



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Faculty of
Architecture,
Building and
Planning

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ATRIUM



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Inside the
Faculty



From the Dean Julie Willis

What a big year it has been for the Faculty. Alongside symposiums, exhibitions, panel discussions and guest lectures, we have been doing the inspiring and invigorating work of teaching the designers and creators of the future.



The second half of the year started with the launch of our exhibition John Andrews: Architect of Uncommon Sense. Led by Prof Paul Walker, the exhibition was a celebration of the great, yet under recognised, Australian architect's work and its global impact.

We hosted acclaimed Swiss architect and Treseder Fellow Philippe Rahm who proposed in his wildly popular public lecture, Climatic Architecture, that the discipline of architecture should be reset to focus on its intrinsic qualities of air, light, heat, and humidity as building materials.

Later in the year, the exhibition Project Toria (p8) asked us how much we truly know about the Faculty's home state of Victoria? The result of a three-year teaching and learning partnership between the University and The Architectural Association of London, it showcased five areas of innovative student research: fashion, food, climate, tech, and urban design.

Never a quiet moment in the Faculty, we held three symposiums in the past six months – all tackling vital issues related to industry, research and policy in the built environment sector. The 2024 Symposium: Climate Action in Cities delivered a series of thought-provoking keynote lectures, interactive sessions, panel discussions and site visit to unpack urban solutions to the climate crisis. The Melbourne Centre for Cities Symposium: Rethinking an Urban Era centred on creating multilayered, holistic governance and sustainability for all. The Ableist Cities Symposium addressed how we can create an equitable world by offering innovations beyond mere technological advances.

Our Dean's Lecture Series featured international speaker Xu Tiantian, who provided an overview of her design and architecture studio's minimal intervention approach to revitalising regional villages across China. We also hosted Prof Edgar Pieterse, founding director of the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town, whose Dean's Lecture addressed what the Global South can learn from Africa's sustainable urban transitions.

Sadly, we lost two wonderful alumni this year. Alan Choe, a pioneering urban planner based in Singapore, was the first architect-planner of the Housing Board and the founder of the Urban Redevelopment Authority. He died at the age of 93. We also lost the exceptional Ar. Alfred Wong. Wong belonged to the first generation of modern architects to contribute to redesigning Singapore after colonial rule. He died at the age of 94.

Looking to the next generation of designers, we ended the year with our annual MSDx Summer exhibition and celebration. From the basement to the rooftop, the creative minds of our students transformed the building into a vibrant gallery space. Beginning with a Smoking Ceremony, the night featured pop-up conversations between tutors and students, alongside projections, gallery tours and waste materials workshops. It was wonderful to welcome so many family, friends and industry guests into our building.

We also held a special celebration for our community of donors and supporters to mark ten years of the Melbourne School of Design Building, now known as the Glyn Davis Building. It was wonderful to have so many old friends together in the award-winning building they helped make possible.

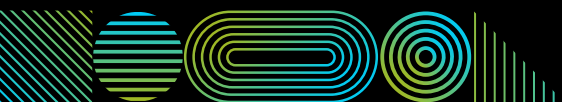
In this issue of Atrium, we bring together the architects, designers and academics who lent their expertise to our home of design to reflect on the building's creation, its legacy, and what it means ten years on (p4).

Elsewhere in this issue you'll find recent alumni Virginia Overell blending art with landscape (p10); Master of Urban and Cultural Heritage graduate Chanelle Custorio combining chemical engineering, architecture and conservation (p12); and Bates Smart Award recipients Nina Nervegna and Felix Davis discussing their collaborative approach to architectural design (p14).

We caught up with Singapore-based alumni Adjunct A/Prof Catherine Loke (p16). One of the founders of transdisciplinary society The Circle for Human Sustainability, she explains how scientists, sociologists, economists and built environment professionals can work together to create a balanced economic system which enables ecologically responsible behaviour.

Finally, we dive into research from A/Prof Crystal Legacy and Dr Matt Novacevski on standardised community consultation for urban development projects and how it's changing the way we teach urban planning (p18).

I hope you enjoy this edition of Atrium, and as another busy and rewarding year comes to a close, we wish you nothing but joy and peace this festive season.



A decade of design excellence: celebrating ten years of the Glyn Davis Building

— IMOGEN CRADDOCK KANDEL

The architects, designers and academics who made the Glyn Davis Building possible come together to reflect on the building's creation, its legacy, and what it means ten years on.

Start at the beginning

The Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning places its commitment to Indigenous knowledge and engagement at the heart of its work and curriculum, so it's only fitting that we acknowledge that prior to colonisation, the site of the Glyn Davis Building was a wetland that belonged to the traditional owners, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.

Since colonisation, the site has borne witness to generations of change and white settler interventions, from which the Building is not exempt. In the 1930s, the imposing facade of a Bank of New South

Wales, originally designed by Joseph Reed at the height of the gold rush, was transplanted onto the site. In 2012, both the Old Commerce Building and the Architecture Building were demolished to make way for the new design. Fast forward to 2014, the Glyn Davis Building was unveiled, heralding a new era in architectural education. At all points, we acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

Originally named the Melbourne School of Design Building, it was renamed after former Vice-Chancellor Glyn Davis. Brought to life

by John Wardle Architects and NADAAA, the internationally acclaimed architectural team was tasked with designing a building that met four exacting requirements: make every discipline within the Faculty visible (literally); create an outstanding place to work and carry out research; provide world-class learning environments; and deliver on environmental performance. Not only did the design team achieve what they set out to accomplish, they created an iconic structure that has solidified its status as a landmark in innovative and sustainable design.



MELBOURNE SCHOOL OF DESIGN LAWN EXTERIOR



Seeing is believing

The Glyn Davis Building's open and transparent design was conceived to serve as a living, breathing educational tool.

"One of the key briefing elements given by our [former] Dean, Tom Kvan, when the building was in its design stages, was that the building should be a pedagogical instrument. It should teach people. And what better place to teach architecture and construction," says Professor and Chair of Architecture Philip Goad who was embedded in the building's transformation process.

Ian Steedman, Design Manager at international construction contractor Multiplex, adds, "The Glyn Davis Building was a huge undertaking, not just in scale but in its ambitious features. The atrium, with its hanging studio and elaborate roof construction, is a testament to innovative design."

Looking back, Claire Martin, an Associate Director with Oculus Landscape Architecture and Urban Design, emphasises the importance of creating outdoor spaces that not only knitted the building into its surroundings but provided external spaces for members of the Faculty to study and relax in. "Our role was to stitch the building into the campus, considering the movement and trajectories. It was about creating outdoor rooms and spaces that enhance the building's functionality."

Sustainability at the heart

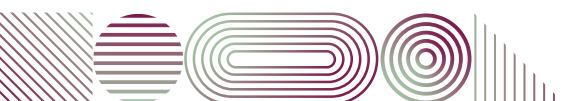
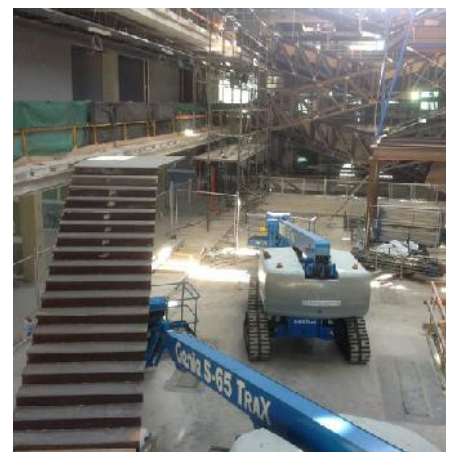
From its inception, the Glyn Davis Building was designed with sustainability in mind. Achieving a 6 Star Green Star rating, it incorporates numerous climate-first features. "The building proposal started as a 5 Star, but we elevated it to 6 Star. It's among the first dozen buildings in Australia to achieve this rating," Steedman explains. This includes a million-liter rainwater tank, solar hot water systems, and a mixed-mode ventilation system that reduces energy consumption.

Professor Julie Willis, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning emphasises the building's green credentials.



The sustainability aspects were crucial from the start, and the building has set a standard for the university's future projects."

– Professor Julie Willis, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning





Spaces that inspire

The Glyn Davis Building was designed to foster collaboration and innovation. Ten years on, the structure hasn't wavered from delivering on this promise. "The atrium is a place where students and staff can interact and see what's going on. There's an energy that runs through the building every day," Willis says.

The flexible design allows for seamless transitions from classrooms to exhibition spaces, enhancing the learning experience.

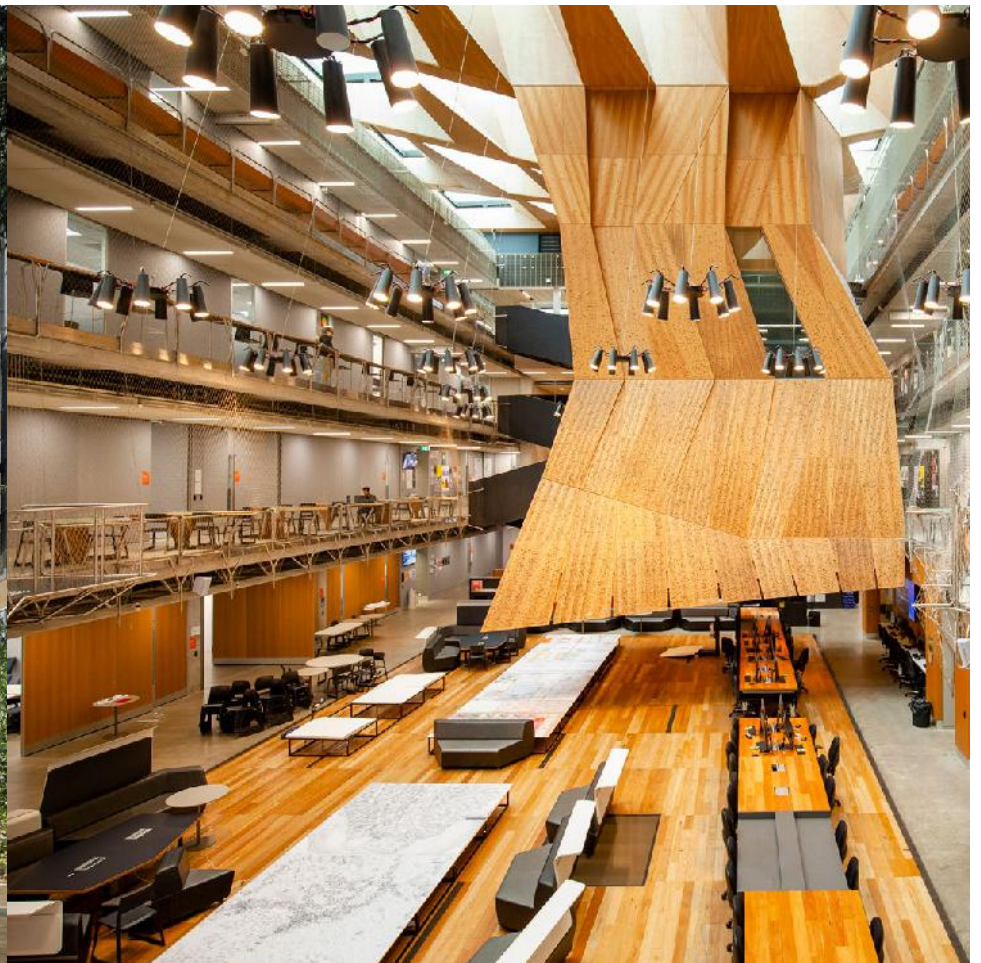
Martin elaborates on the thoughtful landscape design that brings learning and research outside the building and into its many exterior spaces. "We created spaces for hands-on making to the north, and more formal courtyards to the south, integrating both structured and informal learning environments."

Robert Crawford, Professor in Construction and Environmental Assessment, highlights how the building is used as a pedagogical tool to this day.

"Students can see how the building goes together, from the exposed services to the structural components. It's a practical teaching resource," he explains.

Meanwhile, the building's integration of advanced technologies has ensured it remains at the forefront of architectural education. "We teach a subject on prefabrication, integrating learnings from the building's construction. This approach has become a key part of our curriculum," says Crawford.





Beyond Faculty to community

More than a piece of architectural design, the Glyn Davis Building has become a hub of activity. “It’s a place where students feel at home. They come to work, interact, and be inspired. The building has this amazing ability to bring people together,” says Willis.

Martin adds, “The ongoing legacy of the building is the learning environment it has created, and the way it has changed how people learn and think about design.”

“It’s one of the places on campus where students like to come and collaborate and often they’re not our students. You can look over someone’s shoulder and they might be from accounting or science,” adds Goad.

Reflecting on its impact on the University culture, Crawford remarks, “The significance of the Glyn Davis building lies in its ability to unite students and the broader community in a single, dynamic space.”

Living heritage

With its commitment to innovation, sustainability, and community, the Glyn Davis Building continues to inspire future generations of architects, planners and designers, setting a benchmark for educational facilities worldwide.

Willis leaves us with this reflection on the future of the site: “I hope that the Glyn Davis Building stays as a piece of design that’s complete; that when we look after it, we look after it as though it is a piece of heritage.”





Project Toria

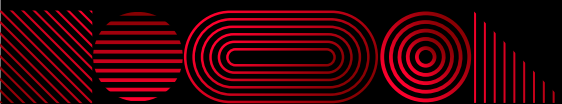
Victoria is the home state of our Faculty,
but how much do we truly know about it?

Project Toria, brought to life by Mond Qu, Leire Asensio-Villoria and Dr David Mah, invited audiences to explore the projected and speculative futures of our state. This captivating showcase featured five areas of innovative student research, immersing visitors in visionary futures for Victoria's fashion, food, climate, tech, and urban design sectors.

Through a series of thought-provoking exhibits, including digital animations, fashion design, urban design drawings and models, and gastronomical delights, Project Toria challenged us to reconsider what makes Victoria *Victoria*.

Project Toria was the result of a three-year teaching and learning partnership between the University and The Architectural Association of London.

IMAGE CREDIT: JORDAN KAYE



The art of landscape



YHONNIE SCARCE, CAMPFIRE, 2023 (RENDER)

— CATH NEWELL



Recent alumni Virginia Overell blends art with landscape. She graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) in Sculpture and Spatial Practice from the Victorian College of the Arts in 2012. Seven years later, she returned to the University to complete a Master of Landscape Architecture. Both times, she studied as a mature aged student, which she describes as “an absolute joy.”

After a creative childhood, and a stint studying photography at VCA, you moved to London in your early twenties and worked in hospitality. Why was that time important to you?

After going straight into art school from high school I realised I wasn't ready to make the most of the course. I didn't know myself very well and needed the freedom to find my perspective both personally and for my creative practice. Travelling and working overseas was challenging but I learnt to be comfortable with myself, mostly through spending long stretches of time alone.

At the age of 33, you decided to study the Master of Landscape Architecture fulltime. Why?

A good friend who I was at art school with had gone on to do the landscape architecture course. She was telling me about working on a streetscape design with a Feng Shui master and I thought that was such a fascinating approach. The diversity in how public realm projects can be developed and the resulting variety in your day-to-day work life appealed to me. I didn't really labour over the decision, I applied for the course and was accepted.

How was that experience?

I absolutely loved it. Being a mature age student with other commitments, I was really disciplined. I had established good time-management skills and perspective. And I met people, like me, who were changing careers from all walks of life like a textile designer, anthropologist, ecologist, teachers. They were amazing and their previous experience was a great form of secondary learning for me. The content was so broad, we covered so much material and I was never bored.





As far as advice is concerned, I would tell new and emerging landscape architects to say ‘yes’ to everything, especially to things that scare you.”

You’ve been working with Oculus since February 2022. What does a typical workday look like?

I am a Senior Landscape Architect. I work on a wide range of projects, some for the public and some private, including health projects, parks and mixed-use precincts. I also do a bit of work on strategic documents and frameworks. I find the more research-based work exciting. We recently completed a Gender Sensitive Urban Design Framework and Toolkit with PLACE Laboratory, Communication Link and Inhabit Place for the ACT Government which is a practical guide to creating public spaces that are more equitable, inclusive, accessible and safe for everyone.

You were recently awarded the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects Victoria’s 2024 Future Leader Graduate Award. What does this sort of acknowledgement mean?

I was pretty surprised. My boss put me forward and didn’t tell me! It’s amazing to be recognised and great to get that positive feedback from my peers and profession. It makes me very proud to be a landscape architect.

You’ve also been a great contributor in terms of extracurricular work such as tutoring, establishing a research collective, working on sector committees, contributing to thought leadership. What do you get out of this?

I am a social person, my favourite part of design is that it is thoroughly collaborative. But I don’t want to get bogged down in the menial side of full-time work. I am always trying to stay engaged in broader dialogues and discussions. Coming from an art background I don’t wait around for formal invitations – if there are discussions or events I want to see happening in the industry I will try to organise them myself. Most recently I did a project for Melbourne Design Week with Olivia O’Donnell, who I have been putting on exhibitions with since art school. We invited a bunch of people to submit a video that reflected on landscape in some way – this resulted in a long collage of contributions, from different times zones and seasons, that all communicated the making of place through everyday use and subjective experience. We exhibited it at MSD but also worked with an amazing graphic designer, Lloyd Mst, who made all the collateral for the exhibition but also

created an incredible website so the work could be accessed and continue to live on beyond the short Design Week program.

What advice would you give young practitioners?

The broader landscape community is really generous, kind and supportive so just find what interests you and get involved.

How do you imagine your future?

The breadth and diversity of projects we get to work on in landscape architecture is one of things that drew me to the profession. So, I don’t want to necessarily start specialising in a particular type of work, though I definitely want to continue to work on projects with public art elements.

GENDER SENSITIVE URBAN GUIDELINES DEVELOPED BY OCULUS, PLACE LAB, COMMUNICATION LINK AND INHABIT PLACE, FOR ACT GOVERNMENT



KANA SHIMIZU, A LITTLE GARDEN WITH A CAT, MITAKA, TOKYO, 2024, PHOTO CREDIT: KATE MEAKIN



Bridging the past and future through heritage conservation

— IMOGEN CRADDOCK KANDEL

How Master of Urban and Cultural Heritage graduate Chanelle Custorio combines chemical engineering, architecture and conservation to save our built histories.



Chemicals to architecture

An architect and heritage professional from the Philippines, Custorio's journey is a blend of science, design, and a deep commitment to preserving the past for future generations.

Her academic career began in chemical engineering. "I've always been fascinated by science," she explains. "I went to a science high school and pursued chemical engineering for my undergraduate degree." However, during an internship, she realised her true calling lay elsewhere. "I wanted to do something with design," she recalls. Despite her initial reluctance, she completed her degree and even passed the board exam before transitioning to architecture.

A neogothic restoration

Custorio's shift to architecture opened new doors, leading her to work on several mainstream architectural projects. But it was her involvement in the restoration of San Sebastian Basilica, a rare neogothic all-metal church in Manila in the Philippines that ignited her passion for heritage conservation.

"It was very meaningful because studying the chemical decomposition through corrosion, and understanding the intricacies of the architectural and structural design of this unique building, made me use my background in chemical engineering and architecture," Custorio says enthusiastically. "It also opened up for me the very rich and challenging field of heritage conservation."

The challenges of working on such projects in the Philippines, where natural disasters like typhoons and earthquakes are common, only deepened her commitment. "Restoration in Southeast Asia is more challenging and interesting compared to first-world countries. No day is the same," she says.

Custorio's work often involves not just the physical restoration of structures, but also engaging with the community, collaborating to raise funds, and finding innovative ways to maintain and preserve these historic sites. With minimal government support, it is up to heritage professionals like Custorio to manage restoration projects across the archipelago country.

Trash, treasure, art

Thinking outside the box, Custorio and other project managers came up with an ingenious way to repurpose rust collected from the church restoration project. "We had sacks of rust from the corrosion of the church," she explains. Instead of disposing of it, Custorio and her team saw an opportunity. They collaborated with local artists to create artworks from the rust, which were then sold to raise funds for the restoration. This innovative approach not only provided much-needed financial support but also raised awareness, including coverage in Esquire magazine, about the project and the importance of heritage conservation.

TOP AND BOTTOM: PARA SA INA: RUST TO ART EXHIBIT
MIDDLE: RESTORATION IN PROGRESS





SAN SEBASTIAN BASILICA, COMPLETED IN 1891, WAS THE FIRST ALL-STEEL STRUCTURE IN ASIA, AND THE SECOND IN THE WORLD AFTER THE EIFFEL TOWER

New horizons in heritage conservation

Custorio's dedication to her field led her to pursue further studies in heritage conservation at the Faculty. "Australia is home to the world-renowned Burra Charter, which is very relevant to heritage practice," she explains. Also known as the Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance, it was first adopted in 1979. The Charter defines the basic principles and procedures to be followed in the conservation of heritage places. Its creation and widespread adoption have positioned Australia an international leader in the field.

Custorio is particularly interested in the integration of technology with heritage conservation. "There are even new conservation approaches using 3D printing and other technologies to reinforce architectural and structural frameworks," she says. However, this merging of old and new methods is something she finds exciting and full of potential for the future of heritage conservation.

"We usually have this idea that something is heritage when it's old and only when it's old. But actually, we consider something as 'heritage' if it has great value or significance to a particular people or a particular community."

This sentiment is what, in part, drove her to write her minor thesis on the conservation and management of an industrial site in the Philippines, a topic close to her heart. "Industrial heritage sites are often underrepresented and unappreciated," she notes. Her research highlighted the importance of balancing conservation with innovation, particularly at living industrial sites that continue to operate and evolve.

Stepping into heritage conservation

Custorio's advice for those interested in the built environment and heritage conservation is to follow their passions and embrace a multidisciplinary approach. "Whatever background you have, it can broaden your perspective in dealing with heritage," she says. She encourages aspiring heritage professionals to not compare themselves with others, but to focus on their unique talents and interests.

Custorio's journey from chemical engineering to heritage conservation not only safeguards historic structures but also enriches the communities that cherish them, ensuring that their stories continue to be told for generations to come.



"Whatever we do, design, or restore in the built environment has an impact."



Limitless inspiration

— CATH NEWELL



A STUDY OF REPAIR AROUND FISHERMANS BEND



Nina Nervegna and Felix Davis are current Master of Architecture students and recipients of the Bates Smart Award for their group thesis project. They reveal how daily runs and a multidisciplinary approach shapes their practice.

How did your backgrounds lead you to study architecture?

Nina: I grew up around architects and always felt connected to the built environment. I liked the idea of rigorous engagement with a profession that incorporated art and pragmatism. Studying painting helped me appreciate abstraction, and service design introduced me to wayfinding. Architecture seemed like it held a lot of promise for new knowledge along those lines.

Felix: I grew up around architects. Prosecuting creative impulses under constraint is something I have always been interested in. It characterises many of my preferred kinds of poetry. I see a lot of overlap between literary technique and design.

How did you both meet and what led to this productive, multilayered partnership?

N: We met over Zoom during Covid in 2021. It was the first year of our course, and everyone was trying to get up to speed quickly. Felix and I picked up on our similarities by watching each other present ideas and designs. We soon started doing group projects together.

Aside from introducing you to each other, what has studying at the Faculty meant to you?

F: We think the studio culture is remarkably energetic. We have observed and experienced significant care and attentiveness from peers, tutors and coordinators.

N: Felix and I are interested in holism, as well as design pedagogy, and we often talk about the “collective imagination” of studio culture.

F: This has been a rich, multivalent component. On one hand, you have the expansive promises of collectivity, which are superordinate to any individual. On the other hand, you have the constrictive implications of stylistic and ideological trends, which can individuate the collaborative field.

N: Negotiating this intersubjective condition seems to involve a special, ostensibly design-specific type of critical thinking. Again, we have found our tutors and coordinators to be skilful guides.





PART OF FELIX AND NINA'S AWARD-WINNING THESIS ON POST-INDUSTRIAL REPAIR

You won the Bates Smart Award for your thesis. Can you explain your work?

F: Our project began as a personal assessment of place, specifically the Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve in Elsternwick. It evolved into a study of post-industrial repair in and around Fishermans Bend, supervised by Alan Pert, Deb Adams and Jonathan Mills, to whom we owe enduring gratitude for their support.

N: Overall, the project was an exercise in critical mapping, urban ecology and multispecies design, largely oriented at managing water and generating an expanded civic field by establishing a new, green, aerial, flood-resistant datum. It sought to establish this new datum by attaching modular, immediately implementable prosthetics to existing structures, like power poles, roofs, eaves, downpipes and bridges. These prosthetics were intended to conduct a range of ecosystemic functions, and were planted to attract pollinators like native bees, bats, birds and butterflies.

How did you go about producing a collaborative thesis?

N: We developed ideas by running together along the bay each morning. We would establish the daily drawing, text and research schedule, using our movement to prompt conceptual and formal thoughts. Outside of work hours, we dedicated all our free time to the project. We were lucky to experience an exciting, fluid process, partly through a lot of kindness and encouragement from others.

F: While we ran, there was something special about being close to each other and moving through different places at speed. We observed many plants, birds, soil conditions, waterbodies and other environmental phenomena, all of which were important to our project. In the same run, we could pass through an industrial area, a public garden and a quiet street. We were interested in synthesising our findings.

What does winning the award mean for your journey?

N: It has been validating for us. The recognition of our interdisciplinary training, interests and approach has given us a lot of encouragement to pursue the mode of architecture we feel we prefer. This involves extensive existing-conditions assessment, consideration of landscape and ecosystems, investigation of activity at large and small scales, and speculative thinking. We love dreaming and practicality equally; being with ourselves, and being together, and being in the world.

You say that your goal is to split your time doing four things. What are they and where will they take you in the future?

N: We always talk about practising, teaching, writing and artmaking. We want to contribute to local design culture as much as we can.

F: More specifically, those four things will hopefully involve conventional architecture, speculative architecture, critical and creative writing, and drawing, painting, mapping and sound.



Nature as teacher

— CATH NEWELL

Catherine Loke obtained her Bachelor of Planning and Design from the University of Melbourne in 1989, followed by a Bachelor of Architecture (Hons) in 1992. Now based in Singapore, Catherine is globally respected for her sustainability leadership and passion for permaculture. We sat down with Loke to talk climate action, economics and little gardens.



CONSTRUCTION OF A BAMBOO PERGOLA AT THE MAKE A DIFFERENCE FAMILY GARDEN



Loke grew up in Malaysia. As a child, she was fascinated by buildings. One that she remembers fondly was the Subang Airport in Selangor.

“At that time, it was totally naturally ventilated,” she said. “The columns were sort of a diamond shape, which went up into the roof in one sweeping arc, like there was no junction or separation between the column and the roof. And then the whole thing was modular. It was just beautiful.”

This curiosity followed Loke through to adulthood, and her architectural studies provided a turning point in her thinking when she took a sustainability elective in fourth year.

“About that time, I really made the connection between the built environment, sustainability and the responsibility of the architect.”

“For the elective, we spent quite a lot of time talking about economics. I wondered what has economics got to do with this? Why are we talking about Adam Smith? But it actually introduced me to economics and its role in sustainability. That was another seminal moment in my studies.”

Soon after she graduated, Loke moved to live and work in Singapore. Since 1999, she has been a partner with her husband, Ian Lander, in their firm, Lander Loke Architects.



Her contributions to the built environment have been acknowledged through numerous awards and professional achievements, including her role as Adjunct Associate Professor at the National University of Singapore, which she has held since 2017. Along the way, Loke never lost sight of her goal to challenge the economic system within a sustainable mindset.

This thinking led to the beginnings of The Circle for Human Sustainability (TCHS), which she founded together with ten other like-minded people in 2021. A transdisciplinary society, TCHS brings together scientists, sociologists, economists and built environment professionals to look at sustainability holistically, and to work towards a balanced economic system which enables ecologically responsible behaviour.

“Our vision is to promote a human society which is in harmony with nature, where humans can flourish, enabled by a built environment that contributes to their wellbeing.”

Loke believes that if architects really want to be relevant and make a difference in sustainability, they cannot just talk amongst themselves, they need to talk to people of different disciplines and understand the world holistically.

“We need to be asking the right kinds of questions and trying to figure out what we can do to actually steer things in the right direction,” she said.

One of TCHS’s key programs, initiated by Loke, is Little Farms Everywhere. It uses permaculture methods as a simple but powerful approach not only to provide food security but also as the foundation for social cohesion and to promote a balanced economic system.

Currently, TCHS is supporting three Little Farms and one rooftop farm, literally preparing the ground for empowerment of communities to build resilience themselves.

“There’s a certain happiness that flows into you when you see plants grow and when you feel and touch them. It does something to you,” says Loke.

More broadly, Loke believes we need to adjust the system so that earning money is not the only option and people can supplement their livelihood with something else that brings them joy and allows them to socialise with other people.

So given this very strong belief in finding a more sustainable way into the future, how has it shaped her philosophy towards architecture?

“We need people who don’t just follow model answers, and can look at a situation and go, hmm, how can I come up with something that works here or works there?”

Architects, she believes, need not worry about being relevant in the future. “I always think architecture is a physical manifestation of human values.”

“We will always be relevant as long as we are creative, as long as we look around us and look at what is needed, and then respond to it.

“I do believe that architects and architecture have to play a significant role. We need to question the status quo, and really look at how we can fundamentally deliver what society really needs.

“Nature is the best teacher. Architects need to be more observant so we can continue to be important enablers for human life long into the future.”



“

“I believe that the profession will become more and more important, because when we enter a period of instability and transition to a different system, we need people who can think out of the box.”



How standardised participation is changing the way we teach urban planning

— IMOGEN CRADDOCK KANDEL



Urban planning has long emphasised public participation – the process of involving the communities in the planning of their city through meetings, workshops and discussions. But recent developments are changing the way teachers in the field are training the next generation of urban planners.



Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning researchers, Associate Professor Crystal Legacy and Dr Matt Novacevski, have been uncovering the effects of increasingly standardised approaches to participation and the professionalisation of participation practitioners. What they're learning has big implications for the future of urban planning.

The allure of standardised frameworks

Legacy and Novacevski's work investigates how influential frameworks developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) are employed by local governments in Ontario, Canada, and Victoria, Australia. These frameworks are designed to promote "best practices" in public participation, providing a structured approach that can be easily adopted by government and consultancies.

While these standardised frameworks can help ensure a minimum standard of participation, Legacy and Novacevski found that their application risks stifling creativity. Frameworks provide a shared language for planners, however they can become rigid structures that limit the ability for participatory practice to adapt to local context.

Their research has also found that IAP2 frameworks are often deployed to legitimise institutions or decision-making processes, prioritising public relations and aiming for a curated process that erases generative disagreement.

When asked about the inherently messy nature of the participation and consultation

process, Legacy responds "There is a risk in formalising the informal. How we are [doing that] is by using words like 'co-production' or 'co-design' but it's another way of co-opting informal spaces so we can control them, but on different terms."

The end result are consultation processes that are more about box ticking than genuine engagement with community or place. "The drive for a single, standardised 'best practice' in public participation can obscure the need for specific approaches to respond to community dynamics, to place and the circumstances that public-spirited planning needs to grapple with," Novacevski says.

Professionalisation: elevating or dividing?

The professionalisation of public participation through training and certification schemes, particularly those offered by IAP2, is reshaping the roles and identities of planners. It is also changing the way participation is taught and experienced.

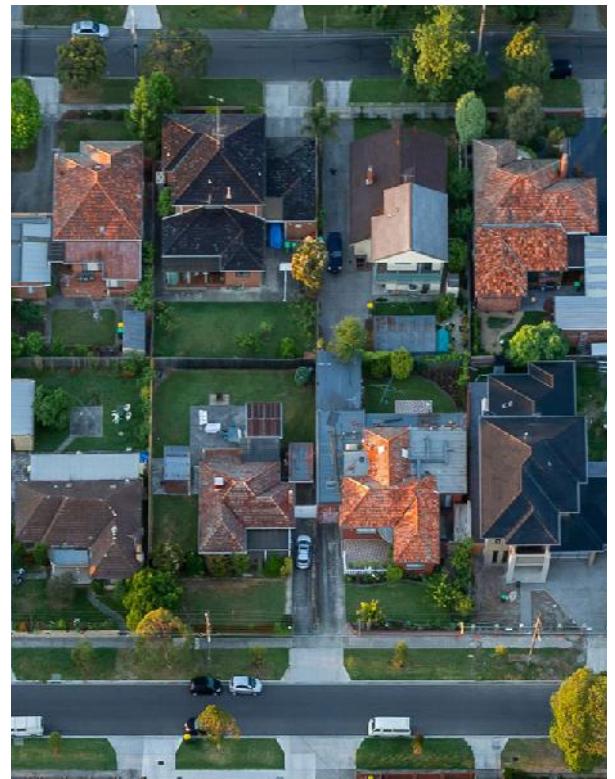
Future practitioners are increasingly expected to bring a structured approach to participation once they enter the workforce, with the supposed aim of enhancing the

quality and consistency of engagement processes. However, Legacy and Novacevski have found these expectations are creating new tensions. Some planners view the growth in IAP2 training as legitimising their participatory work, providing them with recognised credentials that enhance their professional standing. Others see a form of marketisation that commodifies participatory processes, creating barriers of entry for planners wanting to encourage public participation and skewing the priorities of planning.

"Who is consulting the community is less planners and increasingly people with a background in communications and marketing," explains Legacy.

"When you've got a consultant coming into a consultation space who is trained in marketing and communications, they are managing community expectations. They are managing out conflict. They are de-risking projects for their clients rather than engaging with the visionary questions that planning ought to be raising."





Rethinking participation

What's clear is that to give urban planning students the skills they need to navigate these dynamics, a more nuanced approach to teaching public participation is needed that foregrounds critical thinking alongside field-based skills.

"[As part of our research] we wanted to understand who is doing participation, because we are getting a sense that the teaching of participation isn't fully representing how participation is actually occurring out in the real world," says Legacy.

Legacy calls for urban planning students to critically examine the frameworks they adopt, ensuring these tools serve the community's needs rather than merely fulfilling procedural requirements. She emphasised the importance of fostering a participatory culture that goes beyond standardised practices, encouraging innovative and context-specific approaches that respond to place and community.

Insights from the classroom

"We live in a different context now, whereby much of planning is conducted by the private sector," explains Legacy. "This shift raises questions about who planners are serving — public institutions focus on community interests, while private sectors may prioritise clients or shareholders."

Legacy emphasises the need for urban planning education to adapt to these changes.

"The approach I take in teaching public participation is to recognise that any of my students who want to do community engagement or consultation as part of their future practice will likely be trained through the IAP2 training program," she says. Legacy says this heightens the need for planning programs to cultivate students' ability to navigate power dynamics and think both critically and generatively about who participatory planning is serving.

"What I do is help students to develop their critical capacities, to understand power and how power works, and how they are in a position to engage with the ways power is made and remade through planning."

Legacy also highlights the importance of informal or community-led participation that happens outside formal planning process, suggesting that planners should pay attention to community responses in everyday spaces, not just formal consultations. "Informal participation needs to be increasingly looked at with the same kind of weight as formal participation processes if planning is to serve the community," she notes.

Out in the real world

The evolving landscape of participatory planning presents both opportunities and challenges. Standardised frameworks like those offered by IAP2 can enhance the quality and consistency of public participation, but they must be implemented thoughtfully to avoid stifling innovation and responsiveness.

Legacy and Novacevski believe the goal should be to integrate these approaches, fostering a planning practice that is professionally rigorous, creative and deeply engaged with the communities it serves. By doing so, planners can be better custodians of participatory practice that drives more inclusive, effective and responsive processes.



Inside the faculty

People and news

Lucy Benjamin was awarded the prestigious [British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship](#) for her work in comfort, dignity and repair. She will complete her Fellowship at the Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Edinburgh.

Christina Candido was invited to join the advisory group for The Safer Air Project, which is committed to driving policy change that promotes safer indoor air for spaces including schools and hospitals.

Margaret Grose was awarded a grant from the WA Government's Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety to examine, clarify, and rewrite directions for the pruning of street trees under electric wires in Western Australia.

Dan Hill travelled to Brasilia where ran a strategic and system design course for the Brazilian federal government. He also held workshops with the Brazilian government's planning agency with hopes this will lead to further applied engagement for the Faculty.

Rory Hyde was jury convenor for the [2024 ArchitectureAu Award for Social Impact](#), which went to alumni Sibling Architecture for Wangaratta District Specialist School.

Crystal Legacy and **Sarah Bell** have been awarded an ARC Discovery Project 2025 in the highly competitive category of Built Environment. Their project will investigate the underdeveloped area of research surrounding the practice of community planning, which is vital to the delivery of resilient infrastructure services and fostering community resilience.

Jillian Walliss was interviewed by Landscape Architecture Magazine (US) about the digital storytelling app Yalinguth.

André Stephan, Katie Skillington, Sareh Moosavi, James Helal, and Robert Crawford, in collaboration with Stephen Livesley and Martin O'Dea, secured a Climate Research Accelerator grant from Melbourne Climate Futures for the project [Nested Phoenix - Infrastructure](#).

Ika Trijsburg, together with a team of researchers from the Melbourne Centre for Cities and the German Marshall Fund of the United States, launched the [Disinformation in the City Response Playbook](#).

Katti Williams co-curated the exhibition Designing Remembrance, made in conjunction with Shrine of Remembrance staff Laura Carroll and Neil Sharkey. **Philip Goad** also consulted on the exhibition. For the first time, this exhibition features designs submitted to the 1923 competition for the National War Memorial of Victoria. It runs until August 2025.





Events and exhibitions

Dean's Lecture Series: The Case for City-level Innovation Ecosystems in Africa

Professor Edgar Pieterse, founding director of the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town, delivered a public lecture exploring the dimensions of a working canvass that can accommodate emergent urban experiments in Africa. He unpacked the effects of dramatic urban expansion and sustainable urbanism imperatives in Africa and the global South.

Talking Water (Take 1)

Margolese National Design for Living award winner Jane Wolff delivered a public lecture on her work in framing public conversations about complex and contested landscapes subject to change. Wolff believes design can offer widely accessible tools for deciphering, discussing, and reimagining places whose trajectory will be decided through the collective decisions of citizens, policymakers, and technical experts.

Conversations along the shore

This exhibition of work by Margolese National Design for Living award winner Jane Wolff centred on two projects designed to engage public discussion about urban shores that are changing with the climate emergency. Located in Vancouver and San Francisco, both projects revealed the ambiguities and complexities of how citizens think and talk about our uncertain climate future.

Climatic architecture

In the face of the climate crisis, acclaimed Treseder Fellow and architect Philippe Rahm, delivered a public lecture where he proposed resetting the discipline of architecture to focus on its intrinsic atmospheric qualities: air, light, heat, and humidity as fundamental building materials.



John Andrews: Architect of Uncommon Sense

Our public exhibition, John Andrews: Architect of Uncommon Sense, was a celebration of the great, yet under recognised, architect's work and its global impact. Now more than ever, Andrews' designs are a shining example of how architecture can be used to address urgent environmental and urban concerns. Toured previously at Harvard University's Druker Design Gallery, Architect of Uncommon Sense showcased formerly inaccessible Australian archival holdings from the State Library of New South Wales, with a special focus on Andrews' Melbourne projects.

Project Toria

Project Toria was a public exhibition that invited you to explore the projected and speculative futures of our state. The captivating showcase featured five areas of innovative student research, immersing visitors in visionary futures for Victoria's fashion, food, climate, tech, and urban design sectors. Project Toria was the result of a three-year teaching and learning partnership between the University and The Architectural Association of London.

Dean's Lecture Series: In Progress - Working with Local Resources

This public lecture by founding principal of DnA Design and Architecture, Xu Tiantian, provided an overview of DnA's minimal intervention approach, termed architectural acupuncture. For over a decade, Xu's studio has closely collaborated with villages and rural regions across China, developing models for rural revitalisation and self-regeneration.

Melbourne Centre for Cities Symposium: Rethinking an Urban Era

The Melbourne Centre for Cities' annual symposium explored the optimistic narrative surrounding our complex urban spaces – shifting away from the belief that growth is inherently negative and adopting a mindset focused on climate resilience.

2024 Symposium: Climate Action in Cities

With cities responsible for up to 75 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, we brought together local and global voices to campaign for urgent and meaningful change across Australia's built environment sector. This year's Symposium centred on the theme of climate action, connecting academic, government and industry experts to influence the national agenda for the transformation of our urban spaces.

Routes and Roots: Towards Right Relation with Place in Uncertain Times

In this public lecture, Treseder Fellow and world-renowned curator, urbanist and author, Sarah Mineko Ichioka, Director of Desire Lines, Singapore, discussed how can we design, manage and live in our cities in a way that respects planetary boundaries, while addressing human-centric challenges such as economic inequality, social polarization, and population displacement.

MSDx Summer 2024

The Melbourne School of Design transformed into a vibrant gallery space filled with groundbreaking ideas. MSDx presented a new generation of graduate students whose work expands our understanding of the places we live in, and the forces that shape it. As part of our MSDx Summer exhibition, designX once again took over the basement. Showcasing over 700 capstone projects, the designX program highlighted the incredible work of our graduating Bachelor of Design students.

Ableist Cities Symposium

In our pursuit of an accessible and equitable world, innovation's role extends beyond mere technological advances. It is a comprehensive process that involves engaging stakeholders from the beginning to ensure that innovation is a collaborative endeavour. At the heart of this process is the Ableist Cities Symposium, which fosters inclusive dialogue across industry, research and communities with lived experience.





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