

Atrium

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DESIGN
CRITICISM &
FUTURE PRACTICE

THE UNIVERSITY
OF MELBOURNE

FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE,
BUILDING & PLANNING



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

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Dean's message

In *Atrium* we celebrate the work of our academics, students and alumni and discuss the issues shaping our contributions to the built environment. Each edition of *Atrium* is themed, reflecting our faculty's core research strengths and innovative projects. In 2012, we published three editions themed around: *Design Partnerships* (issue #19), *Women in the professions* (issue #20) and *Designing our future* (issue #21).

This year, we lead with an edition focused on *Design criticism and future practice*: a topic of significant interest across the built environment professions, in particular architecture, and one which encapsulates the preoccupations of many of our researchers. We commissioned several academics to broadly explore this theme and consider the intersection between critical discourse, research and practice.

Atrium gets topics out for debate through print; a more common medium for us is the lecture. We have launched a new series of public events this year under the banner ABP AGENDA. In this series,

we will host people and practices shaping our designed and built world, stimulating ideas and debate around key topics. To launch the series, we asked renowned New York architecture critic and design blogger Alexandra Lange to join a panel of local figures in Australian architecture media and academia to explore the evolution of architecture writing and critical discourse and how 'new media' has opened up a seductive new space for design criticism. You can read Alexandra Lange's introduction to the discussion on pages 9 to 11 and Professor Paul Walker's review of the 'More than one way to skin a building' event on pages 12 and 13.

Professor Alan Pert, Director of the Melbourne School of Design, contributes a piece on the state of critical discourse in the UK and the power of words on contemporary architectural form making. Alan, who is also Director of his own design firm NORD, talks about architectural practice and representation can challenge our encounters with buildings.

Denton Corker Marshall are the focus of the first exhibition in the 2013 ABP Alumni Survey Series, joining a distinguished list of alumni practices who have featured in the series including Daryl Jackson (2010), Phooey (2010), ARM (2011), Kennedy Nolan (2011), Lyons (2012) and Six degrees (2012). Entitled *Land art: nine small buildings*, the exhibition features photographs, sketches and models for seven residential houses and two small buildings – the Australia Pavilion for the Venice Biennale, Italy, and the Stonehenge Visitor Centre and Interpretation Museum, UK. Professor Donald L. Bates reports a fascinating interview with John Denton on pages 6 to 8.

Queensland architect and Meriam descendant Kevin O'Brien presented a special lecture on his 'Sep Yama Finding Country' project in April, which seeks to reflect the indigenous experience through art-making and spatial mapping. Professor Gini Lee writes about Kevin O'Brien's projects and collaborations, defining them as 'multilayered



expressions of the negotiations non-Indigenous designers rarely confront in designed projects’.

Justine Clark, architecture critic for *The Age*, met up with Sir Peter Cook – our first international speaker in the 2013 Dean’s Lecture Series – when he visited Melbourne in February. Justine spoke with this iconic British architect about the role of drawing and the challenges that face us as practice changes. Read this interview on pages 16 to 19.

The Faculty recently reached a milestone in our project to deliver exemplary education connected to the built environment when piling began on site on 25 April 2013, signalling the commencement of main works. Following a summer-long program of demolition and enabling works, we are excited by the progress through which we will soon witness our new building, designed by John Wardle Architects and NADAAA. You can keep up to date with the construction program and project news by viewing the timelapse images and

monthly videos posted on the new building blog on the ABP website – www.abp.unimelb.edu.au/blog. There will also be the opportunity to access a viewing platform on site which will provide an aerial, up-close perspective of the build. We are also pleased to host Nader Tehrani (NADAAA) in late May, who is visiting Melbourne to present at the AIA 2013 National Architecture Conference.

The many activities of the Faculty are also documented here. ‘Inside the faculty’ provides an overview of some of our recent activities and achievements, as well as a round-up of events and exhibitions. Our diverse program of public events will continue in our temporary refurbished premises throughout 2013 and 2014. We have already held a number of studio exhibitions in our gallery space at 757 Swanston Street (known as Wunderlich@757) and presented several talks by acclaimed local and international practitioners, as well as launching a new series of events under the ABP AGENDA

banner. Visit our ‘Events’ page on the ABP website for detailed event information: www.abp.unimelb.edu.au/events.

I hope to see many of you at one of our upcoming events.

Professor Tom Kvan
Dean, Faculty of Architecture,
Building and Planning

Cover Image: The Australian Pavilion, designed by Denton Corker Marshall for the 2015 Venice Architecture Biennale, recently won a competition run by the Australian Council for the Arts. The image on the is a visualisation of the Pavilion being delivered on a barge – symbolic of the design and delivery process, and an homage to Aldo Rossi’s Biennale Theatre, which arrived on a barge in 1974. Construction on the Pavilion is due to commence late 2013.

“Ignore this building”...

ALAN PERT

Glasgow artist David Shrigley manages to contain humour, insight, ambiguity and even melancholy in his spontaneous but elaborate forms of doodling. His sign, “Ignore this building”, placed in front of Fosters & Partners ‘Armadillo’ concert hall in Glasgow in 1996 manages on one hand to reduce the building to a mere anecdote but on another it is a provocation using few words to say so much about buildings that occupy the everyday lives of our cities. The power of Shrigley’s sign is its ability to strip the building of any architectural integrity leaving it as a humorous childlike form lurking on the Glasgow skyline. This is the power of words but the question remains whether this was just playful spontaneity or a subversive critical observation of contemporary architectural form making. Whatever the intention, this shorthand use of image and text came 10 years prior to twitter and 10 years prior to the assault on our attention spans. In an accelerating world of miniaturization and digitization, where we try to process a multitude of fragmented information, Shrigley’s works make us pause. In this particular work, to reflect on everyday situations and events. They make you stop to think for a second, provoking ideas over information, he makes you consider the backdrop/building with a critical eye.

But in a world where image is now privileged over text, how do we train this critical eye to make sense of new forms of dissemination like Dezeen, Archtext, Architect Magazine, Archinet, eArchitect, ArchDaily, ArchNewsNow and so many other sources with continuously scrolling portfolios of images that are so common on our devices, screens, monitors, tablets and smart phones? These devices make images available all of the time accompanied by limited text and usually contained to 147 characters of twitter feed. At a time when blogging and social networking are overshadowing in-depth journalism we more than ever need to find new ways to edit this kaleidoscope of material.

Goldberg suggests we need to be curators to make sense of this “visual or written shorthand,” and the challenge is to find ways to filter this ‘stuff’ that is continually downloaded, uploaded, scanned, collaged, retweeted, deleted, stored and shared on a global scale. This new digital landscape is certainly a threat to printed media and the traditional editorial role but there is a counter argument, which celebrates the opportunity for expanded

content tailored to a culture of ‘searching’ and enabling other forms of architectural publication to find new global audiences. This embrace of new media emphasizes the need for curatorial skills to filter, divert and collate information; making sense of this online clutter is heralding a new type of editorial voice capable of positioning content as well as critiquing content.

Another obvious shift is the relationship between the academic architectural journal and practice. As a practitioner involved in academia and an academic involved in practice I am noticing a rethinking of the traditional peer reviewed journal, which was previously detached from traditional practice. This could be the burden of measuring impact through recent changes to ‘research assessment exercises’ within higher education or it could be the diversity of outputs being encouraged that may include but are not limited to: printed or electronic publications, materials, devices, images, artefacts, products, buildings, confidential or technical reports, patents, performances, exhibits or events. Whatever the reason there is now demand for new forms of critical

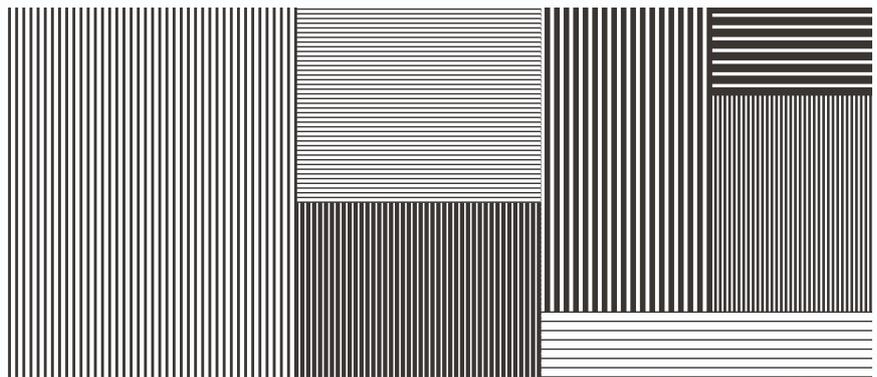
practice that ‘impact’ directly on the built environment and move away from the insularity of a printed journal solely focused on critical theory to a new model of collaborative practice. This also acknowledges that the institutionally defined disciplinary boundaries are being increasingly crossed.

My feeling is that through a reassembling of this dominating digital landscape we are starting to find new forms of output where design, building, teaching, writing, experimentation, testing, prototyping and thinking are overlapping to uncover new opportunities to collaborate on real conditions. The challenge is in measuring the ‘impact’ of these new trajectories for exploration through advancing digital possibilities. Film and sound through podcasts and video streaming are exposing previously closed lecture rooms to new audiences and participants. A lecture to 500 students in Melbourne can be watched by thousands of students across the world who can mix with the local audience in real time through tweeting and blogging. The static lecture has died before the book but the book is no longer confined to print.

This new digital language of web based information is provoking new forms of dialogue and dissemination and more accessible architectural discourse than has been available in the past but it might also require a new critical voice that is nimble enough to traverse the complexity of media platforms. The 'critical choreographer', has to be able to cull information to prioritize and 'press play' at the right time. What remains to be seen is whether the 'culture surrounding architecture' can capitalize on the creative potential of these new formats.

David Shrigley's infamous doodles are a shorthand way of representing ideas and sparking the imagination. The power of the artwork is the relationship of the image and the text; one does not work without the other. But with Twitter now part of our everyday conversations our world is being reduced to the one-liner, everything is spontaneous; headline grabbing anecdotal and often trivial. The ease with which one can dump thoughts through short texts or upload images produces a culture, which can preclude questioning, even preclude the imagination. There is almost too much architecture visible in various forms of media. And yet there is not enough architecture criticism testing the limits of 147 characters.

Professor Alan Pert is Director of the Melbourne School of Design. He also heads the practice he founded NORD (Northern Office for Research & Design), recognised as one of Britain's most innovative architectural practices.



Interview: Donald L. Bates talks to John Denton

ON THE EVE OF DENTON CORKER MARSHALL'S 'LAND ART' EXHIBITION IN THE WUNDERLICH GALLERY, JOHN DENTON (BARCH1969) AND DONALD L. BATES DISCUSS ARCHITECTURE'S RELATIONSHIP TO LANDSCAPE AND THE CREATIVE FREEDOM OF WORKING ON SMALL PROJECTS.

Relative to the forthcoming exhibition at the Wunderlich Gallery, you are mostly showing some of the houses, the "smaller projects". Do you see these as "laboratory work", exploring certain ideas? Is it because of the scale, is it because of the intimacy of working with clients, is it because of the range of detail and focus, or the degree of engagement that sets them apart from larger projects?

It's not the client. I think it is primarily the scale of the project. I think the scale of the project makes you work harder to get a clear, defined and complete outcome, that's fully worked through. It has to be simpler and more productive in the way it works. I think that it is a little bit harder work and I think for most of the projects it allows an opportunity to explore some of the interests we had that influenced the way we have developed our practice and work.

Certainly things like "land art" have been a theme. We were always strongly influenced by people like Richard Serra, as an artist, but also by land art. I like people like Michael Heizer, with his work at DIA Beacon in upstate New York, the holes in the floor, *North, East, South, West*, (1967/2007). I think his piece there is one of the most fantastic pieces I have seen. So there is this interest that is by and large very simple and very gestural, but generally in a landscape context. A lot of the houses and small projects that we have done have been that way.

I remember Graham Gunn, years and years ago, 20, 30 years ago, did a little airport down in western Victoria, and he was taken with the cypress windbreaks that had been built and that idea of a European intervention into an Australian landscape being very rigid and formal also struck a note with us as an idea about how the building could become like that,

could become a formal expression in an Australian landscape – clearly an intervention, so that the buildings in many ways expressed line and form and were very much made to work the form as distinct from a loose fit or "nice use" outcome. We were quite happy to be quite arbitrary about how we managed things, so most of the houses are "houses in the landscape".

The ones that get reproduced have quite flat, windswept landscapes, as opposed to forested, mountainous, hilly sites...

I think again, that was partly circumstance, but it was also a function of southern Victoria. We saw them as the "southern Australia house", compared to say a Murcutt house in NSW, which reacts in a certain way or a "Queenslander" which reacts in another way. We saw these as houses that have to deal with the winds



Image: View Hill House, Yarra Valley (2011)

off Bass Strait. Your view might be directly into the wind, and therefore you're not doing a house with a balcony out onto it because you're going to get blasted by the wind. So you create a more private courtyard to one side where it is protected and gets the sun, but you create a panoramic view out to the elements. So it is dealing with a southern Australian environment and by and large it is an environment that has been denuded of trees, again by European intervention. And with the bushfires, it is hard to build a house in with the trees now anyway.

These were the things around which we were interested in. It makes a project like the Venice Pavilion almost an opposition. It's a heritage, European landscape of trees, and we're dropping an Australian dimension into it. Which is why we're cladding it in south Australian black granite rather than some local granite. It is a conscious thing of making an "Australian" container sitting in that landscape. It's another "object in the landscape", but a different kind of landscape and therefore a different proposition.

Particularly with these smaller projects, how do they begin? Does it begin with a gesture that has to do with the landscape, and somehow the interiority emerges out of that or, do you start with some interiority, some sequences

of spaces or relationships of spaces, and then they begin to inhabit the landscape?

If you look at the houses, there is a linearity in the houses – of the interiors being treated in a similar sort of way. There is a sort of structure of trying to create a space, and then using bathrooms, or things like that, as small blocks within the space, to define the space. There is a habitual way of thinking how houses work. That is in your mind as a starting point when you start to think, but then it is very much about the site and what the site offers and what you can do. It's weather-related, it's view, it's all those sorts of things. It's then conditioned as to how you might respond to it and the nature of what you might do.

Phillip Island House (1990) is buried in the dunes. There is the view out to Bass Strait, but there is the totally enclosed courtyard, enclosed with three meter high concrete walls, with just a plain grass floor to it that is the protected north-facing courtyard – but it's very much a square in the landscape. Particularly when seen from above. You don't really see the house when you're looking at it at ground level, because it's hidden by the dunes and the slopes.

We went from that house with a 35m square courtyard to the Sheep Farm House (1997) where we actually opened the courtyard out, because the weather

protection needed meant you had to protect everything on the lee-side. The 35m courtyard was open on one side because that was the entry point, and you entered through the concrete wall, so you had two houses, garage, sheep-sheds hiding in the lee of the wall. They formed up behind. The wall was the primary organizing element for all the bits that made up the house.

Is it that the primary elements are the vertical elements, or the primary elements are the horizontal elements? And what they say and do with the landscape. Whether there is a predominance of verticality – that is to say walls. Or whether it's a predominance of horizontality – podiums and roofs and awnings and things like that.

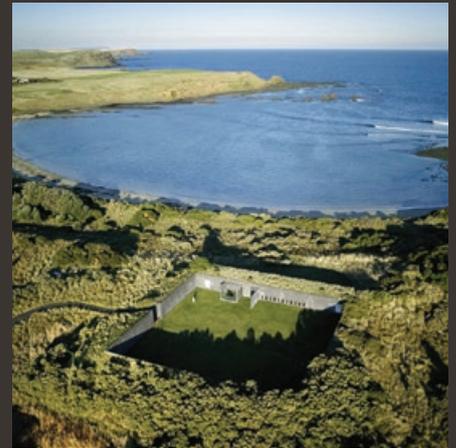
It's the wall or else it's the "sticks". That's the two things we play with – the wall or the sticks. So Phillip Island House or the Sheep Farm House are walls. Cape Schanck House (1999) is a "sticks". My house, View Hill House (2011), is a "stick". And they're just different elements that we use elsewhere in our architecture. Here we are using them in a more distilled form. Or they become more complex with a set of walls with a Miesian pavilion sitting on top. They tend to be fairly restrained, just to maximize the impact of the gesture.



Image: The Australian Pavilion, designed by Denton Corker Marshall for the 2015 Venice Architecture Biennale (on the barge)



Image: Philip Island House (1990)



For those small projects, is the process in the office similar to other projects or more restricted in terms of the number of people or the inputs involved? Is it you and Barry that sit down and do it? Or you and Adrian?

Most of the buildings that will be in the exhibition were designed by Barrie and me. And one of them, Tube House (2007) is by Adrian – as it is his own house. One of the reasons we like the houses and small projects is it gives a chance to get younger architects in the office involved in a more complete way of seeing a job through. It gives them that experience. We have them working for 18 months or 2 years on a big job and they say: “I’d really like to work on a small project.” It gives that chance for them to get some experience with small projects, so they don’t have to leave DCM to get the small project experience. People that we are particularly keen on keeping and supporting; we’ll try and give them a chance to work on a small project.

As projects, for us they’re “fun”, but intellectually they have to be very rigorous to get the outcome we feel you need it that circumstance. It is the antithesis perhaps of a Peter Corrigan house in the country which would be free-wheeling all over the place. We try and reduce it back to lines in the landscape or in effect, “land art” – objects in the landscape that are quite powerful interventions.

Given the focus and the referencing to ‘land art’ and the ‘intervention into the landscape’, what is your position about the landscape? Do you use landscape architects to come in with you or do you not see any distinction between the architecture and the land?

That is very dependent on the client, but normally we would use a landscape architect to help us. But we’re a bit unfair on landscape architects, in the sense that we try to define the landscape that we want. We certainly do all the hard landscaping. We then try and define what we want from the soft landscaping. Therefore I think landscape architects find us frustrating because they want to start from the edge of the house and do what they think is the right thing. That is a bit like the way when we have to work with interior designers – by and large interior designers want to take what you have done as a shell, and do their own thing. Without a good understanding it rarely has any relationship to what outcome you’re trying to achieve. Therefore we find in all those sorts of cases where you have parallel design skills coming in, we’re actually quite tough on them. In the way we think, the way we deal with it, we want less out of the landscape architect than might otherwise be the case.

When you’re looking at some of these projects, what does the notion of context mean for you? Relative to either its positioning/orientation versus some specific ideas about the landscape? Or about an insertion into the landscape, a mark on the landscape?

I suppose we take context fairly seriously, we do believe that you can’t just look in an introverted way at the building you are doing and not think about what’s going on around it. That’s absolute and it certainly becomes more defined in urban situations.

I think particularly with the houses in the country, we are dealing with the context by saying “here is the landscape as it exists – it is windswept, it can be cold or it can be very hot – it is there”. We’re not trying to reinvent that, but we are trying to intervene in a very clear way. So it is a strong reaction to the landscape. But it is not rejecting the landscape, it’s saying its intervening in it.

I am thinking relative to the trajectory of “land art”, that a lot of times when people use the word “context”, they mean you have to subjugate yourself to it, where as “land art” is actually about making, not an oppositional, but a clear demarcation. It is the abrupt rupture of a straight line in a “natural” landscape that gives it its frisson, its power. So, for me, I don’t think it’s less contextual, but it’s not what people tend to think when they use the word context.

Exactly. I think that’s partly why we think of it as being akin to land art and that’s what we’re trying to do. It’s always been the large scale art that we’ve been interested in.



DCM’s Land art: nine small buildings exhibition runs in the Wunderlich@757 Swanston Street until June 14, 2013.

More than one way to skin a building

The Faculty launched an exciting new series of public events this year under the banner ABP AGENDA. In this series, we will bring you some of the people and practices shaping our designed world and stimulate ideas and debate around key built environment issues.

To launch ABP AGENDA, we asked renowned New York design critic and blogger, Alexandra Lange to join a panel of local figures in Australian architecture media to explore the evolution of architecture writing and critical discourse

and how 'new media' has opened up a seductive new space for design criticism.

Along with Alexandra, the panel included Justine Clark (architectural writer and former editor of *Architecture Australia*), Michael Holt (editor of *Architectural Review Asia Pacific*), Dr Rory Hyde (broadcaster and author of *Future Practice*, 2012), and academic Dr Karen Burns (University of Melbourne).

Alexandra Lange has made a name for herself as a featured writer on the popular *Design Observer* cultural website. She is author of the acclaimed *Writing About Architecture* (2012), and her lucid and

entertaining critiques have appeared in *The Architect's Newspaper*, *Architectural Record*, *Dwell*, *Metropolis*, *Print*, *New York Magazine* and *The New York Times*.

You can view the full panel discussion at www.abp.unimelb.edu.au/events/abp-agenda-more-than-one-way-to-skin-a-building

Prior to the panel discussion, Alexandra gave a short presentation and following is an edited transcript of that talk. ↓

ALEXANDRA LANGE, NEW YORK DESIGN CRITIC

The first panel I was ever asked to be on about the state of architectural criticism was in the spring of 2011, two short years ago, which was at the Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York City. I can't remember much about that night now, except that I was freezing because the Storefront is a tiny space open to the street and March in New York can be very cold, but I do remember that a sizable chunk of that evening was devoted to discussing whether or not the move to digital publishing would kill criticism.

Some panellists argued that only in print could architectural criticism flourish and online writing was too ephemeral. Two years later I feel that that conversation could not happen. The revolution of the turn from print into digital media, whether parallel or singular, has happened and that question is completely moot.

And I'm happy to say even then, as a late adopter, I knew that there was something wrong with that argument. Those editors were obviously confusing the medium with the message and the medium was and is in a state of massive flux. If architectural criticism could only exist in print it was an endangered species...

Blogging, I felt, was a form in itself and it can definitely be critical, but isolating a single post, as I had with the other

essays, reprinted in my book, wasn't really fair to the forum. A post is not intended as a self-contained unit, but as a part of an ongoing dialogue between the blog's author and readers or the publication and readers. Not to mention the bloggers shorthand of hyperlinks, which means that things read offline frequently require further explanation.

One becomes familiar with a bloggers' interest, his or her style, and all bloggers and commentators come to speak in a kind of collective shorthand. A blog post can become an essay but it doesn't have to be one to make its point.

A critical essay by my definition is a piece of writing that can stand alone. It can be understood as of its own time but also out of its time and is interesting even if it's about a building or a project or a place that you will never see. It doesn't need photographs and it gives you some feeling of the atmosphere of the real thing. But just as there's more than one way to skin a building, there's more than one way to speak critically, incisively and publicly about architecture and I'm going to talk today about a few of those ways.

The first one is Twitter. Now, I don't think I would be here talking to you without Twitter, because for all of my love of long-form writing, I also love Twitter.

Twitter allows me to broadcast links to all of the things that I write in one place. I'm a freelancer and without Twitter, people wouldn't know where to find me.

It also lets me wisecrack about the latest design blog memes. I have a personal thing about anything related to shipping containers and urban farms. I also like to share the writings of other people that I admire, to chat with likeminded strangers.

In the print era, criticism was legitimised by institutions like city newspapers and national magazines, but when I did a poll on Twitter last year, we could only identify 11.5 newspaper critics left in North America and the .5 is Philip Kennicott, an excellent critic who writes for the *Washington Post*, but he is both their art and architecture critic, so we only gave him a .5. And there are a handful of others that work for mainstream magazines like *Vanity Fair* or *New York Magazine*.

So those people and those print publications aren't really enough to represent architecture culture and so the conversation really has to be continued elsewhere and by people who may not have the same institutional backing. I've always been very suspicious of the advice given to young journalists today, to establish your personal brand on social media. However, I recently realised that I think I inadvertently did that.

I like being able to show all of the things that architecture and design critics are interested in; what informs what I choose to write about and also what informs the critical way I go about everything in my life. I really think that critics are born and not made and that the scepticism with which I approach a new building equals the scepticism with which I approach things like pink ruffled girls clothes for my daughter.

I'm careful not to be too personal, I try to avoid the Facebook post but I do think that people now feel that they know me because they understand my larger field of interest, and I think that that leads to things like invitations to fly half way around the world...

I've said this before, but I think that online we can create communities of common concerns. In the old days the city would be a locus and I think that's really still the most important one, but I've personally, given my range of interests, found communities of people who are interested in design for children, who are interested in the design of the modern home, who are interested in the way technology can and cannot make life easier.

Platforms like Twitter also allow these communities of critics to support each other through re-tweets, through invitations, and I think all of us who are online savvy are now creating our own design magazines through services like Instapaper. If you subscribe to a Twitter feed and you get all of your friend's and acquaintance's design reviews, put them all into Instapaper, you've essentially created your own online design magazine, and being able to disassemble this structure, puts more emphasis on good writing rather than less.

I also think that Twitter is a great place for criticism. One way to skin the building is to type the first comment that appears in your head upon seeing an image in your stream. Now, Michael Beirut, the esteemed graphic designer and design writer, who works for *Pentagram* in New York, recently published on *Design Observer*, arguing against such drive by criticism. But by not respecting the process and looking at the whole design system he said that we 'dumbed' the profession down.

But I wouldn't want Twitter to be the only venue for criticism... 140 characters is not a bad beginning if it's not also the end and you can get a surprising amount of information into 140 characters if you know how to write. A little Twitter free-for-all indicates that a building has touched a nerve and gives everyone a chance to add to the conversation in a public forum. I often use Twitter conversations as an indication of a topic that I should look into in greater depth. Architecture takes a long time, but at some moments it is news and I like having that news as part of my stream.

I mentioned earlier that I thought Twitter created communities. Follow lists of architecture critics are one way of creating such a community, and in those communities a freelancer like me gets treated as an equal to those with full-time employment. There are other types of communities that have been created by online media also.

One way that seems particularly successful of cutting through the noise is a sort of mono-mania. Historically, critics have been journalists and have sort of had to take their topics as they came from what buildings were built in their cities or the economics, politics and construction schedules.

But the freedom of the Web allows people to specialise in much more interesting ways. I'm thinking of someone like Aaron Naparstek, who was a journalist interested in urban issues when I first met him – he founded the blog, *Streets Blog*, which is now a national network of blogs devoted to news and opinion about matters relating to traffic, pedestrians, bike lanes. So, he found a way to turn his interests into a new kind of critical publication. One that gets criticism out from the outmoded stereotype of being only building reviews. Justine and Karen have done a similar thing with *Parlour*, where it's a community of people interested in work, life, and gender issues relating to architecture.

And you see a similar structure behind a project like *Clog*, which is a journal started by some graduates of the Yale School of Architecture and the SVA

program, in which I teach. Each issue of *Clog* has a theme and the editors call for 500 word pieces on that theme. Their first theme was the work of Bjarke Ingels and I contributed to that one, revising a blog post I had written about his 8-house in Copenhagen and some of the unanswered questions I had about how it actually worked...

Five hundred words is basically a blog post, but these pieces are very well written, they're long enough for about one good point, and they are properly footnoted. As a cumulative, collective effort, these issues work as a deeper commentary and I think all of the posts collected in *Clog* might have been written elsewhere, but it's incredibly handy to have them all in one place and I think it creates a little bit of competition among the writers that causes them to up their game.

That's not to say that all is rosy now that so much of architecture culture connects online. There's still the problem of being there. When traditional print publications hired an architecture critic, they also provided a budget for travel to works of architecture. I get paid less for almost all of my writing that only exists online, and I don't work for anyone who will send me where I want to go.

Local critics can cover their own territory and in many cases that is preferable ... but what about cities without a critical community? What about other opinions? I mean, isn't it more fun to read three reviews of a building than just one? And as more architecture publications just rely on photos because they're free, the knowledge base for criticism goes down.

Second, there seems to be a persistent equivalence in discussing criticism in the digital realm, that criticism is negative. And despite all appearances, the digital realm doesn't necessarily reward negativity. A checklist on how to be successful on Twitter, for example, said it is better to be positive and to never complain. The most popular design and architecture blogs, many of which I'm sure you follow, tend to be relentlessly positive. I'm thinking of things like *Fast Company Design*, which seems to publish a new save the planet via design idea every day.



"A LITTLE TWITTER FREE-FOR-ALL INDICATES THAT A BUILDING HAS TOUCHED A NERVE AND GIVES EVERYONE A CHANCE TO ADD TO THE CONVERSATION..."

As everyone in this room probably knows, criticism doesn't have to be negative and I tell my students that even the most positive review has to have a paragraph of critique or your readers will think that you're asleep at the switch. I call it a little pepper. It's actually more difficult to write cogently about something you love than something you hate, which is why I'm always happy when I see a site trying to mix history in with the new, new thing. But as I so often feel the need to point out, all of those people who don't want to say anything negative are making critical judgments all of the time. That's the only way that they could only put things that they love on their sites. They just aren't telling us about those critical judgments.

Just as criticism can illuminate what went into making a building, it could also

illuminate the making of popular taste, via design blogs, architecture blogs, Tumblr and Pinterest. This may be the next frontier for criticism using the visual tools of the Internet to tell a critical story. I found it enriching, for example, to Instagram my recent trips to exhibitions and buildings, as a way of sharing my first cut, publicising something interesting and also teasing a longer piece that I'm going to write later. I see graduate students with Tumblr's, where they publish images every day from their research, as a sort of daily log of their best discoveries.

Can Pinterest be used critically? I'd love to see someone try, if only as I've argued, to prove that it is not the platform that is feminine, consumer driven, etc. A renewed focus on how visuals are used would also start a

deeper dialogue about the power of the rendering in architecture today.

As architecture, culture and criticism move online all aspects of it have to engage in dialogue and be examined as potential critical tools. It's no longer about blogs versus print or even an essay versus a post, as I wrote in my book. All these forms are happening simultaneously and I think we're still figuring out how to use them.

Architectural Review Asia Pacific was the media partner of the 'More than one way to skin a building' event.

Image: Alexandra Lange

Review: More than one way to skin a building

PAUL WALKER

Architectural criticism has been much under the spotlight in Australia in the past two or three years. Events last year in Melbourne and Sydney devoted to the topic, mostly rehearsed old complaints that the reviews of recently designed buildings that make up most of the critical writing found in Australia's 'professional' journals of architecture (*Architecture Australia*, *Monument*, *Architectural Review Australia* – now *AR Asia Pacific*) are too tepid, while the critic's experience is that few architects expect their work to be assessed in any terms but those used to conceive the design.

More interestingly, a couple of symposia convened in Brisbane by Naomi Stead of the University of Queensland, documented in the book *Semi-Detached*, have in part promoted new approaches to writing about architecture and included workshops to bring together young writers, photographers, and others interested in becoming active in the critical space. Alexandra Lange's visit to Australia added to this local debate by focussing on the impact of the new media, an issue widely acknowledged here but not yet much

thought through. Her appearance at the University of Melbourne was in the context of the first of its ABP Agenda events, a panel discussion with Lange, and local participants in the design media Rory Hyde, Karen Burns, and Michael Holt, chaired by Justine Clark.

Lange is herself a blogger and contributor to the US site Design Observer. She also teaches courses on writing about design and architecture and her recent book *Writing about Architecture* examines in detail the genres within the field and their potential for effecting improvement in the public dimensions of the built environment and processes that shape it. If the conventional lament about architectural criticism in Australia is fixated on writing in the professional journals, in the US it is focused instead on the decline of newspaper critics of architecture and the long form criticism that newspapers once sustained. Dismissing the proposition that long form critique is only possible in newspapers – online venues have multiple formats including those that sustain extended, complexly argued essays – Lange suggested that there was value also

in the short forms that blogging and – at the most extreme – tweeting have encouraged. Twitter is good for wisecracking and for news (buildings can be news), while blogs at their best develop a dialogue between blogger and readers and take shape as entries accumulate and develop a line of argument. Lange values the accessibility of online media – it encourages 'citizen critics'. She disdains claims on expertise the architectural profession makes in the face of expressions of concern about design issues from the wider public, being particularly scornful of Foster + Partners' defensiveness in reaction to wide concern about their designs for the much loved New York Public Library.

Blogs also favour concision. Lange suggested that the new print journal *CLOG*, for example, run by students in Yale's doctoral program in architecture, took its lead from the blog form: it invites contributions to its thematic issues (on e.g. Brutalism, Washington's National Mall, architectural rendering) of no more than 500 words, each akin to a blog entry, which she suggested required a degree of clarity from its writers which promoted



The panel R to L: Rory Hyde, Karen Burns, Alexandra Lange, Justine Clark, Michael Holt

rather than compromised quality. On the decline of the role of architectural criticism in American newspapers Lange noted that successful newspaper critics once built long term readerships which shared a community of interest based in their respective cities. Online media establish new kinds of community, based not in urban locality but rather in other shared interests, and these can also be activist in their orientation, Justine Clark's Parlour website being a case in point.

Lange's wide-ranging and positive take on the directions that architectural criticism is now taking was for the most part reinforced by the other panellists. While Rory Hyde professed respect for some contributors to the standard print journals (he nominated Alex Selenitsch as a personal favourite), in his view discussion about architecture in online formats ranges more widely than is encouraged by the conventions of the building review, that dominates conventional print media. In engaging with the connection of architecture with, say, science fiction, new media venues and communities are able to focus on architecture as a cultural field rather than the product of narrowly defined professional endeavour. Karen Burns' comments addressed the participatory aspects of Twitter and blogging; the conversational tone of these is akin to continuation of the pub conversations so important in the mythology of Melbourne's architectural culture. A difference, however, is that this dialogue can now potentially involve a wider group. Moreover, a site

like Archileaks (a repository for anonymous and often scarily funny comment on the employment conditions in famous architectural practices – watch for an Australian version rumoured to be coming soon) shows the potential of the new media in encouraging criticism of the architectural profession from the bottom up. Burns also commented that as a writer she enjoyed the immediate response from readers that an online presence facilitated. Quoting Victor Hugo's famous but mistaken prophecy from *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831) 'This will kill that!' (meaning print would kill the role of public architecture in giving expression to communal values), Michael Holt warned against the idea that the potential changes facilitated by new media technologies were inevitable. His comments suggested that no matter the media landscape, content is king – if you have something interesting to say, you can find opportunity to say it. But while this appears to put aside the prestige of the authorial voice, claims about the death of the author in the new media context have been overstated. In the new economy, commented Lange, people follow the writers they are interested in no matter the venues where they appear. And to underscore the point that criticism is not yet entirely in the hands of an undifferentiated, quasi-democratic blogisphere, Justine Clark reminded everyone of the editorial as well as authorial prerogatives that continue to shape publications both new in style and old – Madam Editor has not yet left the room.

Comments from the floor started to push the conversation in yet further directions. Simon Knott of Triple R's The Architects opined that criticism should move from judgement of architectural objects to instead educate the public about how process affects outcome. Holt recklessly promised that *AR Asia Pacific* under his editorship would move in just this direction... Another audience member worried that the anonymity of some online forums can undermine the legitimacy of commentary, but this was rebuffed by the panelists who were confident that readers can discriminate between the well informed and the stupid... Donald Bates asserted that there was still a role for a genre of architectural criticism directed to an expert rather than a lay audience, to which Burns responded there were multiple audiences even within the profession and Lange that increasingly for architects a key part of their professional arsenal is an ability to write... Phew!

If none of this seemed quite conclusive, the conversation of 'More Than One Way to Skin a Building' was optimistic, lively and constructive. Even this dinosaur not infrequent writer of building reviews in conventional print journals felt somewhat consoled. Asteroid alert on hold!

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Sep Yama, Finding Country

GINI LEE

Fire in the landscape is nowadays increasingly understood as the primary method used by Aboriginal people to tend and care for the places over which they hold custodianship – over Country. Yet for non-Indigenous Australians, fire is more often regarded as destructive, as something to be feared over long, hot and dry summers where management for fire more often results in scarring landscape rather than enhancing its aesthetic, territorial and use value. To witness architect and Meriam descendant Kevin O'Brien firing and burning a wall inscribed with a large map that traces and patterns the urban and nature forms of the city – that at first glance looks a lot like Brisbane – is to confront the seeming duality present in the image. Is Kevin tending the wall as an aesthetic practice, perhaps more aligned with the tools of

the graffiti artist, or is his intent rather to remake the colonial landscape through an even more provocative intervention?

To Find Country is to commit to an idea and to a practice about that which cannot be easily observed, especially so in the city. Kevin O'Brien's practice is made visible through potent and finely crafted architectures that reveal the complexities of working with Country through recasting urbanised Australia with trajectories that mark and name Indigenous origins. His built projects, teachings and collaborations are multilayered expressions of the negotiations that non-Indigenous designers rarely confront in designed projects that regard country and landscape as both *tabula rasa* (blank slate) and *terra nullius* (empty, ownerless). The Sep Yama Finding Country project insists that architectural

projects can no longer disregard continuing Aboriginal presence on the ground on which they purport to lie anew. As Kevin invites collaborators into his projects, this writing seeks also to negotiate meaning through transcribing thoughts progressed in the context of his recent Sep Yama Finding Country lecture for the MSD alongside architect Michael Markham as respondent.

On the 3rd of June 1992 Mabo v Queensland (no.2) was decided. The High Court by a majority of six to one upheld the claim and ruled that the lands of this continent were not terra nullius when European settlement occurred, and that the Meriam people were 'entitled as against the whole world to possessions, occupation, use and enjoyment of (most of) the lands of the Murray Islands.'

The decision struck down the doctrine that Australia was terra nullius – a land belonging to no one.

Critical to becoming aware of the dynamics of contemporary Australian landscapes is to acknowledge those fundamental events of 1992. Kevin above describes the moment when new maps of the territory that is now called Australia could commence being drawn through writing in Aboriginal names and descriptions of places according to the occupation, stories and relationships to Country, from then to now. The ubiquitous colonial practice of overlooking prior occupation in projects for mapped landscapes is most obviously revealed in early explorer maps of central Australia. Edward Eyre and Charles Sturt, among others, marked the routes and natural signposts of the desert territories they were 'discovering', most usually applying European names to sparsely noted places along their paths. Conversely Henry Hillier's fragile silk map of the country around the Birdsville Track is inscribed with around 2,500 Aboriginal names gathered from accounts freely given by the Dieri, Wangkangurru and other peoples of the area.¹ Clearly, these landscapes were not empty, rather they had been emptied out by an other culture and political system charged with enabling ownership and property rights for the sole benefit of the newcomers. This was not an isolated practice. The revelation that places are more numerous and potently described through language connected to landscape features and histories, is a largely unmet opportunity for contemporary practitioners of architecture, landscape and urban design to challenge current understanding of both design knowledge and method.

I am interested in this [the Mabo decision] for two reasons. Firstly I am a descendent of the Meriam, and secondly as an architect, because architecture students are trained to begin with an empty sheet of paper. In Australia, I say, this paper is not empty, but is full of what can't be seen. The prevailing spectrum of colonial architectural positions bookended by decorated sheds and at the other end metaphysical decks is an argument against Finding Country. In the same vein, the diagram locating non-aboriginal male architects and non-aboriginal female architects is also an argument against the aboriginality of the Finding Country endeavour.

Kevin's travels across spatial, social and political territories are both a method for the practice of an expanded spatial architecture, and a way of coming to know places as they might have been and can be. Through the idea of emptying the urban grid to reveal Country, Kevin tasks us to imagine how places become again when Aboriginal perspectives and knowledge are returned to Australian cities and landscapes; in this case through the medium of the collaborative Sep Yama Finding Country Exhibition for the Venice Biennial 2012 which he and others sponsored to give presence to Country beyond the officially sanctioned event.

The Finding Country Exhibition is an idea Aboriginal in origin and trajectory. It seeks a contest between the traditions of aboriginal space (country), and European space (property). To date, the central exhibit has been an 8x3 metre gridded map of the city of Brisbane consisting of 44 submissions emptying individual grids by half to reveal something lost. Each grid

is an architectural negotiation with decline, whilst carrying an implicit personal challenge to find country.²

Kevin's position is that 'Aboriginal Country is excluded from the Australian city'. Brisbane, located on the Country of the Turrbal people, is the site that confronts that which can't be seen. It employs the operative tactic of decline to provoke speculation and revelation and 'to imagine an opportunity for the recovery of Country'. Working to draw the new architectural and urban project on already populated rather than blank paper, Finding Country commences with the map of current conditions. A community of architectural collaborators is charged with re-negotiating the grid where Aboriginal Country is envisaged through erasure of the extant. Revealed in each remapped grid and accompanying text are the authors' multiple understandings, musings and polemics that seek an Aboriginal presence in a regard for design. Sometimes advanced through naively prescriptive non-Aboriginal perspectives, patterns and forms, these proposals nonetheless re-present inner Brisbane with integrity. Ultimately this is a project for an incomplete urban landscape of possibility for a land free of fixed boundaries, predicated on the continuum of land, sea and sky of Kevin's elemental island landscapes and motivated by an idea for a dialectic dreaming for Country.

Professor Gini Lee is a landscape architect and interior designer and the Elisabeth Murdoch Chair of Landscape Architecture at the University of Melbourne

1 Jones, P, Naming the Dead Heart: Hillier's Map and Reuther's Gazetteer of 2468 Places names in North-eastern South Australia, <http://epress.anu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/ch144.pdf>, pp187-200
2 Sep Yama, Finding Country <http://www.findingcountry.com.au/>

A conversation with Sir Peter Cook

JUSTINE CLARK

The iconic British architect, Sir Peter Cook, visited the Faculty in February 2013 to run a Masterclass with MSD students and deliver a public lecture on his journey from *Archigram*, the avant-garde architectural group formed in the 1960s, to CRAB the innovative practice he established six years ago. Justine Clark caught up with Peter Cook to talk to him about the role drawing plays in architectural research and production.

JUSTINE CLARK: The theme of this issue of *Atrium* is around 'critical theory and the future of practice'. Rather than talking about 'criticism' per se, I thought I'd ask about drawing and education as modes of critical engagement.

PETER COOK: I'm intrigued by the preponderance of the word 'critical'. It is used more and more, but to me 'critical' is very negative. I prefer 'creative', which has a different psychology.

To be critical is to be a 'smarty pants' – all those 'clever' people who can't design. To be creative involves a certain amount of wit. It's a matter of not necessarily following precedent. There's a big difference between the person who is creative and the person who is critical.

JC: For me 'smarty pants' criticism is usually just not very 'good' criticism. I see criticism differently, as a productive engagement with the work in question.

One way to proceed – following from your book, *Drawing: The Motive Force of Architecture* – is by talking about the role drawing plays in the production of architecture and about its propositional, provocative possibility.

PC: The interesting thing about drawing is it doesn't have to tell the truth. It can exaggerate certain characteristics and suppress others, or fetishize certain things, or jump reference, jump scale, jump context. Drawing is a wonderful way of not having to follow the narrow path. We can say, this drawing will show what some things look like and deliberately not show others. That's interesting.

Drawing can scramble the value system and it can home in – or not – on particular conditions. A creative drawing can be quite particular. It can deal with, say, the armature and not the flesh. Or with the atmosphere but not the specific position of the object. Or it can jump across these things. That makes drawing a very intriguing subject.

I'm not a naturally good drawer; I can't draw horses or still lives. I had to force myself to be able to draw. I taught myself tricks to look as if I'm a good drawer, but I'm not really.

JC: That means you have to think about what you're drawing and what matters. If you have an immediate facility, the danger is that the drawings are pretty without doing much work. For me drawing is a place where work can happen.

PC: A lot of stuff done on computers has that same facility, somebody goes "da da da da" and out it rolls. They haven't really thought their way through it.

JC: It often seems there's not enough room for doubt in the computer – it can be too easy to make the drawing look good. However, in the last chapter of your book you also write of the potential of computer and hand drawing coming together.

PC: Yes, you can do things in combination – clipping in and out. There is also the potential of the person to override, to choose not to acknowledge what the computer is telling you. You have to do that.

JC: One of the other things is letting a drawing take you somewhere that may not be quite what you intend.

PC: Absolutely. Can I read you something? I wrote this over the last two days, for AD magazine. It's called 'Looking and Drawing':

'How can people draw things in the abstract? Even plotting a line on a scrap of paper saying, "here's the nearest place to buy potatoes", followed by a scribbled arrow, a wobbly line to the supermarket door... even this is a product of memory and episode. In the invention business, this involves a considerable scrambling of all sorts of memories and episodes. Of course the hand, the pen, the indulgent line, the computer mouse, the delight in a watercolour wash, with a bit of sediment here and bit more green there, with the deft choice of a superimposed bit of Photoshop here and fade out there ...

'These are the support troops who sometimes seem to take over the strategy of the battle. In recent times, I have had the luxury and challenge of being alongside Gavin Rowbottom, who is an amazing drawer. Once again, as with David Greene, Mike Webb, Ron Herron and Archigram, I try to jog along, unable to draw as instinctively as them and therefore shamed into finding tricks and devices – French curves, straight edges, clever pens – in developing a form of exaggerated collage come bright graphics, plus a good deal of doggedness. Then, alongside Christine Hawley and sometimes Ron Herron as well, I plodded on. But now, with the experience of a long distance walker who has at least stamina, I know how to keep

going, attacking the awkward parts of a drawing in the morning, and coasting long with the messy and repetitive parts in the evening. Yet, yes the business of drawing became, not only a place of interpreting ones dreams, but of assembling the likely episodes of some kind of predictable echelon. For me, the best drawings have always been those in which more than 60 per cent was at the outset, merely a snip of what was to come'.

'To have the whole thing plotted out beforehand, and entirely predictable, and therefore just a graphic exercise ... is infinitely boring. A drawing should be an investigative device, a voyage of discovery, a series of glances into the future – "Oh my God, was that what it was about!"'





A CONVERSATION WITH SIR PETER COOK CONTINUED

'In all of these drawings, there are constant questions of imagination versus hard information. The familiar versus the rhetorical, plus the underlying issue of clarity and accuracy, or it can be to prosaically represent only what can be theirs, to miss the point. If we observe on the one hand, and create on the other, there is surely the potential for alchemy, or in other words, you don't have to push out what you feed in, for a drawing can suggest much more'.

JC: There is a lovely essay by Roland Barthes where he says something like, 'when I start a drawing I never know where I'm going.' I think that's important. I'm also interested in where one finds the space in a drawing to think – the time for contemplation – and in finding what a drawing can tell you as you go.

PC: Yes. A certain sort of student gets desperate when they can't put it through the computer – the computer becomes a wonderful prop that they can't get distance from. I'm so conscious of the sort of inadequacy in drawings that I'm interested in them.

JC: I'm also interested in the polemical power drawings can have.

PC: To some extent you can decide, before you start, where a drawing can position itself in the discussion. That sometimes means that the drawing has to have a particular power. It can be too graphic and put certain commentators off. It can be insufficiently graphic and not engage. That's another thing – making a move and deciding what its audience is.

I can show you something I'm working on now. It's a bog-ugly drawing. (I buy myself square gridded paper because it focuses me.)

This is a funny commission for a very small building at the college I went to before I went to London. It was a provincial art college with an architecture school, now it's a full university. It has gone right up the tree. They want me to design a studio shared by all departments (fashion, architecture, graphics and painting and a lot of drama).

I can see the project in my head. But they want an arty-looking drawing for an exhibition in the middle of March. I'll send drawings like this to the office and get them to put it into the computer, then I'll do an 'art' drawing, which wouldn't have been possible without the computer.

I don't know how honest, dishonest, or sideways that is.

JC: It's not really about honesty or dishonesty, is it? It's about working.

PC: I have all sorts of ideas about this big 'eye' that brings in the light. The site is slightly tilted so it exposes itself. I'm going to bring light under this bench – you won't see natural sunlight, only the bright light under the bench. I've not seen that done before. Asplund did something with translucent benching, but here the bench will be a cover. I want to play a game between north light and bright light.

So I have got ideas about light and space and so on, but in a funny way the drawing doesn't tell me much more than I already know. I must ponder on that.

That's how I design. Like most people; you do a plan and you've got an idea of the spatial things, but they're not always there in the plan.

I'm basically a very straight up and down architect. I work out how big it is, where the light comes from, whether you can get upstairs at the back, if there's room for the model to change. And there has to be



some storage – I'll say "okay, that's going to be about 2-1/2 meters, da, da, da, da". I can't help going through these prosaic conversations with myself. It's going to be lovely. I just want to know whether you can get the storage in.

Somebody in the office will do the parametric diagram, but I want to control how deep the seat is, how big the orifice is. That can be more effectively done with a computer that can tilt the thing and get a beautiful shape.

JC: It's also about how you're used to thinking. With a pen in your hand?

PC: I draw, I draw – that will be one of a hundred scribbles in the end. For example, the Christine Hawley project in the book has a pencil scribble, an ink tracing and a colour version. The scheme is in all three, but it is hard to say where the definitive moment of thinking is – it's somewhere between the pencil and the ink.

JC: Isn't it in the set, in the encounter between the three?

PC: There are many parallels ... where is the moment of thinking? A certain amount of hard information is very useful. Without it you just have a funny, floppy idea.

JC: I was also interested in your discussion of the section.

PC: I was brought up on sections. You'd get a higher mark for a good section than for a plan. It was assumed that you could plan, but the section shows how things knot together. Often it is the hardest thing to control.

Even with this tiny drawing studio, I'm thinking of what will happen to the ceiling above the gallery. Do I start tailoring? Do I pull it down, or do I have to make it like a box? But it mustn't be like a box. So my concerns are much to do with this tailoring.

JC: I wonder if you can talk about education more? The environment architects work in is shifting. How do you get students to engage critically with the discipline – particularly as they will be the ones to remake architecture?

PC: Students now are much more professional than we ever were. They're very good at positioning themselves, too good. I watch students choose a unit not because they think it's the best, but because the people teaching have good connections. Even the choice of boyfriend or girlfriend can be tactical –

I've seen it too many times. The right unit leads to the right office; they hang out in the right bar; they manoeuvre in the office. There are a lot of these people in architecture now. They're not dreaming. They get nervous when it gets too risky.

JC: So, is there no hope for shaking things up?

PC: Except for the boredom factor. And the attack can come from an unexpected direction. What will happen when Western architects surviving by doing work in China find that the Chinese can do it better? There's going to be a big crunch sooner or later, and maybe some of the funky people will come from there, because they have to think more dynamically.

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Image: Sir Peter Cook and MSD students who participated in his masterclass

This is not a building: drawings and architectural criticism

ANTHONY WORM

On December 16 1954 a letter was typed, with some corrections made by hand, on Taliesin West stationery, and sent from one architect to another. What was written was an opinion of a design proposal, which the writer refers to as an ‘elaborate and expensive fiasco’ and a ‘manifest aberration’.ⁱ The author was, you may have guessed, Frank Lloyd Wright. The receiver was the late American Mid-Western architect Bruce Goff. As a result of this exchange and other events surrounding it, the project the letter refers to, the Joe Price studio, was never built. Wright had effectively engaged in what could be described as non-other than, by today’s standards, an unconscionable act of sabotage.

It is not unusual for commentary and criticism to exist regarding the unbuilt work of architects as seen as part of the *raison d’être* of the architect and their approach to architecture. It is perhaps more unusual for projects to remain unbuilt works because of the more or less direct intervention of other architects. The implication of an unbuilt project is that it exists at the very least as architectural drawings. The contents of the letter and other historical accounts of the event suggests that it is not a verbal description of the project that Wright was relying on to deliver his critical evaluation but was largely based on his having viewed the drawings of the Joe Price studio design. The project – the *architecture* – has a life sustained by some form of representation. The discursive nature of architectural drawings have been much discussed in recent yearsⁱⁱ however this example highlights a more subtle tradition of translation of architectural drawings perpetuated in architectural criticism: that architecture-as-a-drawing is the same as architecture-as-a-building, which therefore presumes that what is present and

retrievable in the drawing is the ‘sense’ and ‘effect’ of the completed artifact, albeit from the perspective of a viewer.

In other words, it is all too easy to equate a thing with its signifier. This utterly curious phenomenon is eloquently highlighted by René Magritte’s painting *Ceci n’est pas une pipe* [*This Is Not A Pipe*] (1926). At work in Magritte’s painting is our compulsion to identify words with the essence of things. In Michel Foucault’s critique of this painting he drew upon the notion that in traditional Western thought, into the painting (the picture), thought of as “an exclusively visual production, creeps a secret, inescapably linguistic element: ‘This painted image is that thing’”ⁱⁱⁱ. Ask anybody what the picture is of and they would say “it’s a pipe”.^{iv} To this Magritte would dare the observer: “And yet, could you stuff my pipe?”^v

Similarly, could Wright inhabit Goff’s building? In his letter Wright refers to the design as an artifact – something Wright could see and decipher as both architectural and as architecture. It could only become such for Wright via visual evidence, and that is to say via the design drawings. Wright regards the drawings frontally: “So it is that the critic may look at his subject as if it were some kind of projection whose meaning is assured by the fact that it is addressed to him”. Wright equated the drawings with a kind of architectural essence to which he was simultaneously both privy and not privy: he made the judgment based on his own ideas of architecture and his ‘legacy’, and he made the judgment on his knowledge of how to understand architectural drawings. In Goff’s supposed attempt to apparently defy the underlying order of modularity, frontality, symmetry, and axiality – all things that flourish under the accord of orthographic projection – the sight of a well defined architecture is obscured,

and evidently Wright appeared fearful of the consequences of this compromised vision.

With unbuilt projects, or projects yet to be built, the drawings are regarded as relics of buildings that never existed, fossilised remnants that are therefore assumed to contain the story of the architectural event they naturally embody, and it is just a matter of interpretation that this story can be divulged and (re)constructed. The history of the Price studio that never happened has a life in the design drawings that is a subject of perpetual reminiscence. Destined never to be, through words it is made to loom larger than the real thing, and, in a much-overlooked paradox, the drawings somehow prove its worthiness to be so.

Anthony is completing his PhD on the subject of architectural criticism with a focus on the term ‘free’ architecture, titled ‘Free and Architecture and Goff’. His thesis is being supervised by Prof. Paul Walker.

i © Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, 2007.

Letter dated December 16, 1954. Bruce Goff Archive, Ryerson and Burnham Library, Art Institute of Chicago.

ii See Robin Evans, Desley Luscombe, Edward Robbins, et al.

iii As discussed by James Harkness in his translator’s introduction to Foucault’s *This is Not a Pipe*. See Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, James Harkness (trans), Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983, p.8.

iv Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, pp.29-31.

v Harry Torczyner, *Magritte: Ideas and Images*, New York: Abrams, 1977, p.71

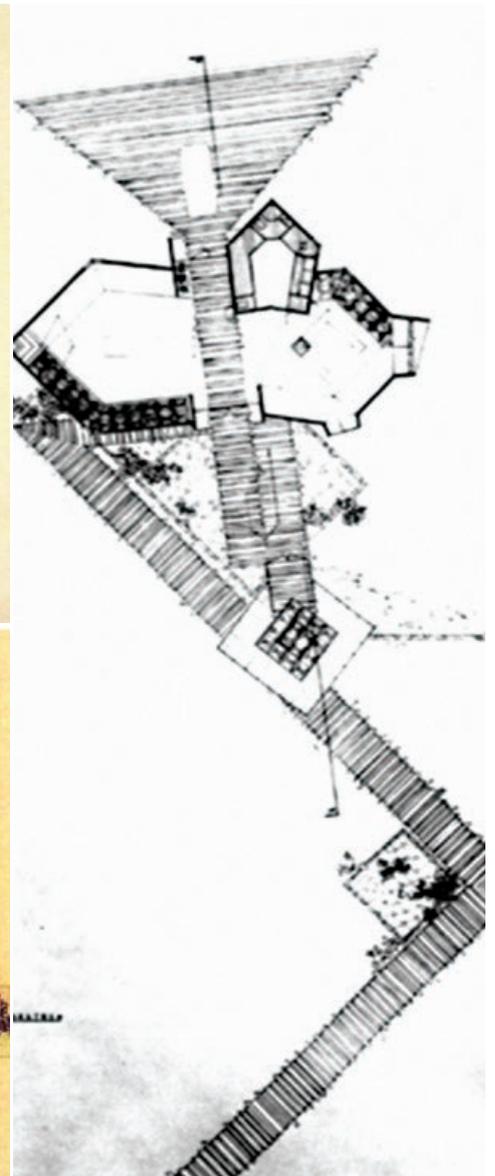
vi Robin Evans, “In Front of Lines that Leave Nothing Behind”, in K. Michael Hays (ed), *Architecture Theory Since 1968* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999), p. 482. Originally published in AA Files, No. 6 (London: Architectural Association Publications, May 1984).

Images:

Plan image: Joe Price Studio project, first of two designs, 1953. Plan. (Source: David De Long, *Toward Absolute Architecture*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988. p.125.)

Perspective image: Joe Price Studio project, first of two designs, 1953. Perspective drawing. (Source: David De Long, *Toward Absolute Architecture*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988. Colour Plate 16.)

'This is not a pipe' by Rene Magritte: (Source of image: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Treachery_of_Images)



Interview: Judy Turner, Director of Advancement

THE FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE, BUILDING AND PLANNING'S NEW DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT HAS AN IMPRESSIVE PHILANTHROPY AND ARTS MANAGEMENT BACKGROUND, AND A PASSION FOR SCOTTISH FIDDLELING. *ATRIUM* ASKED **JUDY TURNER** ABOUT ABP'S LANDMARK NEW BUILDING PROJECT, WHAT INSPIRES PEOPLE TO 'GIVE' AND HER LOVE OF MUSIC.



Prior to joining ABP you were Senior Manager of Annual Giving at the Australian Ballet and Development Manager at the Jewish Museum of Australian from 2003 to 2010. How has working for two flagship Australian arts institutions informed your approach to fundraising?

To be successful as a fundraiser you have to love the cause, and in the case of the Jewish Museum, The Australian Ballet and now the University of Melbourne, this has not been difficult for me. On top of that, I have learned that in every instance, the campaign must start with a real understanding of the case for support. This is no different in the arts, or in health, welfare, or in education. Why should people give is the question we always ask ourselves, and why should they give to our Faculty, our University, rather than to any of the myriad other charities, causes and organisations seeking their support. Once you can articulate a case which not only convinces you (most importantly) but also moves you, I feel you are half way there.

What attracted you to join ABP and to take on the challenging role of Director of Advancement?

The University itself. Pretty much all my family except me were students here at one time or another, with both my mum and dad and my son being editors of *Farrago* in their days. I grew up on campuses (the ANU and the UPNG) and it offered a sense of coming home, to tell the truth. Having worked closely with some inspiring architects – all UoM alumni – at the Jewish Museum I felt attracted to the way they look at the world and the good that they can do in it. I was interviewed in the last days of the old building and liked the feel of the place, and the people. Of course, and capital campaigns are always exciting to work on.

What inspires people to give and, in the case of our new building project, give to a built environment and design School?

People give for various reasons but mostly they are motivated by the desire to "give back". Many graduates feel they owe their success in life to their university, and want their kids and the generations beyond to be able to benefit in the way they did. There's also that great sense of belonging that comes to you when you give – in fact, it's well known to all of us who give as well as asking that the pleasure of giving is something that far outweighs the pain of making the gift!

What sort of opportunities are available for individuals and companies wanting to support the new building project?

We are building a giving program that we hope everyone will feel able to be part of, and we hope that by the time our new building opens in early 2015, every single former student or academic & professional staff member – who might be interested, has had the opportunity to donate. We have a number of fledgling Giving Groups which are being led by committed volunteers from among age cohorts, and who will be raising funds to name a part of the building for someone very special to their cohort and to the faculty. We also have some significant naming opportunities which are more appropriate to larger Philanthropic Foundations or to major corporations.

Outside your professional career, you have an interesting musical one. Tell me about the Melbourne Scottish Fiddle Club and your passion for music.

During my undergrad years at the ANU (studying History and English) I always played in orchestras, and taught at summer music camps, and was always pulled in this direction. On moving to Melbourne I actually retrained as a violin teacher, studying at the old Melbourne State College in the very building that the

Faculty is now housed – what an amazing trip down memory lane this is. In fact for the first few weeks, each time I would go into the women's rest room on level 4 I would feel a slight queasiness, reminiscent of the nerves caused by our performance seminar held each week on Level 4! I started my working life as a violin teacher and the love of fiddling grew out of that. In the Western suburbs tech schools classical violin was not such an attractive proposition, and to keep the kids interested you had to move to new styles. The MSFC was my baby and is an awesome performing machine – with four golden fiddle awards to its name. These days I am an elder stateswoman and can crank out the tunes till 4.00am once or twice a year.

How can people contact you if they want to learn more about the ABP new building project?

A call is always great – I love to talk to people more than anything – or email of course, as I am often out of the building making new friends for the Faculty. Or, if neither of those works, an old fashioned letter will reach me too! My details appear at the bottom of this piece.

Finally, what is your favourite building or urban space in Australia?

Well, this may sound predictable, but after Circular Quay and environs which for me is the space that has everything – history, colour, vibrancy, memory, museums and that amazing Opera House – I absolutely love the Grollo (Eureka) Tower in Southbank. I like the way it calls to you from many different parts of our town, and the way at a special time of night and from a special point on Albert Park Lake you can see the building talking to the sun.

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New building update

In February 2013, the University of Melbourne signed a contract for the construction of our new building. The contract was awarded to Brookfield Multiplex, with construction of our new building to commence in May 2013 and a completion date of 12 December 2014. The contract negotiation process brought the project within budget and in time for the Faculty to embark on the academic year in 2015 in a state-of-the-art facility.

Brookfield Multiplex has recently completed numerous education projects including the Swanston Academic Building at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, the University of NSW's award-winning Tyree Energy Technologies Building and the University's Melbourne Brain Centre in 2011.

Piling began on site on 25 April, signalling the commencement of main works. Due to the excellent

progress of the demolition and enabling works on site over summer, we are currently on schedule from a "whole of project" perspective, and will soon witness our new building taking form. "This is a demonstration of excellent project management by all parties," said ABP Dean Tom Kvan, "especially by the two contractors who now share the site so we can keep to our challenging schedule."

In line with our vision of creating a 'living, learning building', Brookfield Multiplex will establish a 'Living Lab' on site enabling students pursuing construction-related degrees the opportunity to learn about construction methods during the building process. Site tours will also be conducted for students and others allowing them first-hand access to a major building site and the expertise of the project team.

A viewing platform and strategically positioned cameras will also give

stakeholders access to the project site and information about its design, construction status, built pedagogy, complexity and functionality.

This exciting project is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning to articulate its strategic objectives and demonstrate its commitment to innovation and sustainability through the design and delivery of an outstanding campus building.

Regular project updates will be posted on the **new building blog** on the ABP website, charting the project's construction progress, milestones and related research activities. It is also the place to visit to see timelapse video and images of the construction.

www.abp.unimelb.edu.au/blog



Our Donors

ANNUAL GIVING TO ABP: 2012 – 2013

We Thank Our Generous Supporters.

The Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning is grateful to the generous individuals, families and companies listed below who have donated to provide better opportunities for our students and staff over the period January 1 2012 to April 5 2013. Going forward, in each issue of Atrium we will be recognising our donors for the previous and current calendar years.

\$100,000 or above

Volvo Research and Educational Foundations

\$10,000 - \$49,999

Vera Moore Foundation
AECOM
Kevin K W Kang

\$1,000 - \$9,999

Richard Falkinger AO
Ernest & Letitia Wears Memorial Fund
Alasdair N Fraser & Jenny Fraser
Ron Billard

Below \$1,000

12 Supporters

GIVING TO THE NEW ABP BUILDING

The Faculty is also indebted to the many visionary corporations, groups and individuals who have already contributed towards our Faculty target of raising \$20m towards the new Building. The following people have pledged the amounts listed below, since our fundraising commenced.

\$500,000 or above

Andrew Lee King Fun
Hansen Yuncken Pty Ltd &
The Peter Hansen Family Trust

\$100,000 - \$500,000

Alan F C Choe
Hijjas bin Kasturi & Angela Hijjas
Koh Seow Chuan
Daniel T H Teo & Soo Khim Goh
Alfred H K Wong
Anonymous

\$10,000 - \$99,999

Dato' John Lau
Grant F Marani
Roderick I Macdonald & Margaret J. Macdonald
Geoffrey J Lawler
Kai Chen
Peter H Lovell
Glyn C Davis AC
Ooi Choun Theng
Tan Pei Ing
Jay Yeunh Wee-Tiong

\$1,000 - \$9,999

Philip Chun
Tony P Green
Edward R Yencken & Janet A Yencken
Edward F Billson & Margaret J Billson
Peter H. Williams
Paul D Coombe
Max Chester OAM
Robert A McGauran
Jonathan Gardiner
Richard J Hansen
Lim Chong Nam
Patrick R Ness
Tim L Roberts
Simon Swaney & Carolyn Kay
Evan Walker AO & Judith Walker
Chris W White
Thomas Kvan & Justyna Karakiewicz
3 Anonymous Donors

Below \$1,000

57 Supporters

The Faculty also thanks the generous donors that have supported the Dean's Honours Awards and Grad Ex exhibition, supporting the Faculty's acknowledgement of academic excellence.

We have made our best attempt to ensure the list is correct, but we are aware that our records may not be complete.

If you notice any errors or omissions please contact:
Andrew Middleton,
Advancement Manager,
on (03) 8344 3111
or miaj@unimelb.edu.au.

Impact of Giving Stories

JUDY TURNER

A PARTNERSHIP STRENGTHENED BY TIME

Peter Hansen OAM is proud to be the third generation of his family to have led the family firm, Hansen Yuncken Pty Ltd, and even prouder to have seen the fourth – in the shape of his children Richard and Louise – take up the mantle of leadership.

Hansen Yuncken is an Australian success story, and will celebrate its centenary in 2018. “Our interest in skills development goes back a long way,” said Peter, “and our family involvement with the University is of very long-standing.”

Both of Peter’s sons studied here at Melbourne, but tragically, eldest son Michael died while completing his studies in construction. The family’s generosity led them to dedicate the Hansen Yuncken Prize in Michael’s memory.

Peter, son Richard and daughter Louise, have all served on the Faculty’s Building Advisory Committee, and see University work as “our sort of work”.

Hansen Yuncken has been responsible for many buildings on the University campus, most recently the refurbishment of our iconic Engineering Building, which dates from 1899. “Once the Second World War was over things shifted, and apprentices started getting university qualifications, which was a great thing for the industry,” Peter said.

The firm has always believed in supporting the best training for young people interested in careers in the construction industry, and Peter is convinced that this policy has delivered back to the company – in spades!

“As a local company and a leader in the industry in this country, we have donated to many universities over many years to enable the best students to receive the best training. It makes good business sense and we see it as part of our social responsibility.”

GIVING IS A PLEASURE AND AN HONOUR

Andrew Lee King Fun had already graduated Bachelor of Architecture from Hong Kong University before he decided to further his education with an extra final year at the University of Melbourne.

Back in 1959, he said, the difference in atmosphere at his new University was very exciting and refreshing. He loved studying here, and was bowled over by the informality and friendliness of the students and lecturers. Particularly happy memories were around the retreat that students then attended at Mt Martha, and the infamous Archi Revue.

But it wasn’t all beer and beaches – studying and later tutoring at the University of Melbourne gave Andrew a very innovative and different slant on his chosen profession that has served him to this day. He is very proud too that his son Douglas (now a Director in the firm of Andrew Lee King Fun & Associates) graduated from the Faculty and that his grandson shows every sign of also becoming an architect!

The many different nationalities he encountered here in Melbourne, and the support shown to all of them, particularly impressed him. When asked why he chose to make a very generous gift to the Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning, Andrew said he shared Dean Tom Kvan’s vision for the new building as one where students can keep abreast of the latest developments in sustainability.

“It has always been my wish that a sustainable training ground be developed for the better learning of future professionals,” Mr Lee said. “I feel honoured and very happy to have the opportunity to participate in this project.”

THE POWER OF MANY

Well before the design brief for the new Architecture, Building and Planning Building was out, or the winning designers appointed, a visionary group of Singapore alumni came together under the leadership of Mr Alan Choe (BArch 1957) and Mr Alfred Wong (BArch 1953) and made a commitment to raise \$1m towards the Faculty’s grand vision.

Rather than giving individually, the group chose to harness the power of many, and to set an example of generosity to other alumni in Singapore. The group’s generosity will be recognised in a dedicated space within the new building.

This example has inspired others, and six Giving Groups have since formed around age and geographic cohorts, and in some cases around the collective wish to honour someone who has meant a lot to the group and contributed significantly to an aspect of Faculty history.

If you are an ABP alumnus and the opportunity to memorialise an important person or group within our beautiful new building inspires you, we would be delighted to hear from you.



Inside the Faculty

ERA RESULTS

ABP was exceptionally pleased with the outcomes of the 2012 Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) assessment, which rates research quality within Australia's higher education institutions. Of particular note, our research in Architecture was awarded the highest possible rating for outstanding performance well above world standard. We are also proud of our achievements in the areas of Urban Planning and Building, receiving excellent ratings of above world standard and at world standard respectively.

PEOPLE

Professor Alan Pert's architectural practice NORD featured in the February issue of the international journal A+U. NORD's work at the 2012 Olympics was also featured in the November issue of A+U.

In March, **Professor Philip Goad** presented a lecture to final year students on design and research at the University of Tasmania in Launceston. He then presented on 'JH Esmond Dorney and Australian architecture' at Dorney House in Hobart, at a workshop organized by the University of Tasmania and Hobart City Council.

Nader Tehrani of NADAAA visited ABP in May for a week of engagement activities and to present at the national AIA Conference.

Professor Donald Bates travelled to California to present a lecture as part of the UCLA Architecture and Urban Design lecture series in April.

PhD student **Tanja Beer** is investigating the viability of sustainable performance spaces that save materials going to landfill. Conducting her PhD under the guidance of **Dr Dominique Hes**, Tanja has been exposed to progressive sustainability ideologies. She has engaged in a number of projects to test her hypotheses and push the boundaries of eco-design, including a recyclable, biodegradable and edible performance space called *The Living Stage* for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival.

EVENTS & BOOKS

Dr Alan March launched his new publication, *The Democratic Plan: Analysis and Diagnosis* at the University of Melbourne on 31 January. The book was launched by Vice Chancellor, Professor Glyn Davis. This seminal text considers the need for deeper organising principles for self-understanding, action and productive critique in urban planning. Conflicting approaches and variable governmental settings have undermined planning's legitimacy and allowed its goals to be eroded and co-opted in the face of mounting challenges.

New directions in health architecture was the focus of a public lecture with **Professor Alan Dilani** in March. Professor Dilani is Founder and Director General of

the International Academy of Design and Health in Stockholm. Co-presented with the architectural firm *Lyons*, Dilani addressed how recent research has revealed that the quality of the building's environment – its architecture and design – plays a critical role in promoting health and wellbeing.

Professor Peter Rowe recently presented a public lecture on Shanghai's urban planning since 1978. Rowe is Raymond Garbe Professor of Architecture and Urban Design and Harvard University Distinguished Service Professor. He was in Melbourne to be conferred an Honorary Doctorate in Architecture on 16 March.

International expert on Indian architecture, **Dr George Michell** presented three lectures in April exploring the building

traditions of peninsular India over 1000 years. The series was co-presented by the Australian India Institute.

Also in April, Queensland-based architect **Kevin O'Brien** presented a fascinating talk entitled 'SEP YAMA/FINDING COUNTRY', which referenced the Finding Country exhibition at the 13th Venice Architecture Biennale, 2012. You can read more about Kevin's practice on pages 14 and 15.

Innovators from the **Helsinki Design Lab**, Bryan Boyer and Justin W. Cook, visited ABP recently to present a lecture on two exciting projects: *Brickstarter*, a book which considers how crowd sourcing and funding could be applied to the built environment, and *Low2No*, a sustainable urban development project.

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to recent Bachelor of Environments graduate **Sarah Rees** who has been awarded a prestigious Charlie Perkins Scholarship to undertake postgraduate study at Cambridge University.

Two of the 25 semi-finalists in the running for the prestigious **2013 Berkeley Prize** are Bachelor of Environments student

Bryan Chung and graduate **Isabel Deakin**. 152 students from 26 countries entered the annual competition, each submitting an essay on the topic of 'The Architect and the Accessible City'. This is a remarkable achievement by both Bryan and Isabel in a global competition.

Congratulations to **Adam Pustola**, one of five winners in the 2013 Dulux Study Tour, the coveted program that inspires

and fosters Australia's next generation of emerging architectural talent. Now in its sixth year, the 2013 Dulux Study Tour will travel to Shanghai, Barcelona and London. Adam graduated from the faculty in 2004 with first class honours. Currently at Lyons, Adam has contributed to innovative public-sector projects, in particular the Australian National University Colleges of Sciences Precinct.

WHAT'S ON

Alumni Survey Exhibition:
Denton Corker Marshall,

Land Art: Nine Small Buildings

Dates 17 May-14 June

Venue Wunderlich @ B,
757 Swanston St, Melbourne

This winter ABP plays host to an exhibition which gives rare insight into the design process of architectural practice Denton Corker Marshall. The Land Art: Nine Small Buildings exhibition features photographs, sketches and models for seven residential houses and two small buildings – the Australia Pavilion for the Venice Biennale, Italy, and the Stonehenge Visitor Centre and Interpretation Museum, UK.

Transform: Altering the Future of Architecture

Date Thursday 30 May

Venue Spring Street Conference Centre, 1 Spring Street

If architecture was more inclusive would it also be in a stronger position? Together with Parlour, we invited participants to come together for a one day workshop to discuss and debate issues of gender, agency and remaking the profession.

ABP DEAN'S LECTURE SERIES 2013

Gregg Pasquarelli
(SHoP Architects, New York)
'Out of Practice'
Tuesday 14 May, 7pm

Alan Greenberger (Dept Mayor for Economic Development and Director of Commerce, Philadelphia)
Tuesday 06 August, 7pm

João Nunes (PROAP, Portugal)
Tuesday 08 October, 7pm

For details of all the Dean's Lecture Series and other ABP events visit:
www.abp.unimelb.edu.au/events



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