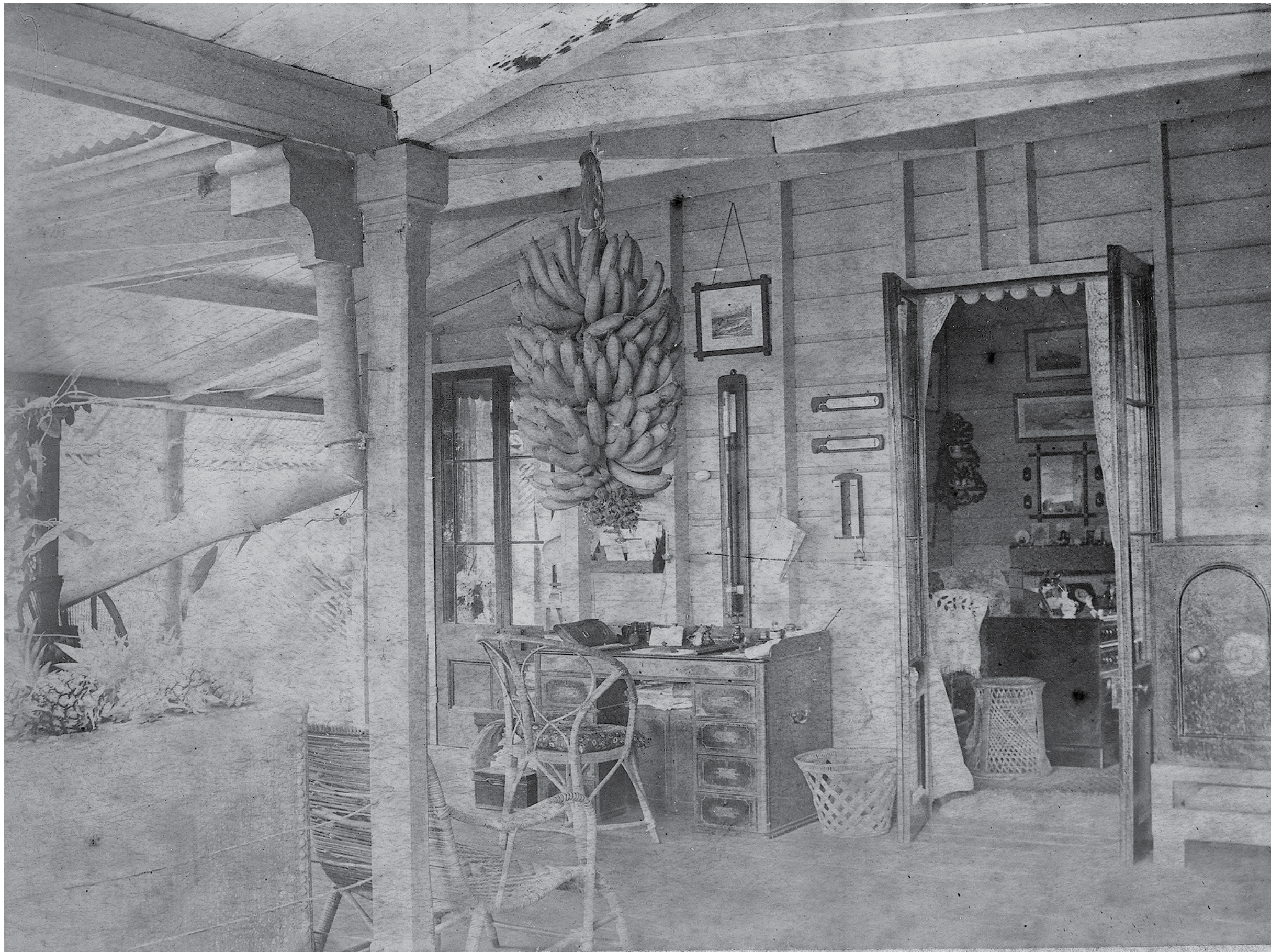
Starting with the geological formation of both cities: their land and vegetation are different, and, accordingly, so is their architecture. Sydney's harbours and coastal topography is beautifully abrupt while Melbourne's flatness is endless; Sydney chaotically looks for the best spot in the bay while Melbourne uses a grid as a planning tool. When we zoom in, we realize Sydney's buildings do not need to stand out, that they can merge with their ever-present landscape, as the best works of the Sydney School do. However, Melbourne's flatness require an urban attention with a strong aesthetic position, as the Lyons buildings show. We are also alluding to the four degree difference in latitude from one city to the other, which allows Sydney's constructions to propose enjoyable semi-outdoor spaces open to the landscape, while Melbourne focuses on its interiors punctuated with internal streets and courtyards. Nevertheless, in both cities the finest examples maximize their relation to the environment.

Of course, we are using the term 'context' broadly to include material culture, as well as political and financial influences. Murcutt's use of vernacular structures and materials linked to rural Australia is as rooted in this country as the tiles, bricks and metal sheets applied by his Melbourne colleagues. Murcutt's painting wood to simulate metal in the Magney House (1984) is as postmodern as generating a house using a distorted photocopy or Boyd's Neptune's Fishbowl (1970) (yes, he was also a postmodernist!). Both the Melbourne and Sydney architects' use of references goes beyond the local banal vernacular towards sophisticated global allusions. This can be obvious, like when ARM quotes Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe in different buildings, or subtle, as in the Miesian arrangements of Murcutt plans or the Japanese influence of Lepplastrier's work. Similarly, in both cities, architecture has been too tied to the financial and political elites. The houses of the Sydney Northern Beaches have provided the perfect scenario for the Sydney School 'good life' experiments while university buildings in Melbourne deal the multicultural city. The architectural sphere has ignored for too long its social aspects; suburbia, affordability, environmental concerns, the migration crisis, indigeneity, multiculturalism and queer identity.

In recent history the Sydney/Melbourne tension has been a productive construction for architectural debate in Australia. This intellectual inquietude was particularly useful for the protagonists (antagonists) but the current state of affairs suggests that if the Sydney/Melbourne discussion is to persist at all, it must engage in some of the contemporary challenges that this land and the world face. Free, but aware of the dominant trains of Western thought, this new generation of practitioners needs to engage optimistically with a greater diversity of perspectives including their long, local aboriginal history, new cosmopolitical understandings of this rich environment and the realization that Australia is a multicultural part of the Indo-Pacific region. It is this land's time, at the centre of a global shift in both economy and culture; it is the perfect testing ground for a post-anthropocene architecture, where strange hybrids could grow.

4. We would like to thank the generous contributions of Tristen Harwood, Desley Luscombe, Naomi Stead, Louisa King, Andrew Leach, Gerard Reinmuth, Leon van Schaik, Philip Goad, Carey Lyon, Luke Tipene, Ian Moore, Howard Ragatt, John Wardle, Angelo Candalepas and Baracco Wright. We would also like to acknowledge the work of Sandra Kaji-O'Grady, Elizabeth Farrelly, Rory Hyde, and Conrad Hamann whose words have been a reference.





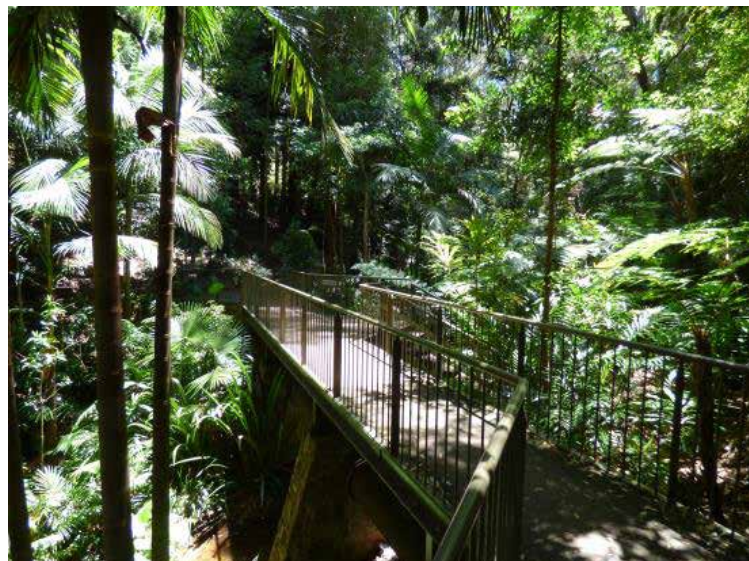
An island has the very particular capacity to be both of its place and to be entirely apart from it, they manage to be wholly within, but do not belong to their context. Throughout any territory Islands exist as elsewhere sites, simultaneously balancing this complex balance of connectivity and isolation. In the case of the finely crafted vessel that is Australia House we find an architecture as island within a multitude of seas.

The singular structure located within the Niigata Prefecture of Japan, and within the Echigo-Tsumari Art Field, houses a small gallery, artist studio and residence for Australian artists to produce work in collaboration with Japanese communities.

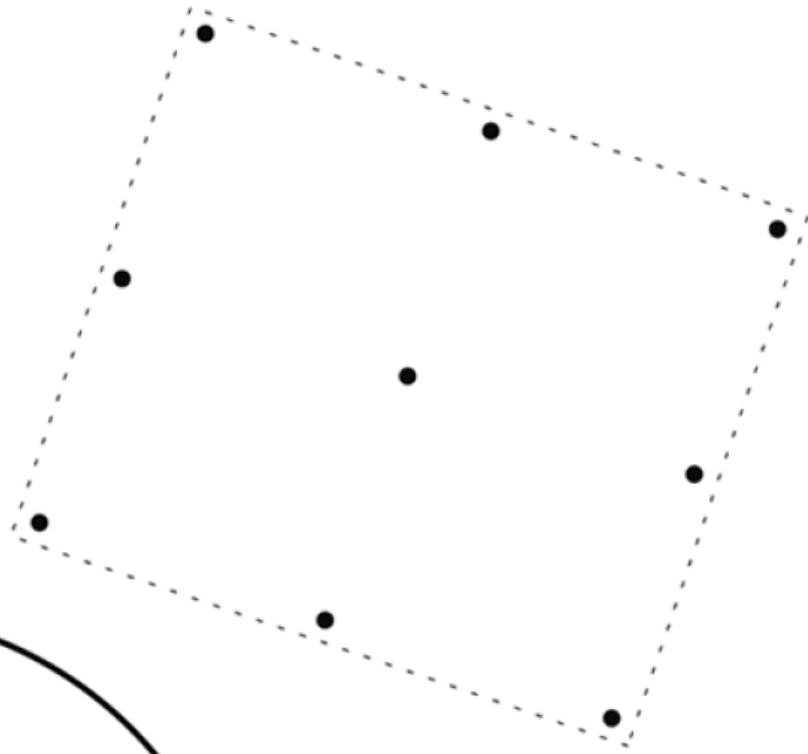
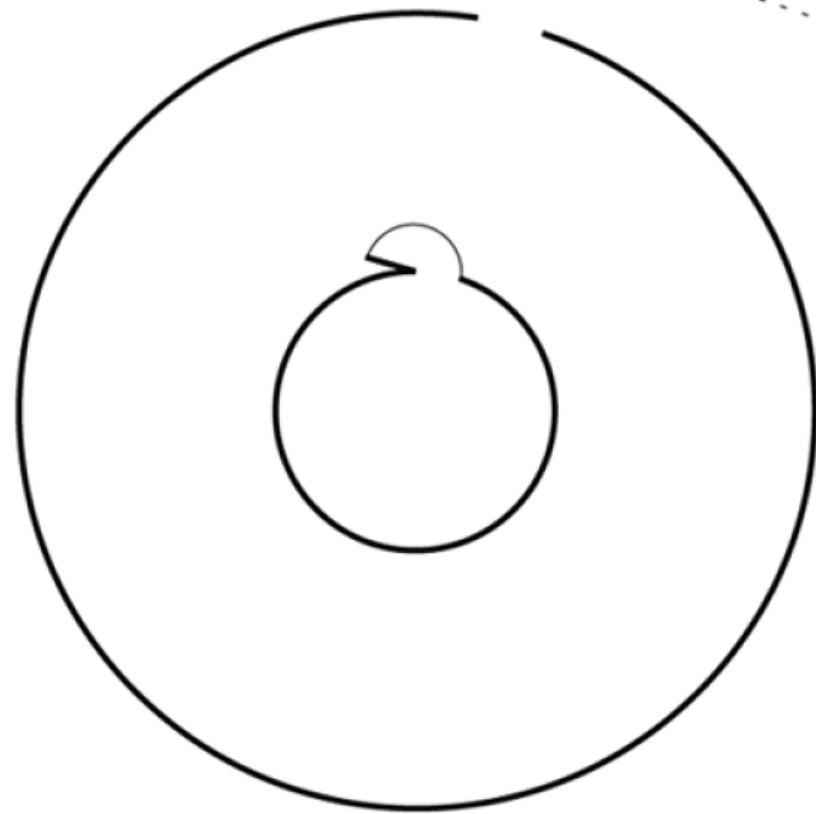
Designed and reborn after the trauma of its own death, replacing a 100-year-old farmhouse that served the same role and which collapsed during strong earthquake aftershock, the building now can be understood as a shapeshifter of sorts as it oscillates between an array of roles and personas. It offers a civic presence while retaining its domesticity; it is comfortably both public and private; the immersive and soft internal Cedar wood palette is appropriately offset by the charred and deep black Cedar exterior which also suggests a resilience and toughening born of the knowledge of its own previous destruction.

However, the most successful and perhaps the most intangible act of duality is how succinctly the building appears to comfort and speak through its formal and spatial language to the cultural gaze from both an Australian and a Japanese perspective. In this way the project stands as an island but somehow also as a bridge between the two countries; existing in multiple states simultaneously and harbouring what Peter Sloterdijk perhaps would call the phenomenology of spatial plurality.

The neon glowing heart of this island then is artist Brooke Andrew's work 'Mountain Home - dhirrayn ngurang' which speaks to each visitor of the small building's true capacity, as it splits and expands both itself and its site into an equal pair of mirrored infinities. It's hard to think of a more suitable expression of this project's deeply generous and considered intent.



Sir No Beard



Untitled
panovscott on Richard Stampton

This is a short text made while reflecting on a photograph by Rory Gardiner of Bush Camp 1, a project by Richard Stampton Architect located on the south coast of Victoria. We must limit our consideration in this manner because we have not experienced the project in person, nor had much more than a brief conversation with Richard about it.

It is a beautiful image, arresting at first glance in the way that the thing made is within the place. We think of the glint of a mirror on the far ridge across a gully while deep in the bush. An alien beauty, improbable and fleeting.

But the thing made is not an effect of light. It is an equilateral triangle, with 60 degrees at each angle. Three lines lock together in a manner known since Euclid to be the most structurally robust of elements.

Beyond, and in front there is the vegetation of our place, the banksia men of childhood, the middle name of our second son. This scrappy composition, scribbled lines, is in movement and so soft focus. The shadow below the form is carefully obfuscated to flatten the contrast of the frame and to emphasize the lightness of the structure. The dark mass of the banksia to the north is part of the building. It offers shading.

The architecture is transparent, a prism. Through the form, the landscape can be seen. There is a slight ghosting of the interior via reflection, the bedding and banksia beyond is doubled, maybe magnified.

We are reminded of Glenn Murcutt's Ball Eastaway house.

The project is larger and more complex than the photograph suggests. There are other structures made in a similar manner, placed independently to define a loose and open manner of habitation.

But larger again, the architect is working with his client to carefully repair the surrounding farmland via revegetation. This manner of making both figure and ground is for us the offering of the architecture. In one direction establishing the most lithe of structures and in the other remaking the land in an ancient tradition.









Untitled

Alistair Kirkpatrick on Mike Hewson

At a time of rapid population growth and escalating climate change landscape architects need to let go of the idea of pattern or narrative generated landscapes. Instead landscapes need to be designed to be highly resilient by distorting the current hierarchy of form generation placing the needs of vegetation on top rather than a post-production afterthought. Our discipline and our educational institutes want to distance landscape architectural practice from horticulture and science and attach instead to architecture but in doing this we lose our greatest dynamic material with which to design.

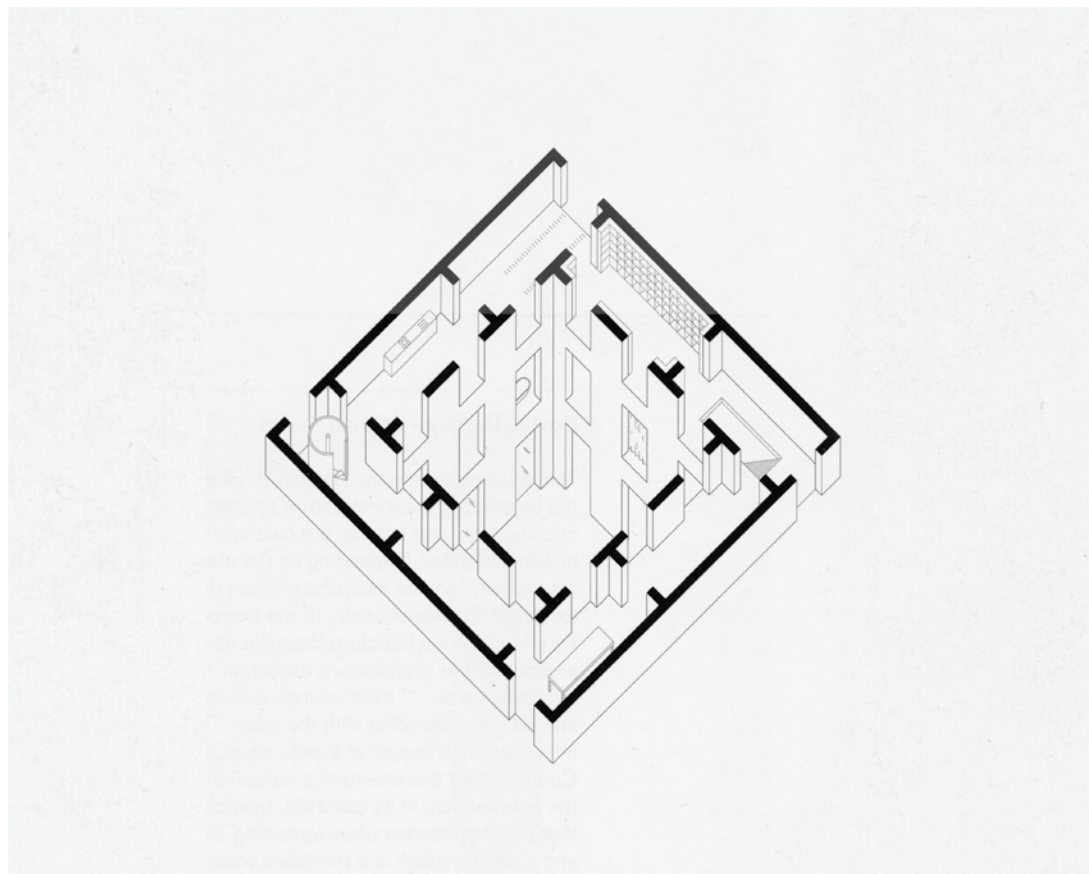
Landscape architects should be developing ways of designing through and with time. In order to facilitate this, we need to be invited to the table and the beginning of the design process not at the end to 'make it green'. We should be thinking of landscapes and processes not objects and we need to recognise the critically important role that maintenance plays in developing vegetated form. Currently we allocate the majority of the budget on the built form then hand over the nurturing of the living organisms to a maintenance team that generally have no horticultural training and even when they do are not allocated the resources to do anything but mow and spray. If we embrace designing with ecological succession, we can develop a new practice that we result in higher quality and more resilient landscapes that are equipped to thrive in a state of flux. Time and subtlety do not necessarily make for sexy drone shots, but they do create working dynamic and resilient landscapes.

Mike Hewson's art work in Crown Street Mall in Wollongong is a fascinating project when critiqued through the aforementioned theoretical position. The vegetation is not in any way an afterthought or 'greening' but rather the star of the



art work that requires huge amounts of engineering to achieve the artifice. As Mike's project is a piece of art rather than a landscape the way it operates over time differs so in this case the static nature of the piece becomes an interesting critique of the way people view vegetation as objects. Mike's artwork raises the issues of hierarchy in design and planning, the artwork would never have been approved in a public space if it was classified as a landscape architectural project. Landscape architects are often rebranding themselves as artists to be able to design anything in the public realm that is Avant guard or challenging in any way.



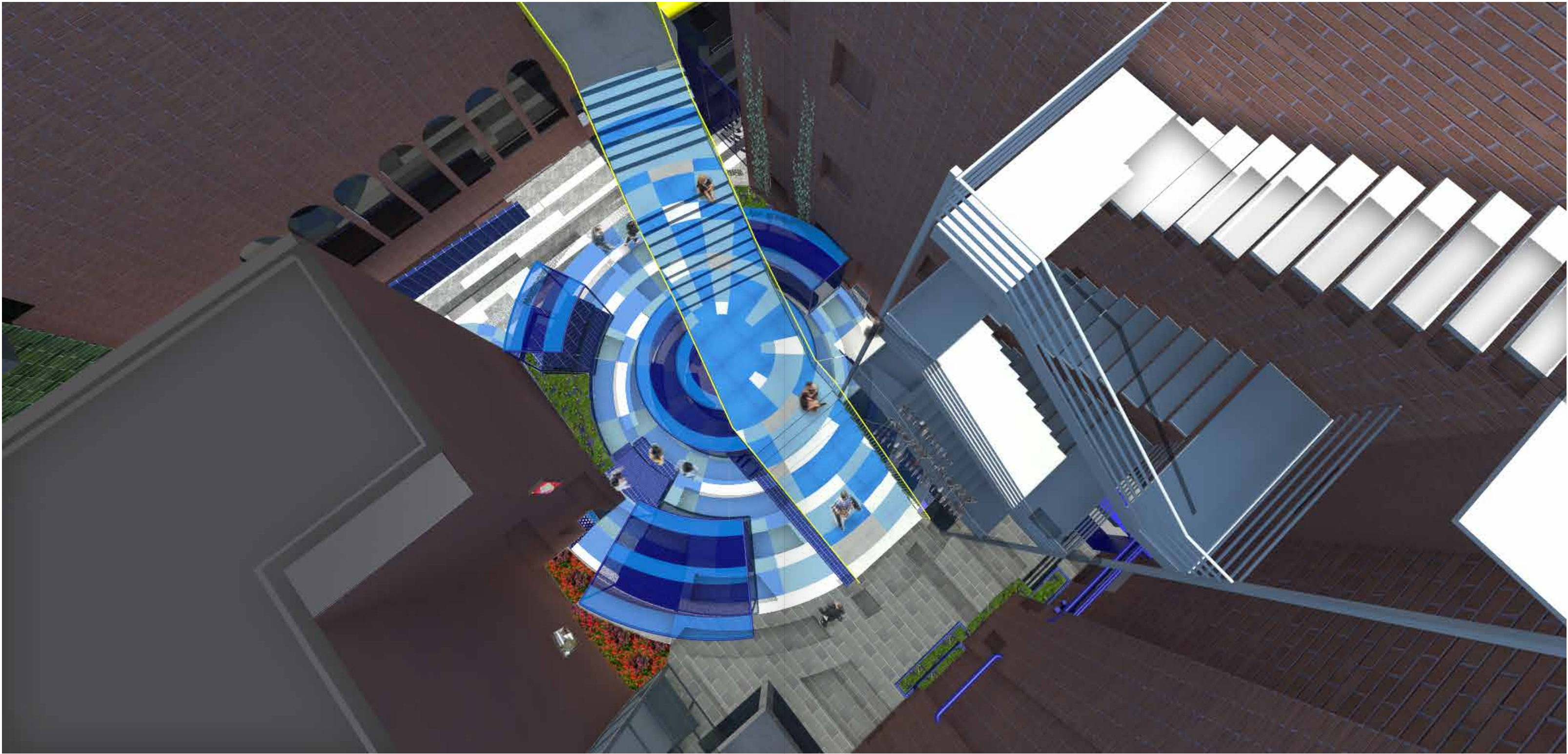


Sibling Architecture: New Agency Exhibition, RMIT 2018
Casey Briant (Trias) on Sibling Architecture

Architecture has often been championed by the sole genius. Single director practices developing a lineage of ideas through introspective design development. The practice and projects of Sibling Architecture show another way – a studio built on a network of overlapping thoughts, histories, agendas, backgrounds and experiences – that ultimately lead to a complex grid of architectural thought. Directing many minds towards a unified built form is often hard, but the result richer for the challenge.

Take the New Agency exhibition and research project at RMIT in 2018. This project seeks to address aging in Australia and asks participants how they want to grow old. A simple question with complex connotations. How to entice participants to assemble and experience an exhibition? How to engage an audience through the medium of design to collect data and opinions? How to ask audiences to question their own future? How to frame these issues within architecture – a medium with which is often confused for opulence, but which we might be the tool to solve this problem?

Who better to design such provocations than a studio founded on participation? Who better to provide an engaging interface for the public than a group who can draw on the multitude of director's life stories and experiences? Who better to distil complex and ranging data than a group used to mediating and distilling each other's design agendas? Sibling are so well equipped to engage socially with design as it is a fundamental part of their practice.







Suburban Interior
David Neustein (Other Architects) on Andrew Power

For today's architect, Australian suburbia might as well be the vast inland sea imagined by early white explorers, with the more than 80% of Australians who inhabit our suburban interior seen as some remote and exotic race.

It wasn't always so. In the mid-twentieth century, leading Australian architects attempted brave forays into mass-produced suburban housing. In fact, the historical divide between Melbourne and Sydney architects likely originates in subtly different attitudes and approaches to the suburbs: whereas Robin Boyd established the Small Homes Service to improve the standard of Melbourne's ordinary suburban bungalows, Ken Woolley's project homes for Pettit + Sevitt were adapted to exceptional Sydney sites.

In the 1970s this intercity divide between the ordinary and the exceptional reached its apotheosis with the rise of Melbourne architects Edmond and Corrigan. A disciple of Robert Venturi, Peter Corrigan had the big idea of not just bringing architecture to suburbia but bringing suburban aesthetics to architecture. Indeed, Edmond and Corrigan's early work was so convincingly camouflaged that John Gollings had to radically alter his photographs - with colour-enhanced twilights and huge superimposed characters looming in the foreground - in order to distinguish the new work from its suburban surroundings.



Andrew Power's recent House with a Guest Room approaches suburbia from a different angle. This is suburbia imagined not from the outside in, but the inside out. Power designed the house for his own parents and built and photographed the project himself shortly after his return from Brussels, where he worked for Office Kersten Geers David Van Severen. In his sincere attempt to build a luxurious Belgian villa on a modest Australian budget, Power has captured something essential about the aspirations and realities of suburban life.

A modestly sized, single storey dwelling located in the type of small coastal town favoured by retirees, House with a Guest Room comprises a one-bedroom residence and adjoining guest suite. Occupants and guests are separated by an open air-courtyard and connected via a verandah. Raised off the ground on timber posts, the house has an expressed lightweight frame clad in fibre cement sheeting, with pearlescent coffered ceilings. The house is strictly-proportioned, formal and even a little grand, but its details and furnishings are eclectic and ad-hoc. There is only enough red book-matched marble to cover part of the bathroom, pendant lights hang on exposed cords, curved downpipes masquerade as arched corbels and the rafters revealed above the soffit-line are coloured termite-proof green.

House with a Guest Room is not an outsider's impression of a typical suburban house, but an intimate portrait of domestic rituals and routines. In marrying the tensions between utility and grandeur, ordinary and exceptional, Power proves that suburban housing can make for fertile territory. But those who follow his lead might want to tread carefully: if architects truly want to engage with suburbia, they must be prepared to fall in love.

Essays

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Indigenous rangers patrol northern coastlines, surveilling for 'biosecurity threats'. The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources frames the 10,000 kilometre coastline that they monitor as a 'frontline', which must be guarded from fugitive foreign animal and plant diseases to preserve the \$60 billion agricultural industry.

Indigenous peoples recruited into the Indigenous Rangers network, the Australian government says, contribute an intimate knowledge of land and waterways. Yet this knowledge, which is interwoven through indigenous lifeworlds and has been developed over thousands of years, holds only instrumental value to the nation state. Although the primary 'threat' to indigenous land practices is the settler state and the agricultural industry, indigenous peoples are compelled to join the Indigenous Rangers network to earn a living. In turn, their knowledge is operationalised to maintain the very settler-colonial borders that produce their dispossession. Such a militarisation of indigenous peoples devalues and erodes indigenous knowledge and practices in service of the settler state. At the same time, such programs are promoted as the inverse, as 'accepting' of indigenous lifeworlds, because the market has instrumentalised them.

In Melbourne and Sydney, universities hire very few indigenous people and do so to incorporate indigenous knowledge into their architecture and design departments, as well as other disciplines. Universities operate established methods of knowledge extraction – research is done on indigenous people and practices, mostly by settler academics, who interpret the knowledge into coursework and research outputs – perpetuating an extractive logic that renders actual indigenous people redundant. Like the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, the university sets the measures of value for indigenous knowledge, which typically means that indigenous knowledge is considered valuable when it can be labelled and repackaged as subject or research outcome.

Staging a competition between the dizygotic twins, Melbourne and Sydney, calls to mind a desire to constantly renarrativise the rivalry between the two colonies in contemporary terms. The architecture of both these cities continues to function as a material and discursive process of settler-colonial place-taking. Here, indigenous knowledge and practices are valued as the flair that adds a semblance of uniqueness to the architecture of these cities. For this reason, as an indigenous person writing in the field of architecture, I'm more interested in creating anti-valuable excretions than adding an 'indigenous perspective', which can be easily appropriated by state or privately run institutions.

Consider the double meaning of the word 'pretence'. It has negative connotations these days, of pretentiousness and affectation and stuck-uppery, also of fabrication, falsity, deceit. But earlier and at base it is about making a claim, laying a claim to something – of having a pretence in the sense of a pre-text, a pre-supposition about what the thing to come could be. This might be a claim for what something (architecture?) could conceivably aspire to.

By those outside their ilk, architects, in general, are considered pretentious. Is this justified?

It is a commonplace to say that Melbourne architectural culture is pretentious in that it postures and puts on airs, that it is overly intellectual and full of its own ugliness and artifice, that despite all the supposed jollity it takes itself way too seriously. It is equally a commonplace to say that Sydney architectural culture is pretentious in a different way – that it is shallow and fey and obsessed with tectonic craft and beauty, that it is an instrument of money-laundering, that it is a subordinate branch of the real estate industry, that it does nothing but materialise a good-life lifestyle.

It's true that commonplaces are dull and should be disregarded. It's true they are received ideas and only bear serious consideration as myths.

But still: the architectural culture of a given place (a city? Sydney, perhaps, or Melbourne?) sets out certain pretences about what built projects can do and be in that place – certain shared beliefs and ambitions and ideas. These ideas can be tectonic, stylistic, aesthetic, ideological, political, theoretical – whatever. But they emerge from that culture, like fungus emerges from rotting wood.

In these terms, and rather perversely, pretence is both necessary and good – it sets out the pre-suppositions, the presumptions, the rules of the game, within which an architectural culture operates – and for what that culture can produce. I say: bring on the pretence, the ambition, the claim for architecture; and its various forms in various places, distinct to the culture from which it arises.

Sydney: Melbourne,
an account of an
architectural misfit
Desley Luscombe

1. L. Van Schaik, "Province and Metropolis", AA Files 14 (1981), pp. 48-53; L. Van Schaik, "Province and Metropolis II: A discourse on the local and the universal, the tribal and the international, and their significance for architecture and the city", in R. Middleton, ed., *Architectural Associations: The Idea of the City*, Cambridge Mass., MIT and AA London, 1996, pp. 156-177; and, L. Van Schaik, "Modernism and Contemporaneity in Architecture: Peripheries and Centres", W. Lim and J. Chang, *Non West Modernist Past: On Architecture and Modernities*, Singapore, World Sci., Pub., 2012, pp. 47-58.

2. L. Van Schaik, "Province and Metropolis II," *Ibid*, p. 158.

3. L. Van Schaik, "Modernism and Contemporaneity in Architecture," *Ibid*, p. 53.

Understanding of a lack of professional fit with Sydney's architectural fraternity relied on three articles by Leon Van Schaik from 1981, 1996 and 2012 and discussions had with students and architects in the subject "Recent Australian Architecture" that I led in the early 1990s.¹

I had always been fascinated with the architecture of Melbourne and each year would drive (I have a bus licence) my students to Melbourne to meet a series of architects, have them explain their recent work, and discuss their approaches. It was an intense week that followed a lecture series and student presentations on the architecture of each city. For my students as well as myself this was a time to lap up the shear difference that a city's architecture and architectural fraternity provided an architectural eye and mind. We met the likes of Peter Corrigan, Norman Day, Howard Raggatt, Ian MacDougall, 6 Degrees, Peter Elliot, Ivan Rijavec, Nonda Katsalidis, Greg Burgess, and Barry Marshall. We met these architects as their younger selves, young architects who were attempting as I was to negotiate the profession of architecture at a time when the dominance of the Modern had been firmly replaced by the Postmodern, and issues of language and Deconstruction were hovering like a storm around the world.

It was amongst these long discussions that an interest in the writing of Leon Van Schaik took hold. His articles approached the issues related to Australian architecture in a very distinct way for that period. His explanation of Australian architecture was couched in a consideration of conceptual opposites including "Province and Metropolis" and "Centre and Periphery". Rather than trot out the sequence from Rome to England to Australia in architectural formalism Van Schaik questioned the symbiotic relationality of a metropolis and a province. He concluded a role for the province saying, "if in this symbiosis the metropolis can be characterised as the repository of thought, then the province is the crucible."² The terms metropolis and province had transformed into intellectual constructs for Van Schaik rather than locational or stylistic devices deployed to sequence an evolution. To see a purpose for the periphery outside that of absorber of truths was enlivening.

At one point he concludes by claiming,

"We can finally see that 'Peripherality' is the condition that arises when those working in their Province locate a Metropolis in which they seek validation . . . We can also see that a Metropolis now consists not of a 'Centre', but of the best possible arena for a conversation about your own work. . . . For each of us, our 'Province' is where we develop our individual positions. . . . A Metropolis has to be . . . characterised by the vigorous interaction."³

Perhaps our practice in architecture has simply misplaced its idea of Metropolis? Van Schaik then goes on to explain how the stories of lineage in Melbourne and Sydney had developed a contemporary

understanding of architecture that had resulted in very different approaches to the concept of "culture", "metropolis" and "periphery". Summarising, he makes the claim, "Arguably the cultural capital they [Boyd and Grounds] created is the platform which the current independence of Melbourne's architectural culture arises . . . Sydney by contrast seems in thrall to the One True Path of the Modern."⁴ Rather than be called to defend the context of my own practice I could only agree. Melbourne always seemed to be open to debate and concepts of the 'new' and 'shocking' that reinforce a negation that easy apprehensions of order, hierarchy and form were our true aim as architects. There was a certain suffocation in Sydney, its buildings, and its Tusculum Club of the RAlA (of which I too was a member). Removing many of these shackles Van Schaik's vision powerfully introduced ways of thinking that enabled an understanding of why the architecture undertaken with my partner Leo Campbell did not fit a Sydney environment and why I was so attracted by Melbourne's radicality and risk taking. The release underpinning Van Shaik's articles was that we could seek a new "Metropolis."

While I did not believe all I read, what struck accord in Van Schaik's work with the broader personal reflections of architectural practice was how rigidly Sydney architects seem to follow a certain kind of evolutionary rationalism: that we too would look to the Colonial heritage of the Motherland to replicate its understandings of worth and cultural value. This was the education I had been delivered and one that I found ill-fitting. I began to question whether this notion of homage to particular precedents was because of an architectural insecurity – the repetition of history that considered a source and an effect mode of operation as necessary. In Sydney there was a devotion to the grid and abstract forms embedded in the work of the rising importance of Glenn Murcutt and others, later including Richard Johnson and Ian Moore. This Sydney type, founded its intellectual 'centre' or 'metropolis' in mainstream Modern practices that we could easily point to. In the stories that architects retold it was this Modernity that was present in what was valued.

Opposite this was the incomprehensibility of Melbourne's new architecture. One that focused as much on the iconography of a dream state as it did on the history of the present. Their architects freely spoke of urban ideals founded on concepts of New Jerusalem, bondage, pixilation, and contemporary society's repetition of domestic enslavement in its image of a house. It was as though the Doug Anthony Allstars had turned their mind to architecture. While Van Schaik saw Melbourne architecture as having sources in Louis Kahn, the Case Study Houses of North America and Wright translated through Boyd, Grounds and others, his explanations at times hardly convince. He too seemed enamoured by evolution. However, what he recognised in their work was an openness to concepts of the "other" in terms of architectural design. The architectural discussions of Melbourne, contemporaneous with our visits, delivered a broad-ranging unearthing of questions about architectural spatiality, validity

of its forms and the potentials of new architectonic meaning. These were discussions that enabled change in the city's architectural forms. Buildings in this city and its suburbs became symbolically charged with new cultural experimentations and visions, almost by stealth when no one was really looking. This architecture that appeared during the 90s and noughties in Melbourne aimed to critique the values and visual ideologies of powerful players in urban politics. Were these the controls that had let slip, just for a few years? By comparison Sydney always felt well mannered, decorous and a little boring. Like only a few others in Sydney we yearned for the freedom that we saw in our neighbouring cities where architects could use their intellect for change through argument and experimentation. Like in a cartoon by Michael Leunig, our Metropolis found itself in intellectual contexts outside the rigid hegemony of Sydney even if this became very dream-like. Continuing to rub up against the Sydney fraternity has also served a purpose as it has matured into a sense of otherness that continues to question norms in favour of the experimental.

Much is made of genealogy. Hardly a generation ago: the Griffins, Seidler, Boyd, Woolley, Jackson, Le pPlastrier, Murcutt, Edmond and Corrigan, ARM, prominent among others, cropped-up like staples nourishing and binding the documents of Australian architecture. All were diagrammed into a hereditary structure by diligent scholars digging up roots to Central Europe, Chicago, Cambridge, Scandinavia, Japan, California, Philadelphia But genetic manipulation, commonplace in contemporary architectural biography, diminishes – by multiplication – genealogical returns. Tracing strains increasingly strains traces. When sampling and transformation are easy and rampant, focus must shift from inheritance and mutation to selection, which cultural invention inevitably factors. As this book suggests, the tales of Sydney and Melbourne have gained a degree of selective autonomy, their specific evolutionary origins and lineages notwithstanding. But these claims no longer correspond to current stakes.

The salience of the Sydney/Melbourne divide has been its concentrated precipitation of transformations fundamental to recent architectural culture: In the interval between the Bicentennial and the Centenary of Federation, global recognition (a notion which itself transformed during this time, from ‘making it’ on some distant world-stage to an instantaneously shared global culture) of Australian architecture passed from Murcutt the noble and heroic individual to Melbourne the collective experiment. The rivalry was no longer just a local concern, even if its poles, which delineate a tension between nature and artifice, purity and mutation, truth and multiplicity, were born as defense of and reaction to a territorial ideology.

That territorial vantage – conceived beneath the exclusive ridge-line circumscribing Sydney harbor – divided the continent into two kinds of settlement: picturesque loci, each a naturally radiant vision, isolated from the corrupted expanse of an incomprehensibly flat and seemingly unending suburban ugliness. Sydney ideology was crafted on the leeward side, its works rational, self-effacing, often secluded and private phenomenal experiences directed by a topographic view. ‘Sydney,’ so conceived, is an archipelago of sequestered islands: pockets of unspoiled natural rights around bays, beaches, and river valleys from Port Douglas to Margaret River. The rest is ‘Melbourne,’ a forgotten netherworld of fabricated fictions, fallen and fecund like a spilled and fermenting petri dish. Where plein-air perspectives of billowing white sails were out of reach, ‘Melbourne’ architects embraced their lot, untethering a Dionysian carnival of colorful, faceted, figured and shaped ‘kites,’ vibrant texts and textures, woven to complicate the gridded colonial hierarchy into a mutable topology of collective yarns.

But the shifting – indigenous and offshore – winds that have buoyed the Melbourne experiment are proving volatile. Suburban populism has a nostalgically jingoistic and racist odor. Stories from country are one thing, fictions in the post-truth era another. The digital technologies of the neoliberal attention economy are being cast by a

new, more-skeptical generation into post-digital history. Meanwhile, the contours of the old divide have eroded: The density shock-wave, a cultural and physical transformation as extraordinary as it was necessary, is depositing a realm in the Australian city neither pristine nor corporate, neither campus (outposts of both camps) nor suburb. The affordability crisis is exposing and rearranging ideologically-suppressed class differences. Longstanding social condensers wither as new social spaces gouge. Cosmopolitanism is no longer exceptional. Ownership is now a privilege, let alone the detached quarter acre or Enlightenment view. Sydney School huts are poised above unnaturally rising oceans on increasingly precarious political-economic escarpments, while the media-wave long ago overwhelmed Seidlerian skyscrapers, washing away their brise-soleil, staining their white surfaces, and filling their pristine foyers with programmatic jetsam. Gehry made it entirely clear that Utzon’s gathered shells, always a commodified screen, were never the archaeological exposition of an ancient monument that Sydney ideology purported it to be.

Sydney made myth appear found. Melbourne embraced fictions explicitly. In the face of contemporary realities, neither tale flies. Neither quite discovered nor imagined, we need to draw new positions with recalibrated contours. Maybe they’ll nominally accrue to a ‘Sydney’ or a ‘Melbourne’ ... or a ‘Brisbane’ or a ‘Perth.’ But I doubt it.

The architecture cultures of Melbourne and Sydney are not the same and never will be. The ground underfoot is different, so are the trees. Sydney's beguiling landscape and ever-present panorama are different from Melbourne's flat, dull plain that cries out for urban attention and aesthetic position. Sydney is beautiful, Melbourne is not. Sydney ignores its suburbs, Melbourne can't. Sydney has too much money, Melbourne hasn't enough. Sydney is proudly international, Melbourne is proudly parochial: Sydney references the globe, Melbourne references itself. Sydney reveres its elders, Melbourne reveres its young. Sydney has responsible environmental regulations for apartments, Melbourne does not. Sydney's architecture schools don't talk to each other, Melbourne's do and bicker usefully. Sydney's practices compete, Melbourne's collaborate - but only after a fashion. Sydney's clays produce ugly colours hence nasty bricks. Melbourne has used up all of her reds and creams and is at a loss materially. Sydney's sandstone is rich and warm, Melbourne's bluestone is grey and stains easily. Sydney never wanted to be postmodern, Melbourne has been postmodern since 1960 but never realised it. Sydney is controlled but shameless, Melbourne is out of control and shameless: both held ransom by the politics of speculation, both eager to deliver history to the jackhammer. Both will regret their lack of vision. Sydney's heroes beat chests over nature and place; Melbourne's brazenly cross boundaries of taste and culture. Both ignore affordability, both brush the social under the carpet. Both architecture cultures step gingerly around indigeneity.

All of these are myths or partial truths. But they are extremely useful half-fiction, half-truths – but only if the profession and successive generations are made aware of them. These myths are the motor of local discourse. They urge a level of criticality that delivers anxiety and the urgency to find a cause, necessary in a climate bereft of political will and at a loss in knowing how to define urban citizenship. We need these myths. If only not to forget that Melbourne and Sydney are just two islands – the largest ones - in a national archipelago of distinct architecture cultures, all wrestling with the same issue: the location of a voice.

While it's true that intellectual tension fuels progressive thought, it may well be more productive to frame this debate less around two cities – and their collective differences – and more around how key thinkers in each are addressing critical issues that affect us both. The most pressing challenge both Sydney and Melbourne face now and into the future is the question of maintaining liveability in the face of unprecedented growth and development.

Beyond the pragmatic, how will our cities support their respective creative cultures, nurturing emerging artists and design practitioners and encouraging their development?

Intellectual tension, then, might best be located in the way our most innovative and determined architects are finding ways to deliver culturally, socially and environmentally sustainable projects. In Melbourne, innovation is often measured through architecture's expressive force and its capacity to convey compelling social narratives.

A story I relayed recently at the World Architecture Festival was that of D.H. Lawrence and his 1922 trip to Australia. He spent 99 days here writing his novel 'Kangaroo', detesting every moment and signing each of his forlorn letters home with: "D.H Lawrence - Upside down at the bottom of the world". It's a phrase that plays into what Geoffrey Blainey termed "the tyranny of distance", and the way our geographical isolation and history have shaped a culture in which so many practices are cultivars of those created elsewhere, adapted to the Australian terrain. Ours is a context that celebrates the rigor of hybridity.

Hybridity also provides an instructive framework for thinking about architecture. In the context of this debate, it relates to how we might investigate exemplars of sustainable design, material innovation and intelligent densification and urban development both within and without Australia and adapt them to our local context.

One of the greatest imperatives for architecture can be found in its ability to nurture community and connection. Certainly, the most exemplary design, whether in education, workplace, the residential sector or urban design finds novel ways to connect people, whether in highly adaptable spaces that support different kinds of interaction, clever co-location, or by creating "in between" spaces in which incidental exchanges can take place.

It could be due to our cold, windy winters, but in Melbourne, our focus on the interiority of a project heightens our interest in novel ways interior spaces can connect with the world outside – thickened, framed, exaggerated, veiled. It is here that the daily rituals and patterns of inhabitation are accelerated. The individual portal becomes entwined with the architecture, the interior like a picturesque landscape precisely tied to experience.

Hybridity, then, becomes a way of understanding architecture's potential to relay multiple narratives, one that takes its starting point from exemplary thinking here and in other places but reimagines these ideas to work within a new geography and social context.

The truth about cities and their processors of production in that they go on at varying speeds, some slow and some fast, slow is not better than fast, likewise large not better than small. They are both fast and slow, small and big, all at once. Any phenomenon, such as that of twin cities, discussed through purely 'cultural' terms as is perhaps redundant exercise, I will, therefore, demonstrate the opposite. For you see what is interesting about landscape formations and intellectual formations is that history stands as a backdrop through which both emerge.

Essential to understanding the 'potential' relationship between Landscape Architecture in Sydney and Melbourne cities is the Lachlan Fold Belt. The remains of an ancient ocean crust which became lodged underneath their bedrocks during the Cambrian which strains and pulls the two cities back and forth against the other. At the time of the Mesozoic, located at either end of the fold belt lay two almost identical river estuaries, places some now call Melbourne and Sydney. At this time, the Gondwanan excursion, (the Australian plate setting the Pacific plate adrift) was produced a cataclysmic, elastic movement which propelled the river estuary of Sydney hundreds of meters into the sky. The effect of this turbulence is Sydney harbour (Ria) and everything that it brings in toe (an accelerated housing market, social and economic inequity, sublime landscape, inability to survey, congregate and sustain communication both visual and verbal) the result is of course that Sydney looks out.

The very same telluric forces which furnish Sydney, reached south along the fold belt baring down upon the sister estuary in Melbourne. The ground folded and collapse, twisting the strata like layers of wet cloth. Melbourne was left a soggy wet 'sunk land', a relatively flat expanse of land, economically unproductive and visually unremarkable to western aesthetic sensibilities (easy to survey and grid, left spatially democratised and cultural transversal) the result is that Melbourne looks in.

Landscapes construct the social and cultural terrain of a city, the scales and depth of these co-formation run deep in both cities. What caused one city to rise, causes the other to fall and what formation are made geological, can in turn mirror such production, culturally speaking. Historically for Landscape Architecture in both Melbourne and Sydney, our significant moments of cohesion between cultural, social and landscape have not been determined by European nor North American aesthetic and intellectual turns nor the manner or speed in which they land upon our shores. The challenge for the culture Landscape Architecture for both Melbourne and Sydney is to arrive at a robust self-determined intellectual that is as serpentine as our landscapes (designed and otherwise), which considered culture to be considerably more than monotonous, conservative formalist aesthetic, the social to be other than whatever brand of public space neo-liberalism is delivering that year. And attached our social and culture work as designers to the critical complex-political geologies through which we emerge.

Generalizations are dangerous, as soon as you make one an exception will always pop up. Having said that these are a few personal observations on the current Sydney / Melbourne architectural debate.

Melbourne - there is a preoccupation with surface texture and materiality which has matured from the early one liners of Corrigan, ARM, Lyons et al. No longer just in jokes about the local footy teams or stretched photocopy references to seminal buildings from other parts, there is now a sophisticated crafting of facades and interior palettes that in the right hands, read Edition Office, Kennedy Nolan, Freedman White and Austin Maynard, can produce work of real quality, however this appears to be often at the expense of a crafting of plan and section (here come the exceptions, Sean Godsell, DCM, Kerstin Thompson). At worst some of this recent Melbourne work is a return to full blown Post Modernism, all show and no content. Even the arch has made a triumphant return to Melbourne. Recent apartment developments of all scales are preoccupied with having a more 'interesting' facade than the neighbours and a superficial 'luxury' overlay to attract the buyers, where in fact the interior planning is usually awful and at worst unliveable. There has been such limited development of the apartment typology in Melbourne in recent years, which is a great pity given the pedigree of many of the early apartment developments from the 30s to 60s.

Sydney - A focus on spatial development rather than surface treatment characterises the current Sydney output, which is an ongoing concern rather than any sudden shift in thinking. The careful consideration and refinement of the plan in the work of Durbach Block Jagers, Chenchow Little and Neeson Murcutt for example are exquisite. This is fully developed in section and is often constructed in a single material, which heightens the experience of space over surface. That is not to say that materiality is not a consideration, as it clearly is, together with the use of colour. DBJs subtle tiled facades, read from a distance as a single material but close inspection reveals a texture and lustre highlighted in Sydney's sunlight. There is an abstraction of form in the best Sydney work that often derives from such mundane issues as building setbacks and height limits, forcing a rethinking of how to bend rather than break the rules. It is this manipulation of plan and section to create these new forms that gives me personally much greater satisfaction than the superficial application of a rich material palette, no matter how well handled.

'The winner is...'
Luke Tipene

I imagine the years that followed the Sydney Olympic Games will come to be seen by many as a golden time in the Sydney architecture community. The design and construction boom that resulted from Juan Antonio Samaranch's announcement in 1993 saw an unprecedented amount of revenue injected into Sydney's building industry. The major competition venues alone came to a conservative total of over 2 billion dollars, almost all of which were contracted to or in partnership with Sydney architects.¹ Works were completed by such Sydney names as Bligh Lobb, Bligh Voller Nield, Cox Richardson, Ancher Mortlock & Woolley, Hassell Sydney, Stutchbury & Pape, Peddle Thorp and Walker, Alexander Tzannes & Associates, Tonkin Zulaikha, Durbach Block Murcutt, Scott Carver and many others. The result was local repute for Sydney architecture. Everyone made a little, some made a lot.

To culminate with this momentous development in the built environment, Sydney's former editor of Architecture Australia Davina Jackson and the then NSW Government Architect Chris Johnson published Australian Architecture Now in the same year as the Olympics. This book showcased the Australian contemporary architecture that had matured in the late 90s, '[w]ith 494 illustrations, 392 in colour'.² Perfectly timed, it would have found its way into the hands of every design-minded visitor to the games as a keepsake of what Australian design had to offer. Its introductory essay announces the raising awareness of Australian architecture in the local public imagination, highlighting significant agitation in the residential sphere.³ Gone are the metropole definitions of architecture from England, and references to Nuts and Berries. The short section on Sydney entitled, 'Sydney's White Houses', cites 'Alex Popov, Burley Katon Halliday, Engelen Moore, Durbach Block, Stephen Lesuik with Nanna Binning and Eeles Trelease' as reinventing the Sydney scene.⁴ Jackson frames their contribution as the reinterpretation of Utzon, Cox, and Seidler's civic projects into a new cosmopolitan austerity; beautiful and unbridled by bookish definitions.

Not long after, Sydney's major practices followed suit and published compendiums of their own achievements to sit alongside Jackson and Johnson's work on the coffee tables of Sydney's homes. Hassell – Poetic Pragmatism was published in 2003 with pride of place given to its Sydney projects since Ken Maher merged with the Adelaide firm in 1995; Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Architects was published in 2005; a collection of Bates Smart's Sydney projects accompanied by an explanation of why they opened their Sydney office, entitled Bates Smart – Sydney 95-05 published in 2005; and COX Architecture & Planners in 2008, to name a few.^{5, 6}

As Paul McGillick echoes in the introduction to his own picture book entitled Sydney Architecture in 2005, the momentum of Sydney's global success was paralleled by the courageous movements in its residential turn.⁷ He cites Glenn Murcutt, Alex Popov and Peter Stutchbury as significant early figures, though locals like Drew Heath and Sydney's great Paul Pholeros deserve mention. The success

6. The particular attention that Hassell: Poetic Pragmatism gives to its Sydney projects is evidenced by the cover image of the book; the reference to four major Sydney projects in the book's sleeve and in the introduction to Robert Powell's essay itself, see: *ibid.*, p. 9-10.; and the extended section on Ken Maher's input and influences in Robert Powell's essay, see: *ibid.*, p. 17-19.

7. McGillick, P. 2005, *Sydney Architecture*, Pesaro Publishing, Sydney, NSW, p. 10.

8. Clark, J. & Clark, T. (eds) 2007, *Open Doors: Fresh Thinking in Australian Architecture and Interiors*, Ripe Off The Press, Collingwood, VIC, p. 8.

of their houses spoke to the values of Sydney's home owners at the time, putting awareness of lifestyle ahead of resale return. Sydney's architecture had become a daily topic of conversation over dinner tables and drinks. Between the buildings and books, punctuated by Elizabeth Farrelly's commentary in the Sydney Morning Herald, arguing about Sydney's architecture felt like a way to argue about Sydney's politics; as a way to participate in the city.

It wasn't really Melbourne, but Adelaide that was having an impact on Sydney at the time. In addition to the Sydney offices of Hassell and Woods Bagot producing world-leading works, firms and schools were top-heavy in young practitioners and academics from South Australia that were bridging the gaps between teaching and practice. Design collectives like 4site Architecture, with members from Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Tassie, were discussing the advantages of hybrid industry/teaching practices and the importance of client focus in a climate of raising public awareness on design.⁸ The presentation format for PechaKucha had just landed from Japan in 2006, resulting in practitioners, students and the public alike finding themselves at windy rooftop bars and in unfurnished showrooms for design slide nights. Sydney was talking about itself, which may seem obvious or self-righteous for someone from Melbourne, though at the time it felt like the right people were talking and there were important things to say.

This wave of public discourse on Sydney seemed to peak with presentations of the concept designs for Barangaroo's open international competition in 2005. With over 130 schemes submitted, many of the local practices that weren't shortlisted took the time anyway to engage in debates on the future of their city with the communities that were going to live in it. The competition was originally won by Sydney's Hill Thalys Architecture + Urban Projects with Paul Berkemeier Architects and Jane Irwin Landscape Architecture, though in 2009 the government rescinded the plan and decided to go its own way with a competition development of international focus. The years that followed saw the retraction of Barangaroo's proposed public spaces for private luxury apartments and a new casino.

1. *Official Report of the xxvii Olympiad: Volume One Preparing for the Games* 2001, Paragon Printers Australasia, Fyshwick, ACT, pp. 370-393.

2. Jackson, J. & Johnson, C. 2000, *Australian Architecture Now*, Thames & Hudson Ltd, London, UK, p. 3.

3. *ibid.*, p. 9-11.

4. *ibid.*, p. 122.

5. Powell, R. 2003, *Hassell: Poetic Pragmatism*, Pesaro Publishing, Sydney, NSW.; Bingham-Hall, P. (ed.) 2005, *Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Architects*, Pesaro Publishing, Sydney, NSW.; *Bates Smart: Sydney 95-05* 2005, Bamba Press, Port Melbourne, VIC.; Beaver, R. (ed.) 2008, *COX: Architects & Planners 1960 – 2010*, The Images Publishing Group Pty Ltd, Mulgrave, VIC.

Australia the invert continent, where swans are black, humans carry their heads in their hands: Europe's 'other'. Even since the early twentieth century, the first country to be more than fifty percent urban, a fact so disturbing to those who need a wilderness 'other' that Dutch critic Bart Lootsma pompously declared that the only thing of urban interest here was the flying doctor service. Differentiating ourselves, establishing an exceptionalism, this is a function of socialisation; fine I think when personal, dangerous when tribal. So we need 'others' – but should be very careful about choosing them. There is I think a spurious duality inherent in Sydney - Melbourne rivalries. In terms of 'others', is Melbourne Sydney's, Sydney Melbourne's? These are the two large cities of Australia, demographically similar migrant absorbers. Nuanced perhaps by migrant clusters from different parts of the world. Culturally very different, with strongly divergent base values. To this point I cite a decades old, annual, ANU by postcode survey. But in doing so I immediately conjoin into discussion Adelaide, Brisbane, Darwin, Hobart, Perth... No duality works! A social geography emerges from the survey. Perth is small 'L' liberal in a flatly homogenous way that echoes its topography. Adelaide and Brisbane have strongly small 'L' inner suburbs but cascade from the core to radical conservative outer suburbs before flicking back to small 'L' in exurbia. Melbourne has the strongest cluster of small 'L' inhabitants in its centre and inner suburbs, and this coincides with nearly fifty percent of Australians with PhDs living in these parts. Sydney has a tiny small 'L' core surrounded by radical conservative inner suburbs. It is the outlier in Australian attitudes. The only urban postcodes in the country that opposed equal marriage rights were in Sydney, and the Anglican diocese is notoriously exceptional in its vehemence against female clergy and same sex relationships. The social geography is abetted by the topography, some commentators aver, leading to the creation of ghettos in Sydney, enclaves in which people do not rub up against local 'others'.

Of course none of this has anything to do with my own field, I simply report. I have been challenged in my belief that the suburbs of all these cities differ from each other. As in our new book "Suburbia Reimagined" Nigel Bertram and I, supported by Shane Murray, demonstrate a love for suburbia that has been built up through decades of study. I know, for example, that Perth suburbia has tell-tale physical indicators that make it distinct from that in any other Australian city. Thank goodness this is true wherever you go! As for the architecture of our cities, those buildings by local architects that capture the public imagination, I believe that we understand the differentiation by discovering the tri-polarities in each city's architectural culture. I have no regard for imported oddities. Like rare specimens in a zoo they fail to interact with local cultural ecologies. I have nothing but contempt for the importers of such, and completely disagree with any manifesto that sets out a 'one true path' to architecture. This I know sets me at odds with Sydney's most famous modernists, but so be it! Let our 'others' be real...

The opposition of Sydney to Melbourne to the exclusion of everywhere else is something akin to the distinction between old money and new, between being above and below a threshold that sees concentrated there and not elsewhere institutions both public and private, and between an assumption of rather than the insistence upon civic identity. It is, too, a relic of a comparison: penal settlers versus free settlers; understated versus conspicuous wealth; topography versus the grid; league versus footie; et cetera. Invoking it somehow calls back all those weird anxieties embedded in the efforts to appear aloof on the question of how one is considered, from afar (overseas, that is). Panofsky once wrote of Wölfflin's Renaissance und Barock that anything setting up two moments in time to a formal compare and contrast cannot help but to confirm its premises. The tricky thing is what to do with the middle stuff that speaks to the complexity of getting from one moment to the next, that precedes or follows. Which is to say that you can curate noticeable differences between one city's architectural culture and another, but it's a self-affirming gimmick. Albeit a gimmick with a history. Fifty years back, Freeland barely saw an exterior to Sydney-Melbourne. A decade before that, Boyd had St Kilda Road and Kings Cross and Surfers Paradise all speaking to American taste on equal terms. I think Queensland is the better counterpoint to Victoria; the Gold Coast is Melbourne's cultural antithesis. Sitting on the sidelines of all this, eating popcorn, are Hobart and Adelaide. Brisbane has its own stuff going on. And there was somewhere else ... That Australian architecture (meaning what, exactly?) rises or falls on the back of a necessary yet fictive battle played out between Sydney and Melbourne just seems a bit precious, myopic, self-congratulatory.

In the eighties we asked what is an Australian architecture? In hindsight the question seems so naïve, so searching, or so in need of an answer. Or perhaps it was just entirely the wrong question. But when we lowered our eyes we could begin to see what lay below the surface, strong currents and discursive cultural eddies that were already bifurcated and coursing through the varied contours of the land and its intellectual geographies. Flows could be observed that joined together Desbrowe Annear to Boyd, or Ancher to Seidler. One current lead to a wide and varied delta, another to a strongly flowing, more singular, stream. Somehow then, when the seeds of post modernism blew in on an international breeze, they seemed to take root in the arable delta, growing up as strange hybrids. And not in the shapes of mere formalism or historical borrowings, but in constructs that suggested a different manner for thinking about architecture, as an artifice, or as a curation of cultural discourses in architectural terms. That we make it up, in a sense, as we go along. And this making up requires a kind of criticality in our considerations, and speculative practice in our doing. Or that not knowing, as a form of creative practice, is far more interesting than being an expert who is sure of the game. And these currents gather up and flow on past Corrigan and Murcutt. But in the end, the greener grass on the other side of the fence, or a state border, is a hopeless mirage. What matters is what we grow there, and how we grow it, in order to nurture a specific ecology of ideas. Angophoras of the mind are not for Melbourne, nor basalt for Sydney. In either case we are better off volunteering for community service to resist invasive weeds arriving from far off places, strangling these endemic ecologies and choking our vulnerable deltas and streams. Or at least to talk up the idea of the local, in a language that can be understood. All the best new buildings in Barangaroo are by local architects, hiding in plain sight, growing their dreams out of a fertile terrain.

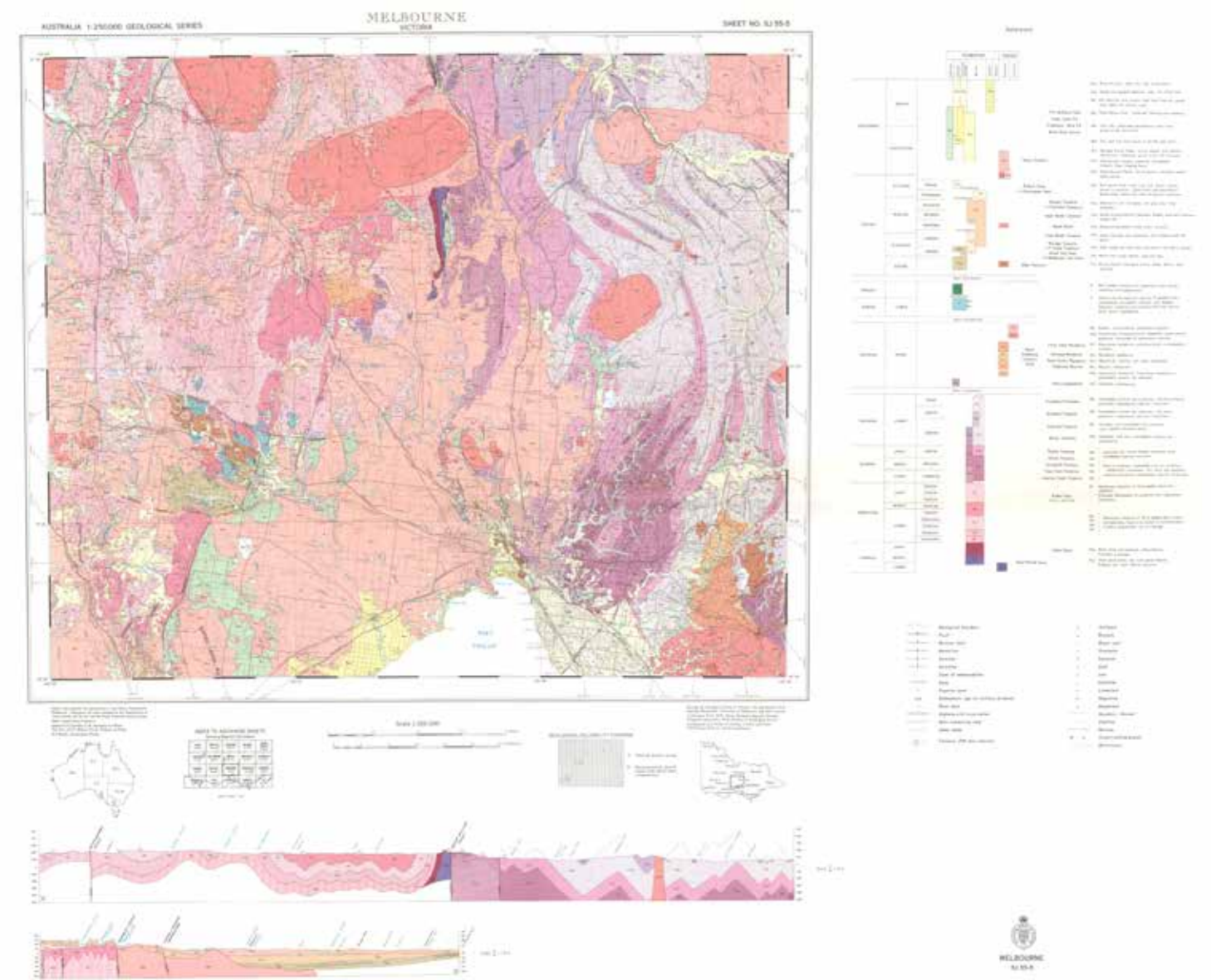
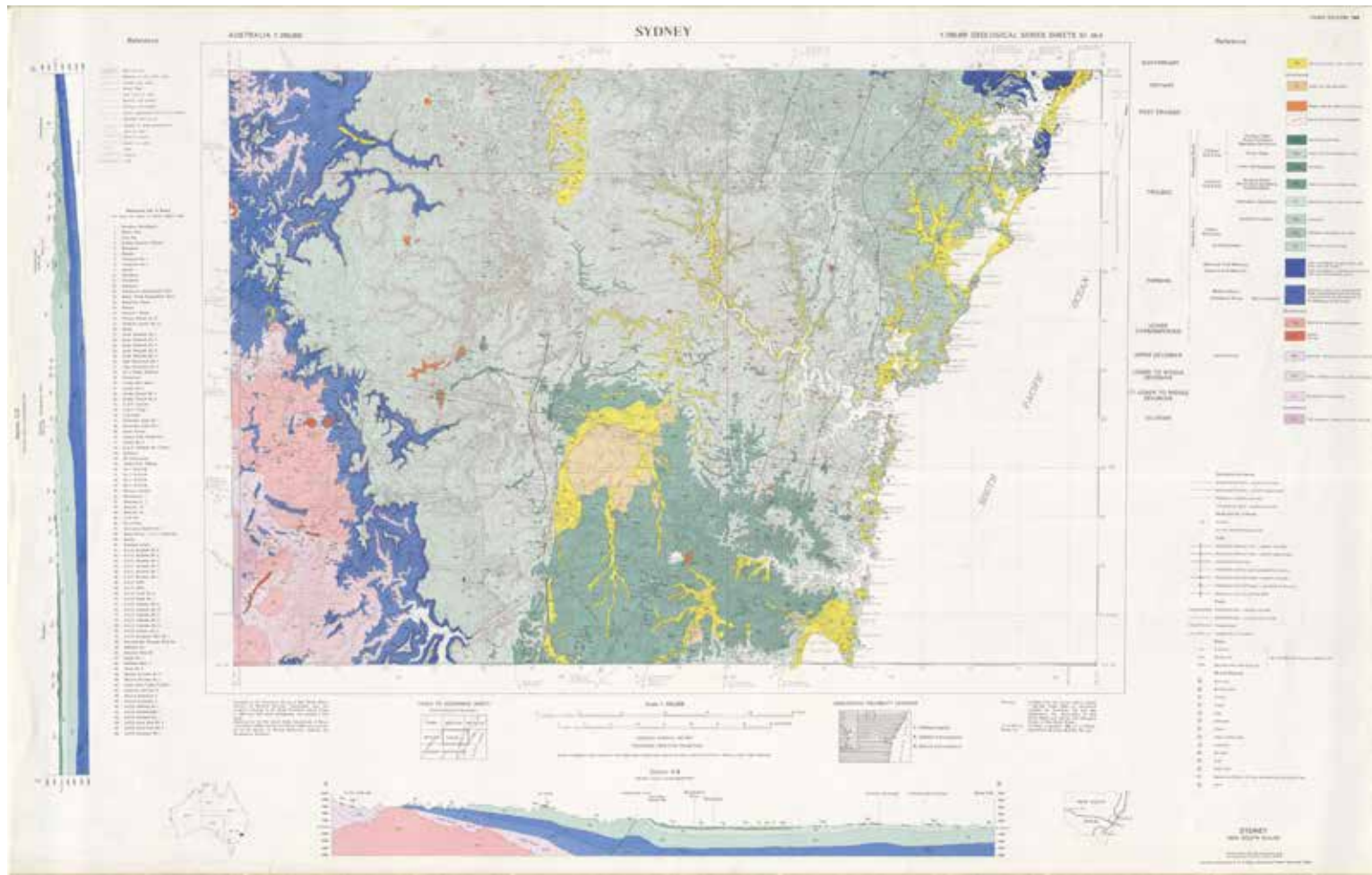
I don't know much about what happened before 1980, but by the time I started studying architecture in the late 1980s the architectural discourse between Melbourne and Sydney had degenerated into an all-out war. Sydney gave little oxygen to anything else but its bush modernists who had evolved out of the Sydney School and came to centre around emerging superstar Glenn Murcutt. Murcutt's cross-over appeal - achieved through his fusion industrial louvres, flyscreens and exhaust turbines with Miesian planning arrangements - came to dominate an entire culture just as Neil Perry changed Australian cooking with his own fusion of Asian and French cuisine at Bondi's Blue Water Grill. Murcutt's cocktail of elements became mandatory in any serious work north of Albury, although this seriousness was in materialisation only, given the discourse never escaped vague moralisations around material use and detailing. Melbourne meanwhile, with its own traditions and discourse based more in matters of city making and culture, was energised in the 1980s by the arrival of South African Leon van Schaik and his command to look inward. The city's architects subsequently engaged in a project of intense self-reinforcement through argument, as exemplified in the legendary Half Time Club.

Just as Melburnians found the puritanical religiosity of the Sydney scene as ridiculous and patently indefensible, the puritans in Sydney hated the way Melbournians wasted materials on buildings generated by distorted photocopy images of post-modernist masterpieces - hating both the post-modernists and the techniques in equal measure. They also hated colours, particularly colours not borne of a natural material and especially they hated the colours of VFL teams, which Corrigan and others often used. Even the change of the VFL to the AFL didn't result in red and white stripes on any Sydney project I know of. As time went on, the digital era played out in the same way, with formal complexity underpinning the new work in Melbourne while in Sydney it's all about smoothed orbs and surfaces. This eschewing of complexity in argument and form perhaps reveals why Sydney invites in the global profession so easily, who regularly insult it and its generosity with their worst buildings in the world, all located in Sydney's CBD.

The hatred between these two architecture cultures became truly multigenerational, exemplified in the awarding of the prestigious Institute of Architects Gold Medal to Murcutt, LePlastrier, Woolley, Cottier and just about anybody else in Australia who embodied "Sydney" values (such as Andresen and Poole) for 30 years from 1988 to now. A lonely Corro and Greg Burgess slotted in after 2000, but still by 2018, only ARM had joined these three. Melbourne work was fun, and very Melbourne, but only Sydney work was serious. They still continue, perhaps less nowadays, to undermine, dismiss and gossip about each other along well-established lines, except when they are denying they are even thinking about the other, which is most of the time. At TERROIR, hailing from Tasmania, but belonging to nowhere it seemed, we spent two decades on the sidelines of a tennis match, turning our head to follow the ball as it was lobbed back and forth.

But then something happened after the financial crisis, about 10 years ago. Internationally, small became cool. In our indefatigable economy, the next generations in both Sydney and Melbourne riffed off this new trend with small, charming but expensive works made of brick or timber, with custom made windows, steeply pitched roofs, brass wherever possible and much patterning and craft borne from the materials as possible. Thus it seems that the distinctiveness of the Sydney and Melbourne schools were killed not by each other but willingly abandoned, everything folded into a global turn. The end of the wars formally arrived in 2017, when ARM won the project to refit the most Sydney of projects, the theatre in the Opera House. In 2018, they opened a Sydney office. And so did Sibling. Meanwhile, no-one from Sydney opened an office in Melbourne, or ever intends to.







Nature vs nurture: National Arboretum Canberra
Mike Hewson on Alistair Kirkpatrick

I haven't visited the National Arboretum Canberra. My sum knowledge on the topic is from two sources: shallow googling (raving architecture magazine articles and a less-ravy newspaper article) and Alistair Kirkpatrick's presentation in the SYD-MELB debate at UTS (it was given a passing mention as a disappointing project that forced a design ideology onto the landscape rather than working with it).

The arboretum is located 10 minutes' drive from Parliament House on a 250-hectare plot of land cleared by two large bushfires in the early 2000's. The sprawling landscape was designed by Taylor Cullity Lethlean who proposed '100 Forests/100 Gardens'. One hundred individual forests each made up of important, rare or endangered tree species from around the world. The place is a zoo for trees, each variety jammed into its own individual parcel of land. It has the hallmarks of a great stamp collection, where rarity is celebrated and each trophy is laid out on a grid.

In the SYD-MELB debate Alistair put forward the Australian National Botanic Gardens as a contrasting and superior design where synergy is central. Here designers study site topography, local micro-climates, soil horizons and many more factors to let this direct both concept and design scope (very Melbourne).

But the arboretum doesn't have to be eco to be cool (how very Sydney of me). It is decadent to green-light such a grand-scale modernist project with such a themey premise. I'm impressed they got away with it. My scant googling revealed that as many as a quarter of the arboretum forest parcels may be dying and the heavy maintenance burden is threatening long-term success of the venture. However, I have no doubt they'll pull through somehow, and this weird project will be a success if not a very interesting case study in fifty years. Next time I'm visiting The Nation's Capital I'll be sure to stop by.











Offset House is unbuilt. That doesn't matter, because it's easy to imagine what it'd look like. We know what bungalow's look like: they're the most common buildings in Australia. Offset House is just another bungalow, a bungalow incomplete.

Bungalows are so common that they can go unnoticed. To look at a common thing and see something novel is itself novel. It requires a certain disposition, an awareness of the here and now. It comes from interest in things as they already are, not as they once were or how they should be. It requires resisting the temptation to make architecture.

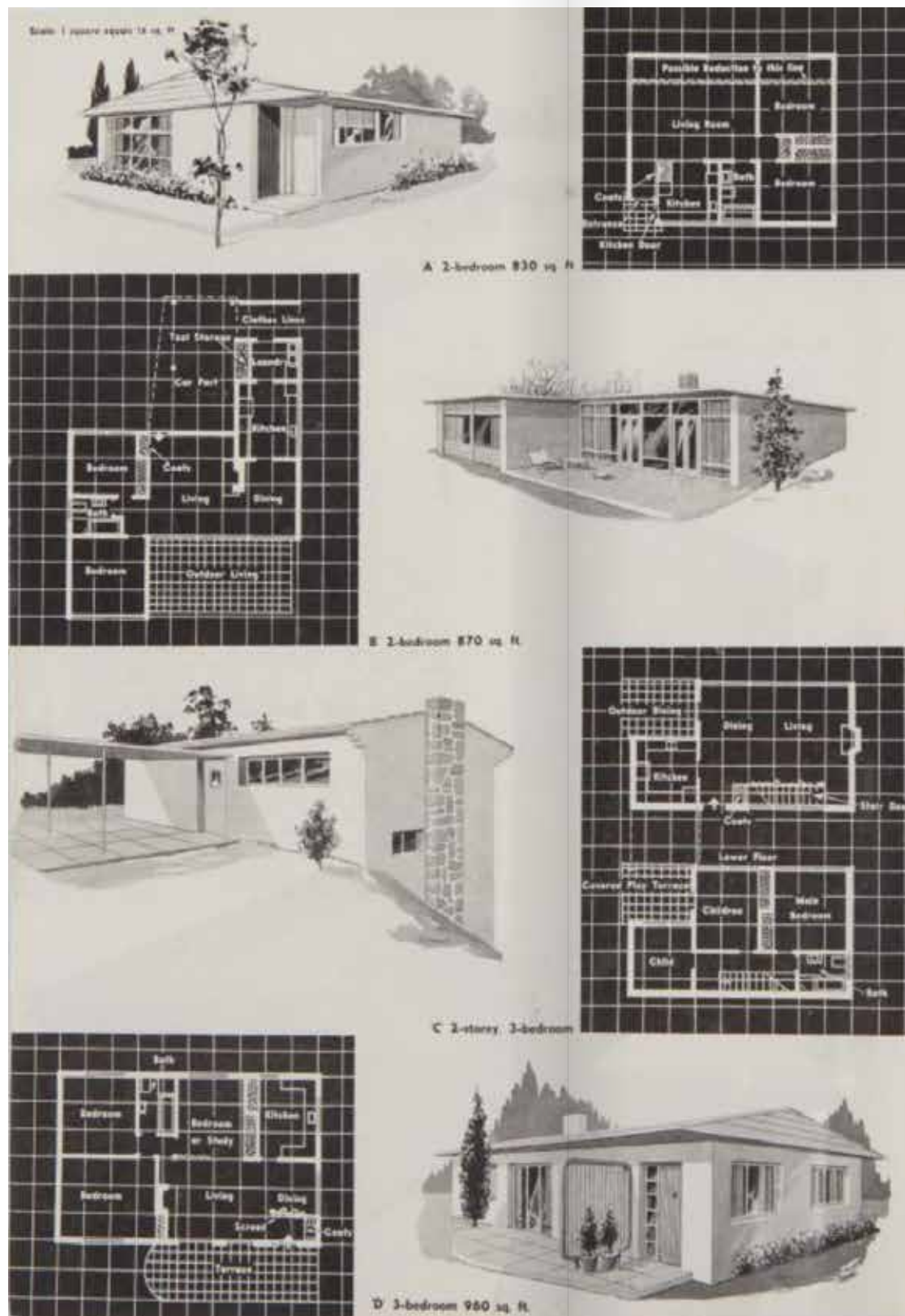
A fascination with things as found does not make the job of an architect easy. It even calls into question the necessity of architecture. A potent observation is rarely enhanced by adding a building. David Neustein and Grace Mortlock solve this contradiction by making architecture through subtraction. Offset House is shaped by subtracting parts of a typical bungalow, creating gaps between existing and proposed, making both more legible. The structure of an ordinary home is revealed through the arrangement of absences.

There are two ways in which absences are used. The first is in the façade, where parts of the cladding are missing, revealing a timber frame. The second is in the plan, where absences displace the footprint of an ordinary home. Read together, you're not quite sure what you're seeing - a building under construction or a building in ruin?

As a construction site it's optimistic. It could be someone's first home that's only a few progress payments away, an entry into the property market.

Or could it be a ruin, a project abandoned after the market has collapsed? Standing now as only a frame, new residents, with fewer resources, occupy its remains.

The incomplete bungalow is an ambiguous figure on the threshold of two possible futures. One is of optimistic growth, the other redeems a state of decay. The ambiguity between these two possible outcomes leaves us unsure of the future. It reminds us we are still, in fact, in the present.



Portfolio of small houses

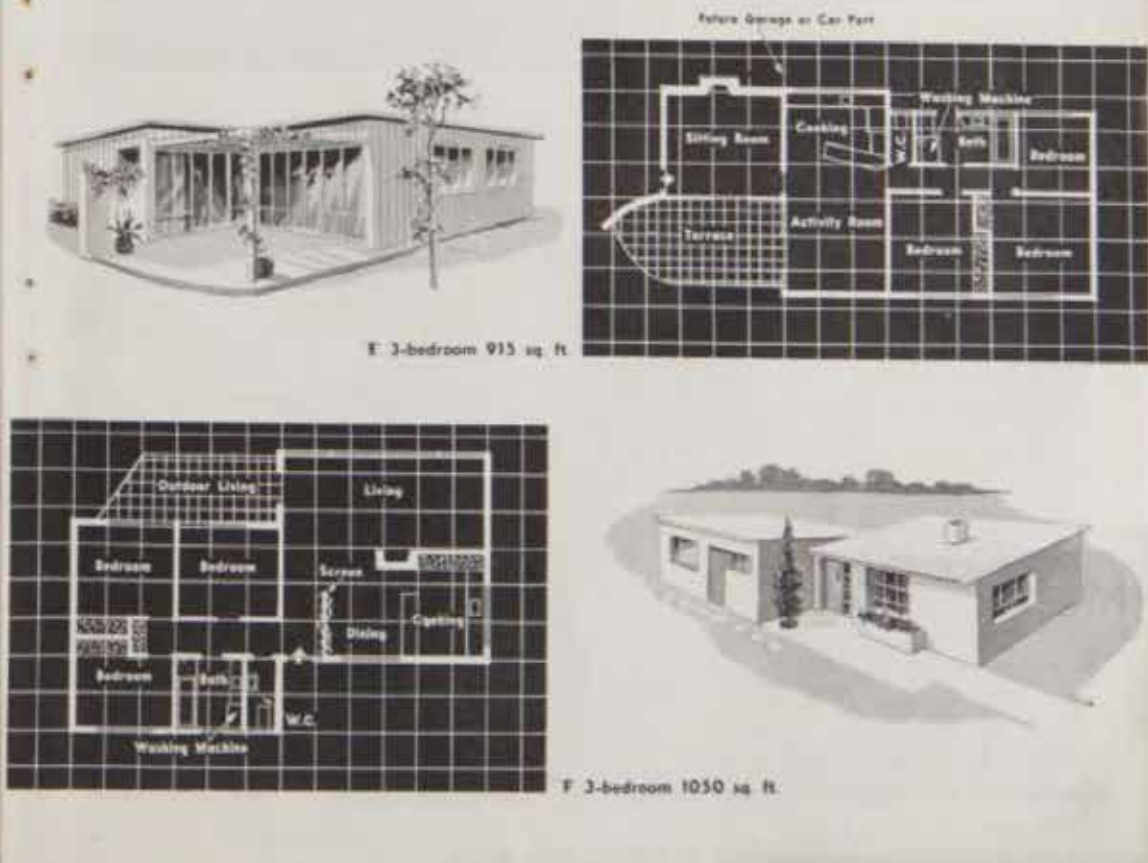
Under 10 Squares!

It is sometimes thought that "architect-planned" refers only to large buildings, that when you content yourself with a small home, planning is an added luxury. This misguided idea is the cause of much of the mediocrity our suburbs are composed of. In fact, since most of the buildings erected in Australia are very small houses, we have little hope of improving our cities, of matching our buildings to the natural beauty of their setting, until we realize that every structure that is erected must be designed and planned properly and skillfully to fit its purpose, to suit its climate and position, to express its structure.

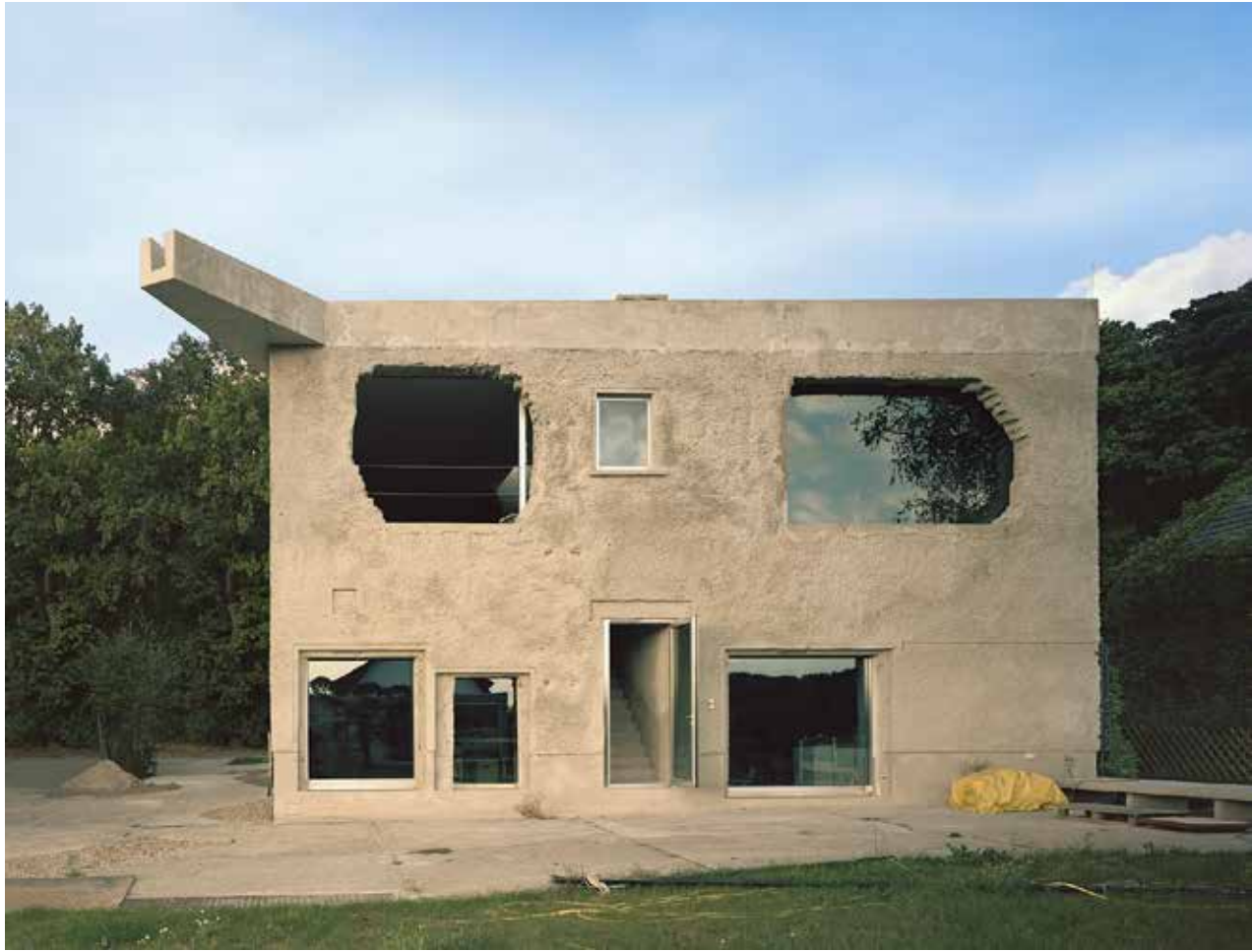
In this portfolio we are showing some small houses which are all designed for normal living habits of Australian families and for typical site conditions encountered in Sydney.

TYPE 'A' is an absolute minimum house. It is shown in two variations, the larger of which provides for a living room of 16 x 20 feet—a fair size for any small house. Even in the smaller variant there is abundant cupboard space including a coat cupboard that screens the kitchen from the entrance. There is a separate entrance, though, from the same covered porch, and all plumbing in kitchen and bathroom is arranged along one wall. It is suggested to have only half high screen walls and curtains between cooking and living area to give the illusion of extra space that such a small house needs. Laundry facilities are located elsewhere.

By Eva Buhrlch









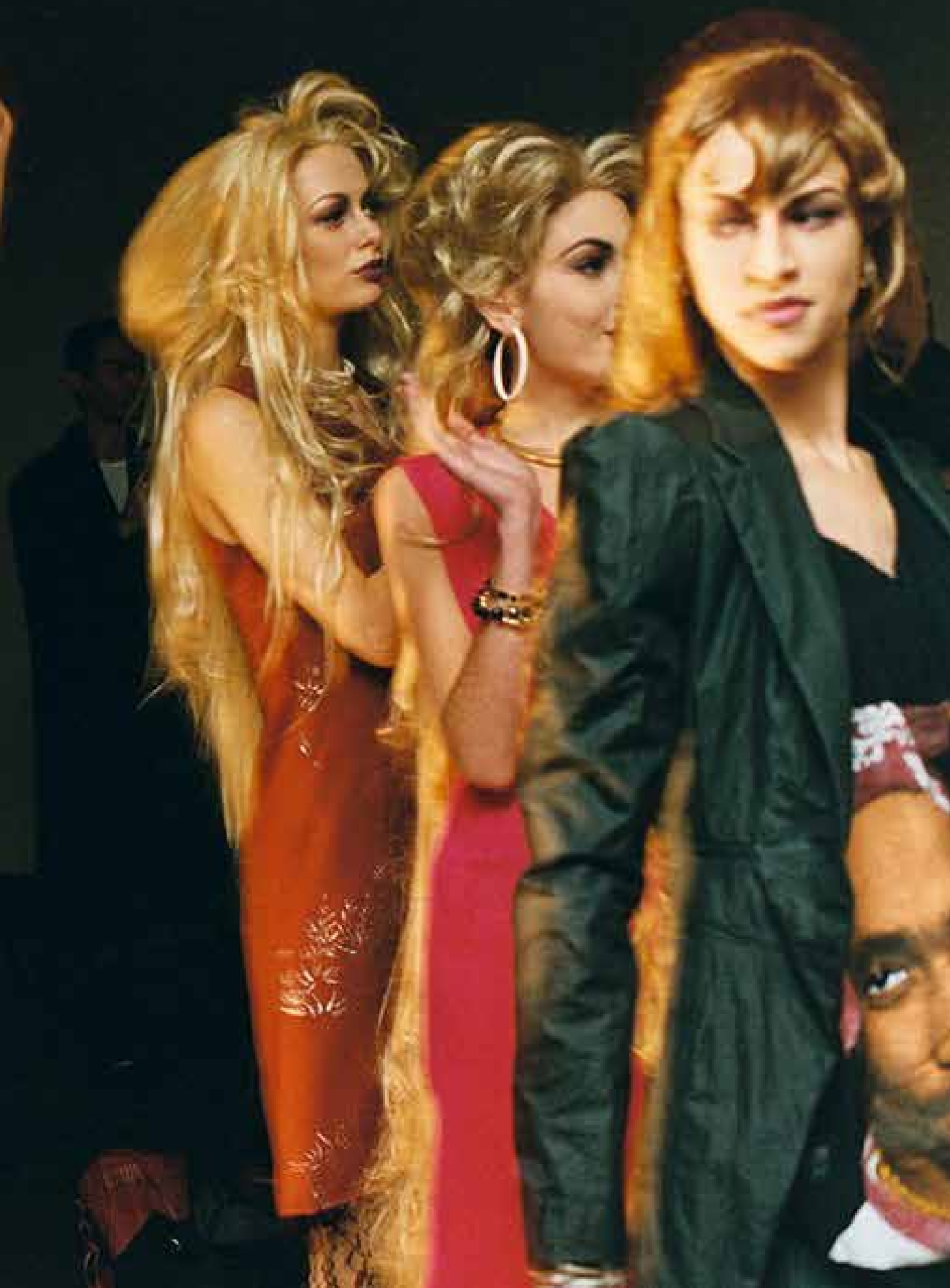
*For Our Country – Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander War Memorial*
Andrew Burns on Edition Office

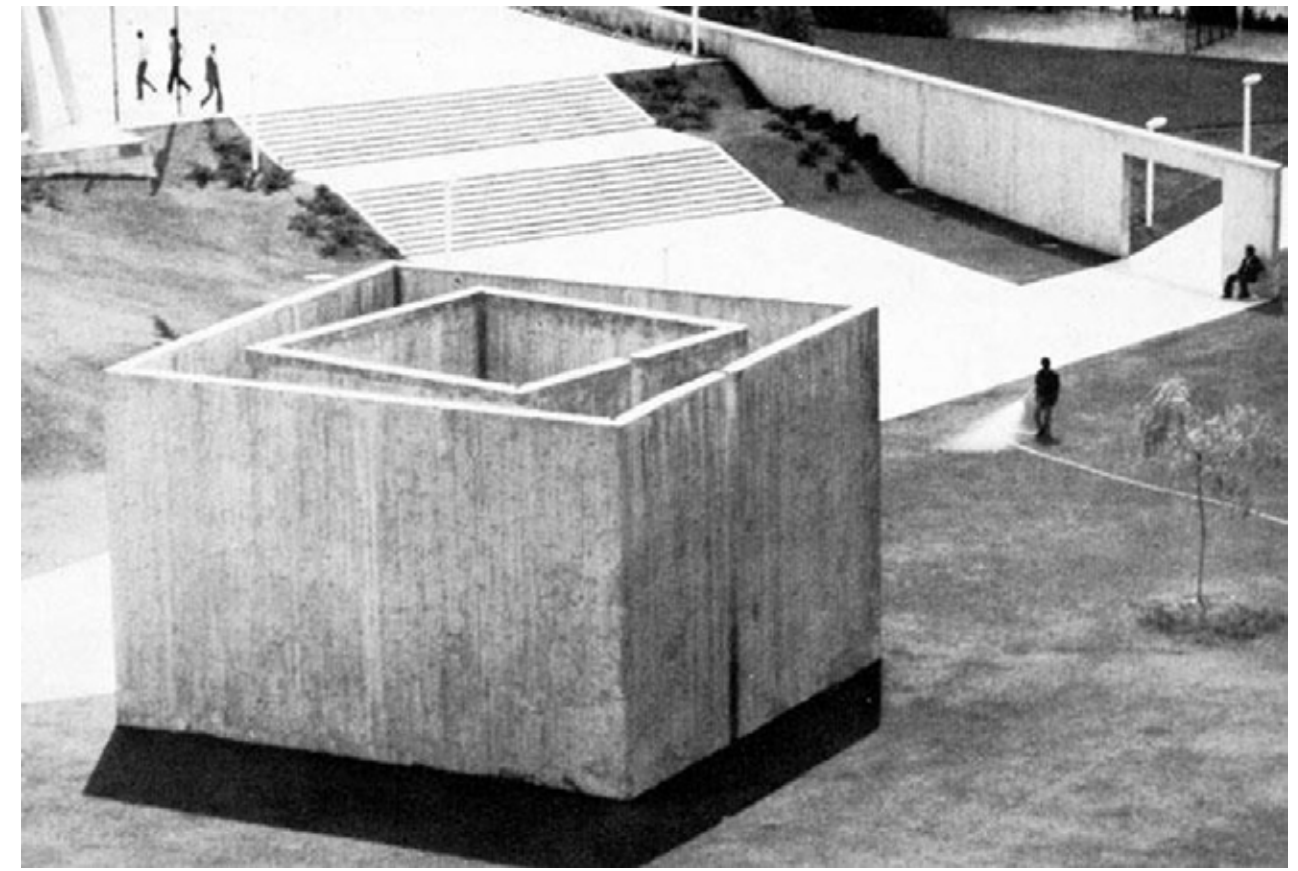
A circle is sliced by a single line to create a larger and smaller figure. The larger figure contains a smaller circle, centred on the original circle and therefore close to the introduced line. The smaller circle holds a flame, bright against the darkness of the adjacent surfaces. The smaller figure is extruded, the line becoming a wall and part of its arc becoming a secondary wall, stopping short of the line to create thresholds. A roof is placed above the smaller figure, the thickness suppressed to intensify the moment of entry. The curved wall holds the interior and implies a pause, geometrically oriented towards the flame. The dividing wall is perforated by a field of glass discs, enabling light to enter the interior and amplifying the presence of the flame, whilst simultaneously becoming a reflective surface externally.

This project, a collaboration between Edition Office and Kudjla and Gangalu artist Daniel Boyd, serves to commemorate the sacrifice and military service of indigenous men and women, simultaneously affirming the connection to country so essential to Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander culture.

The project embodies a kind of expression that I provisionally term a concise aesthetic, whereby the primary elements of architecture; geometry, materials, experience; are mutually reinforcing and integrated in a manner through which there is no redundant content. In this instance, the integration extends across the domains of architecture and art, the geometric precision of the architecture creating a precise setting for memorial to profound service.

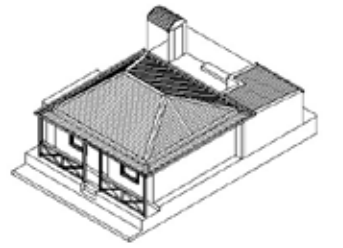
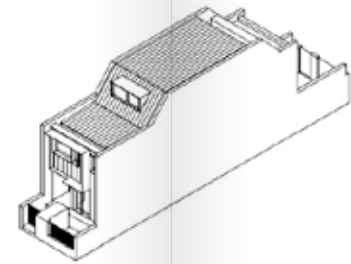
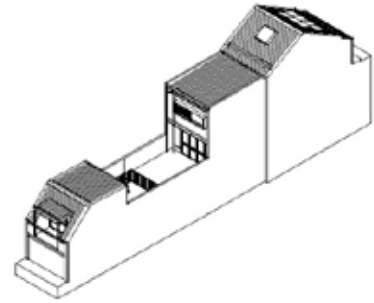
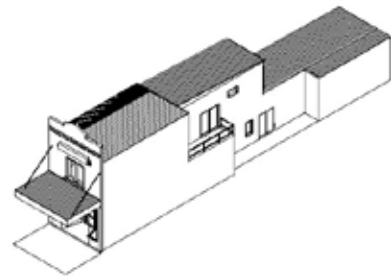
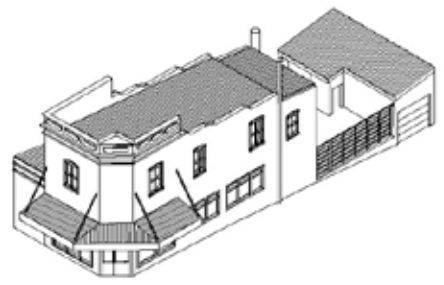












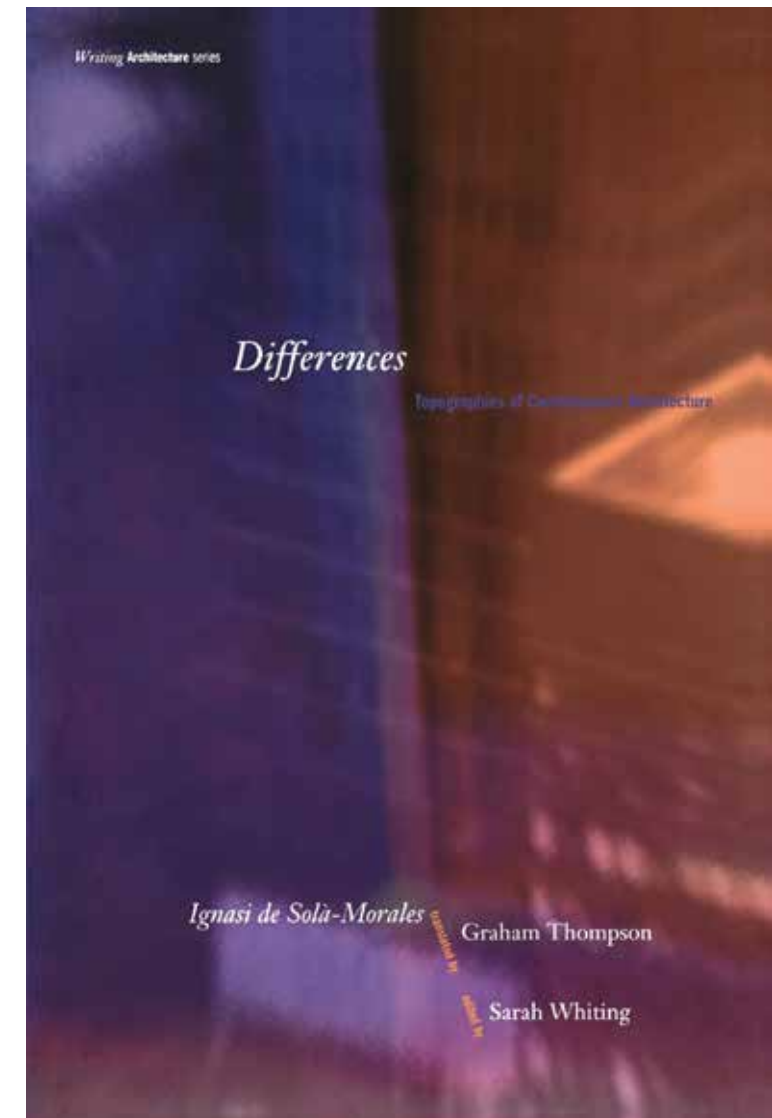


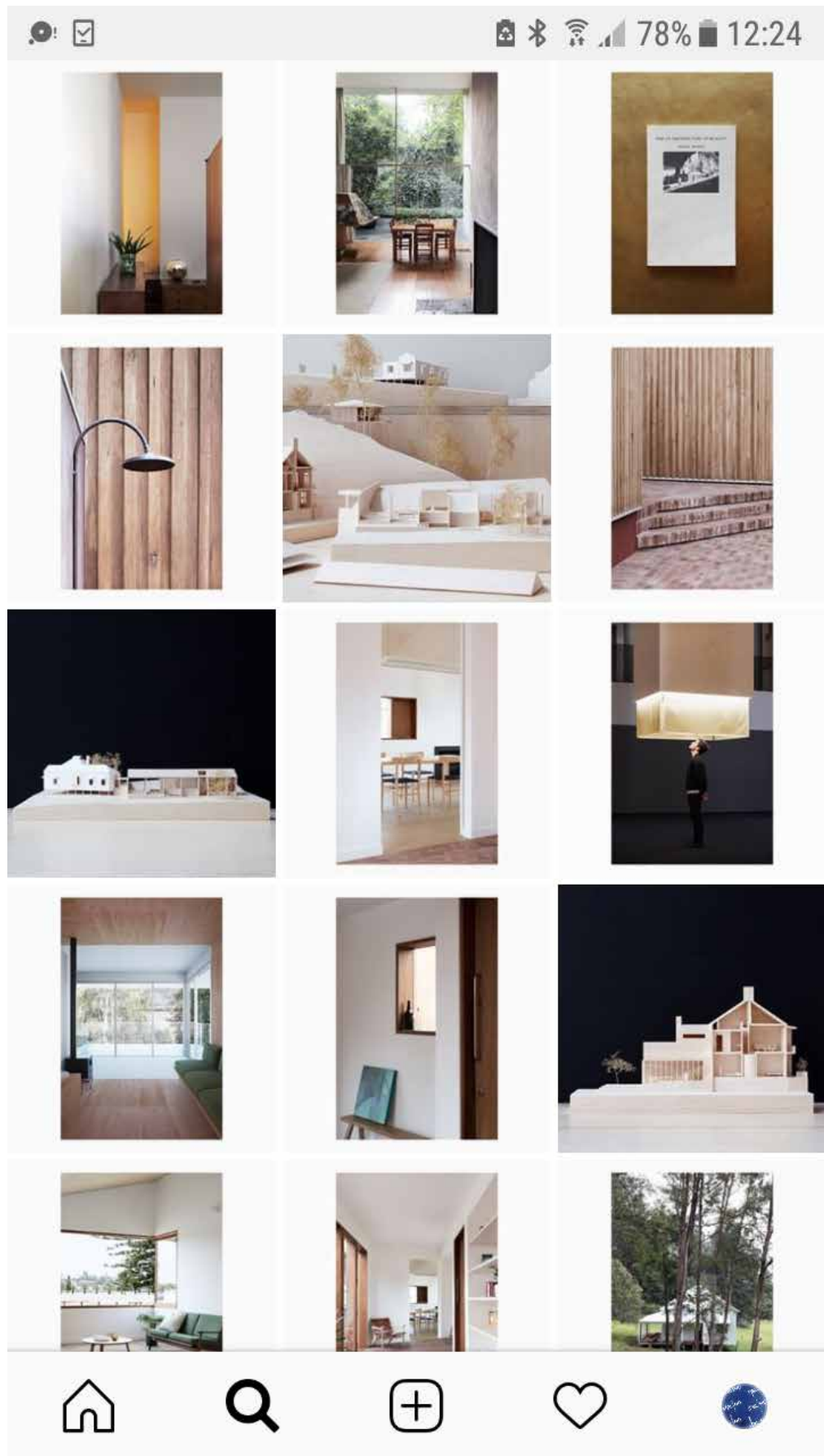
Untitled
Richard Stampton on panovscott

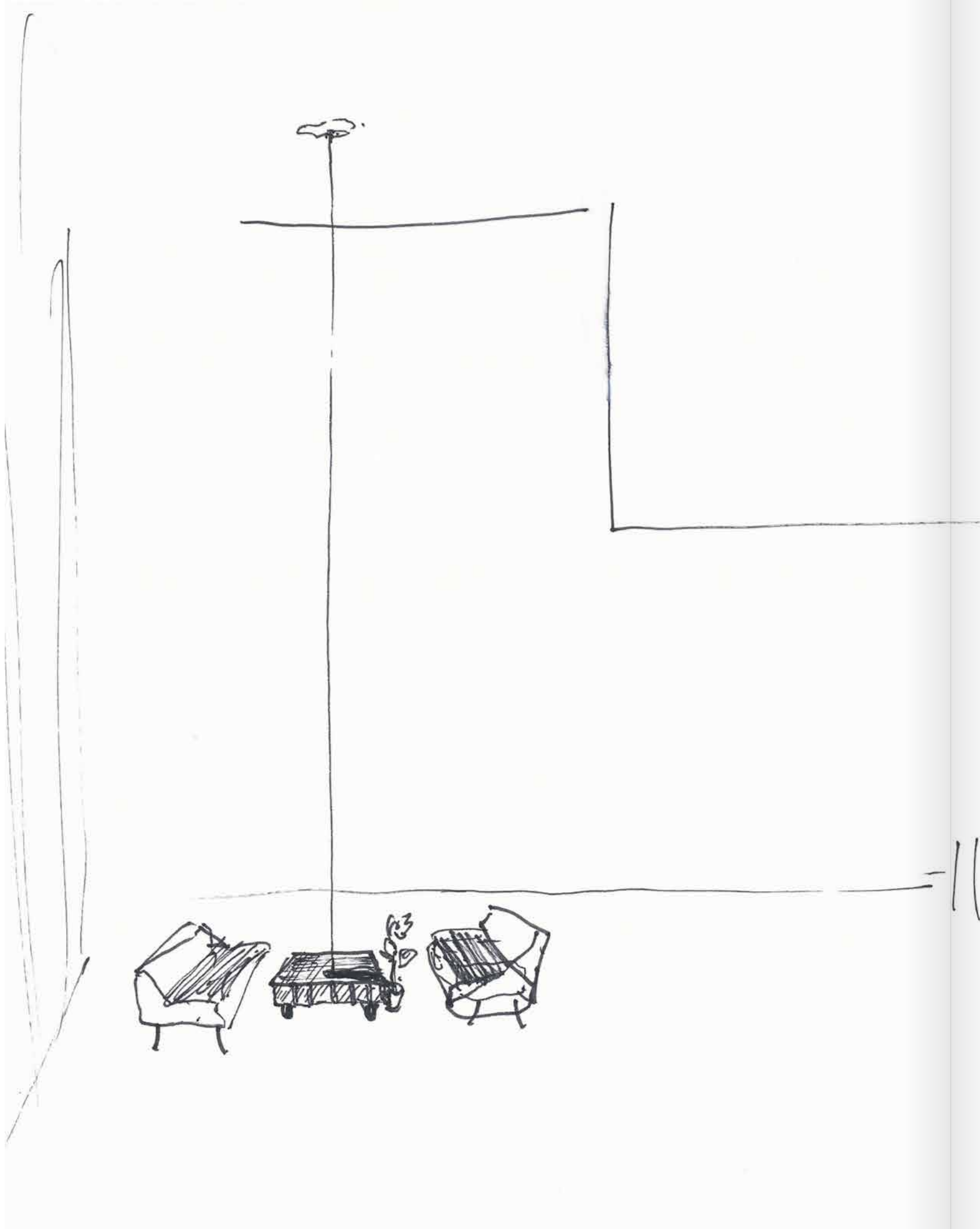
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Less is beaut
Sibling Architecture on Trias

These days it seems design has to be just good enough. Contemporary design often relies upon a narrative of social purpose with conceptual twists and turns to elevate the work. The outcome does not need to be perfect; it just had to be good enough. What really can matter is the social impact or the story that it told. This purports a shift away from the object, such as a building, towards highlighting the social, political, economic and cultural forces that creates the artefact and shapes the world. The outcome, the building, cannot be understood without the backstory (or hoodwink). It is the design that poses questions, communicates possible future worlds, and reveals cracks where designers can intervene, that is prioritised. Sydney's rising stars Trias go against this hegemonic narrative through making work more than good enough. It is, indeed, fucking beautiful. Trias' Three Piece House with recycled bricks, rendered earthen tones and radially-sawn Silvertop Ash is a trinity that would make any architect get a good genuflection. Trias ask: do things have to be just good enough? No, less can be beautiful, too. Less needs to be beaut.



Biographies	Naomi Stead (S)	Andrew Burns (M)	Andrew Power (M)	Other Architects (S)	Philip Goad (M)
	<p>Ad min prem ipideni hilluptaqui raxtusam aut lanihictatia qui vollabo. Et unt, si aut et atias ellam acest rem faccumquam etur? Quiderovit earum aut in con et aut vidi cone cor as sitenditate voluptaquid et iunt. Ullaborem ate doluptatiis moluptas voluptas ut ex esciis quam accaern atinimus evelitas sunti necaepe ribearis et minum sed quatum ates earuptatem. Ectur sitis et earum vellese quistiam dolo omnitem. To qui blaudam voluptam, soluptur aniet hillaut odit que nimaxim ut occae et escienim idempero officimene vitiae poris ipsa quo que explaborerum</p>	<p>Arum faceprae sitatur? Em quo et ex et doluptatem quiatur rem. Tem aut omnis eosam dit velitas volenti beriatque aborestem repeles postempos aut pel molupta tenihil iassita testrum neceper ferero tenis mod mo to ium quam, ipsapis nimus magnatem re pelest, voluptatur audaerr.</p>	<p>Nequaepudi bero tempore mquatquas num, sit fugias qui cus, et ut hicius peri de nus et que cus dolupta testior porepel endaepe llabore eaquiatis sint quibus.</p> <p>Bearum qui dipsam, nullorestia sant hari sit, conseqe moloris aut lacitate nimusam rero bero omniandandae eatiusdae. Mi, tem asin nonsent ionsequis et aut omnisto ium que nustorpossi bearcit, intioreste si aut apiet ra parum eatincienis autende mporitem evelicae volorerro molupta tiisiti onsentio. At poria nis dolutempel ipici net asi adi to int apid ut aperest, volor molupta</p>	<p>Ad min prem ipideni hilluptaqui raxtusam aut lanihictatia qui vollabo. Et unt, si aut et atias ellam acest rem faccumquam etur? Quiderovit earum aut in con et aut vidi cone cor as sitenditate voluptaquid et iunt. Ullaborem ate doluptatiis moluptas voluptas ut ex esciis quam accaern atinimus evelitas sunti necaepe ribearis et minum sed quatum ates earuptatem. Ectur sitis et earum vellese quistiam dolo omnitem. To qui blaudam voluptam, soluptur aniet hillaut odit que nimaxim ut occae et escienim idempero officimene vitiae poris ipsa quo que explaborerum</p>	<p>Arum faceprae sitatur? Em quo et ex et doluptatem quiatur rem. Tem aut omnis eosam dit velitas volenti beriatque aborestem repeles postempos aut pel molupta tenihil iassita testrum neceper ferero tenis mod mo to ium quam, ipsapis nimus magnatem re pelest, voluptatur audaerr.</p>

Edition Office (M)	Desley Luscombe (S)	Scott Colman (S)	Richard Stampton (M)	panovscott (S)	John Wardle (S)
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Louisa King (M) Mike Hewson (S) Alistair Kirkpatrick (M)

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Ian Moore (M) Luke Tipene (S) Sibling Architecture (S)

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Trias (M) Leon Van Schaik (S) Andrew Leach (M)

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Carey Lyon (M) Gerard Reinmuth (S) Tristan Harwood (M)

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Guillermo Fernández-
Abascal
Urtzi Grau

Editorial team
Marston Bowen
Jack Gillbanks
Eric Ye

Design
Nicole Ho
Samson Ossedryver

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Sydney Australia
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