

'If Walls Could Talk': Narrating Adaptive Reuse in the Digital Age

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Statement of Originality/Authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis has not been previously been submitted for a degree, nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been fully acknowledged. In addition, I also certify that all information and sources used are identified in the thesis.

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ABSTRACT

Interest in architectural tourism that concentrates on adaptively reused heritage buildings is intensifying. But the corresponding documentation, presentation or interpretation of these sites has not kept stride with the digital revolution. This has been due to factors including deregulation of the industry, a deficit of clear sanctioned guidelines as to the documentation of heritage sites and the dominance of private property interests. Public narratives about these sites have been subsequently affected. This thesis investigates this situation, looking at the implications for public memories embedded in reused heritage and suggests ways to enhance access to related narratives. It does so via a specific treatment of built heritage – adaptive reuse and its connection to digital resources. I argue that employing social media is the most feasible, affordable and widely available of all formats that permits an online presence in virtually examining a repurposed structure.

An interest in architectural history is a key driver of architectural tourism but many of the relevant historical resources are often absent and not digitally or publically available. If there was better access to these resources this would certainly contribute to the process of remembrance around these buildings. Whilst archivists can play a major part, other professionals are also needed in this process to ensure the authenticity of materials in providing context or interpretation.

Architectural tourists seek out notable buildings to get in touch with history; this is the prime motivation behind the growth of heritage and architectural tourism. They follow up simulated travel by physically pursuing those sites that stimulate their interest. These two categories of travel are regarded as pillars of the tourist industry today, both in Australia and internationally.

This virtual province has been dominated by forms of media representation that can aid the tourist or casual observer in understanding various developmental phases of a site but would be greatly enhanced by well-sequenced, informed resources accessed free onsite. Online exposure is developing at an unquantifiable rate, with the Internet being the ubiquitous force that drives our everyday existence. Yet, so much of what may already exist digitally and be of interest to the architectural tourist, and others, often remains obscured or lost. There is a real need for archival retention of data as much as the buildings themselves, if we are to have balanced, publically accessible resources and comprehensive narratives about our built heritage.

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