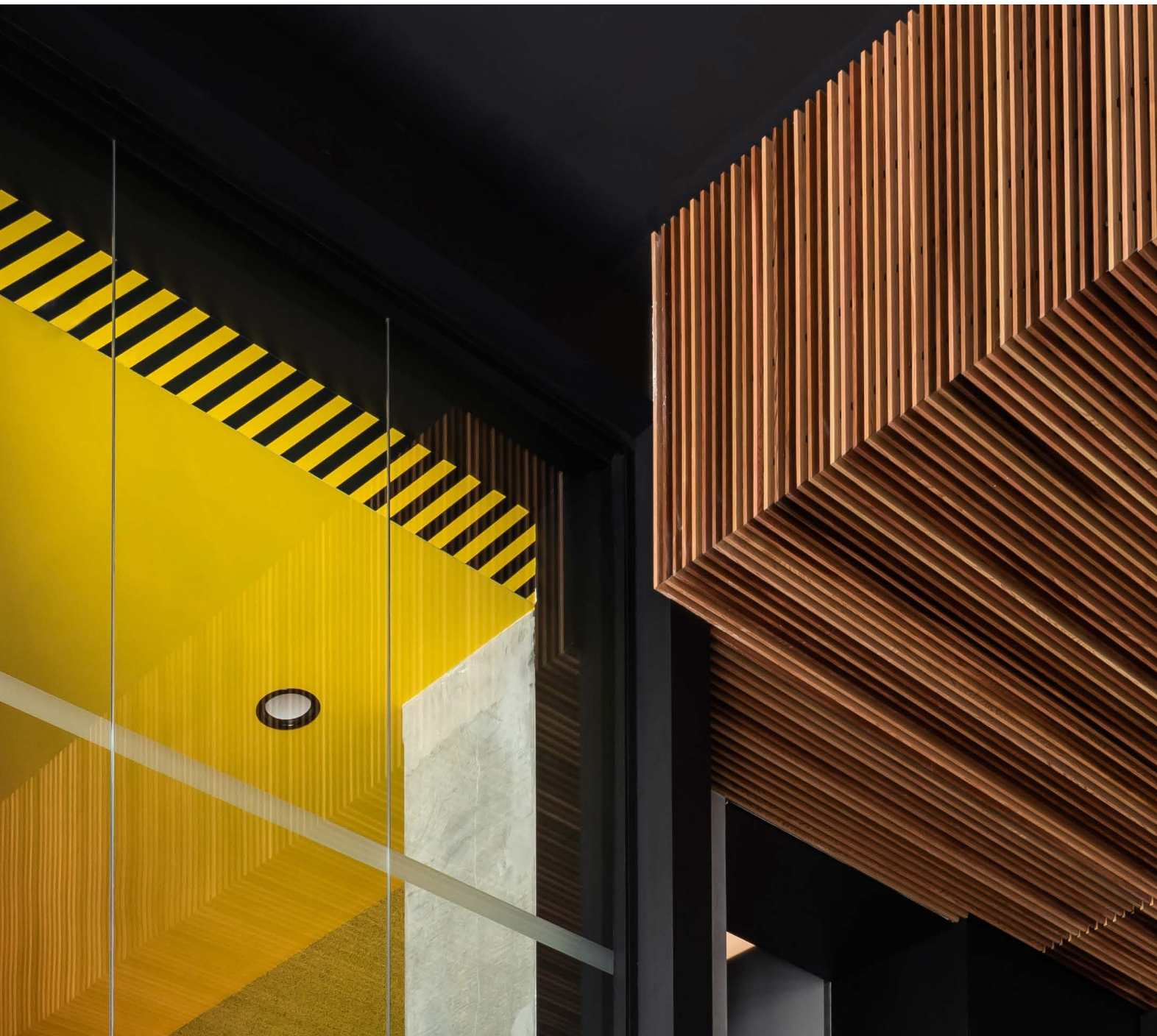


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# CONTRIBUTORS



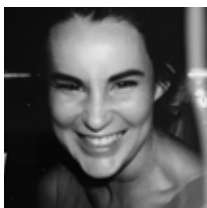
**David McLoughlin** is an architect and urban designer with a focus on affordable housing. He is currently the Principal Architect at Department of Communities (Housing Authority).



**Kukame McPierzie** is the Studio Chair of Woods Bagot in Perth. In 2019 he was awarded the Western Australian Emerging Architect Prize.



**Kelly Rippingale** B.Arch (Hons) B Arts (UWA), M. AIA, M. ICOMOS works to conserve and interpret the values of the National Trust's portfolio of significant heritage places.



**Jess Beaver** is a graduate of architecture at MJA Studio, wine lover, semi-retired bartender and a member of the EmAGN WA chapter committee.



**Marco Vittino** is a director of vittinoAshe architects. He is an architect, engineer and Honorary Fellow at the University of Western Australia (UWA) School of Design.

**Alexandra Mackenzie** is a graduate of architecture and has recently moved to Northam WA. For the past 3 years she has worked in Subiaco for Colin Moore architect.

**Anjana Balakumar** is a graduate of architecture who has a passion for how adaptable, inclusive architecture can contribute to addressing social issues.

**Ariane Palassis** is practicing and teaching architecture after exploring her art practice. Her support of the art and design community continues as a Board member for the Fremantle Biennale 2019.

**Courtney Babb** and **Paul Shanahan** are members of Future Bayswater. Courtney is a lecturer in urban planning in the School of Design and the Built Environment at Curtin University. Paul is the Chair of Future Bayswater and high school teacher.

**Craig McCormack** & **Mark Jecks** are both Lecturers at the UWA school of design.

**Dr. Beth George** is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Newcastle's School of Architecture and the Built Environment.

**Dean Cracknell** is the Chief Executive Officer of Town Team Movement – an underarching, non-profit organisation helping 'town teams' to activate and empower their local communities.

**Jaime Mayger** is a graduate of architecture who has worked in residential architecture and tutored Design at UWA. Jaime currently works in architectural publication and is part of the public art team at FORM.

**Janine Symons** is a graduate of architecture, and is currently nerding around Fremantle Prison indulging her passion for built heritage.

**Dr Jennifer J. Scott's** research centres on the affinities between the work of the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott and the art and architecture of mid-twentieth century British modernisms.

**Lance Ward** is a visual artist based in Perth Western Australia. His work often takes the form of large scale, formal compositional photographs, looking at urban spaces and exploring the traces of people and time within these spaces.

**Leonie Matthews** is Co-Director of Matthews McDonald Architects, graduating from Curtin University in 1992, she combines her work in practice with teaching and research.

**Olivia Kate** and **Charlotte May** are architectural graduates. Both have engaged in working in Perth practices, teaching at UWA and volunteering in the architectural community.

**Natalie Busch** is a landscape architect at HASSELL and is always interested to see how people adopt the places she creates.

**Nic Temov** is Principal Planning & Urban Design with Hames Sharley's Urban Development team. He has over 12 years' experience working on major urban projects and policy reforms – including Design WA.

**Penelope Forlano** (PhD) is a practicing designer and artist. Her thesis Making Custodians explored enduring person-object relationships through a Design Anthropology practice approach.

**Philip Gresley** is a founding director of Gresley Abas architects and a keen advocate for the built environment. He sits on a number of state and local design review panels working to help improve neighbourhoods.

**Tahmina Maskinyar** works at the cusp of architectural practice and visual arts (often in stealth mode) to deliver public art projects, strategies and cultural events to communities and places.

**Tess O'Brien** is a registered architect presently working for Neeson Murcutt Architects in Sydney.

**Tilly Caddy** is a landscape architect at Four Landscape Studio and sessional staff member at UWA.



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# editors' message

**Robyn Creagh and Fiona Giles**

Place has been an obsession of Robyn's for a few years now, and in this issue we explore in the role of architecture and of architects – as citizens – in making places what they are. Architects can see their additions to the built environment as small parts of a larger narrative. This larger story of place is one we are all writing together as both experts and citizens, continually creating a living place, rich with complexity and meaning.

In this issue we have authors and architects from multiple perspectives approaching the idea of making place together. We hear about award-winning Western Australian buildings with a focus on what they give to, and how they support or shape, a community. We see the way that architecture can reveal a place's heritage, and how a new place in the city can respect continuing crossings and entanglements.

Authors investigate projects both large and small. Place making is perhaps more immediately visible in urban design but we also explore the impact sculpture or temporary installations can offer. We have collected spaces which host exceptional and everyday moments of life: we discuss the private spaces within public settings through the architecture of schools, hospitals and leisure spaces.

Within this issue there is also the opportunity to consider the processes that make and remake our places. We have a conversation about impactful changes to the planning regulations



with the introduction of Design WA, and a consideration of the role of streets, opportunities for children's play, and the potential of ongoing civil dialogue about development in articulating a new or renewed sense of place.

Every project has the opportunity to contribute to building community. The longevity and impact of buildings mean architects and built environment professionals have broader responsibilities that take in civic considerations, and our stories about who we are as a community of this place.

We give a special focus in memorial to two architects who over their lives contributed significantly to shaping local places in Western Australia: Iris Rossen and RAIA Gold medallist Kerry Hill.

In parallel to this issue's theme we found ourselves talking not only about

the magazine as a physical container, but as a product of a network of contributors. It takes much more than just a couple of editors, and an amazing editorial team to make this magazine. It takes a community of volunteers who are passionate about Western Australia and about architecture in its broadest sense.

This is our fourth and final issue at the helm of The Architect magazine. So this is the perfect opportunity for us to thank that wonderful, expansive and generous network of people that help make this magazine. Thank you to the authors who have donated their carefully crafted thoughts, and the photographers who have helped to document the works. Thank you to the architects who have given us so much to reflect on, and the team at the Institute of Architects WA Chapter. And of course, thanks to the wonderful editorial team (including graphic designer and proof reader) who have brought their own passions and expertise to this project.

Over the last two years we have tried to capture in these pages the architectural conversations we are seeing and hearing (both discussion and built form) in Western Australia. We've sought a diversity in voices, and to provide some coverage beyond the central urban areas.

We are excited to pass on the reins as the magazine starts its new iteration. So thank you, dear reader, for joining us. ■



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# wa chapter president's message

Author **Peter Hobbs**

Kambarang has arrived (that's Spring for white fellas). Walking through Bold Park yesterday morning, the acacias are in bloom. Within three weeks, the entire park will be a carpet of yellow and pink. In hidden corners, kangaroo paws and donkey orchids will add brilliant highlights. What could be a more fundamental marker of place than its wildflowers, whose exuberant blossom mark the beginning of another cycle?

George Seddon's landmark book of 1972, *"A Sense of Place"*, chronicles the author's struggle to come to terms with the Swan Coastal Plain, a place he initially found harsh and unwelcoming. As Seddon studied the landscape and its flora and fauna, he discovered a fragile but beautiful ecology. Seddon helped build an awareness and pride in the local environs of greater Perth that helped us understand its particular *genus loci* - its *sense of place*.

Our built form heritage is comparatively narrow – we have a mere 190 years of colonial history, and even in that time, we have managed to knock down some of the finest examples of the architecture of preceding generations. So, what to keep, what to re-cycle, what to re-do?

Perth is at a tipping point. We are struggling to define what we want this place to be. Do we want to have a chic inner city supported by dormitory suburbs or a LA sprawl stretched across the Swan coastal plain in a series of linked up neighbourhoods?



Our footprint is already larger than most megalopolis and we are population of a mere 2 million... Do we want to be Paris, Vancouver, Melbourne, or something else?

And in an era of hyper-consultation, what will be the process by which we define this vision for ourselves? Is consultation the enemy of the visionary, or is it the necessary handbrake that controls rampant development at any cost?

What seems to be clear is that our city limits have been defined: Yanchep to the north and Mandurah to the south. We agree that the coast is our greatest asset, and access to the beach and its cooling breezes is fundamental. There is also a natural barrier to our east: the hills seem to suggest beyond here is farming. Interestingly, this area very much corresponds to the natural range of the Whadjuk people.

This is not a conversation to be scared of, it's an obvious coming of age for a very young city, and one we should be very excited to have.

In some inner-city suburbs, rather than allowing new development into existing neighbourhoods, a solution is to add high-rise along activity corridors. Towers are an expensive build and don't underpin an affordable transition to density. In some cases, high rise living delivers great outcomes, but typically, only in places of a very high land value.

Another option is to build new train stations and surround these with as much density as we can. Right in principle, but again, to create a sustainable community takes time, and can only be layered over several generations: it's almost impossible to immediately create a greenfield Transit Oriented Development (TOD) when demand is soft.

What would be preferable is to allow existing suburbs to slowly evolve to a higher density with the gentle introduction of appropriate medium density housing. Now that Design WA has delivered the Apartment Guide, the next step will be the Medium Density Guide. This is urgent and needs to be expedited. The Precinct Planning Policy is out for review, and is the opportunity for communities to ensure places can evolve whilst maintaining their intrinsic value.

And while we're on reform, why not revisit the Metropolitan Planning Scheme in a fundamental way? It is almost 70 years old, and while being constantly amended, it has not had a proper holistic review. It is time for us to define what kind of place we want Perth to be. ■



no place like home





Perth Children's Hospital by JCV Architects and Urban Designers, Cox Architecture and Billard Leece Partnership with HKS Inc. Image: Shannon McGrath.

# perth children's hospital

Author **Kukame McPierzie**

One of my first impressions of the Perth Children's Hospital is that it doesn't smell like a hospital. It's fresh, airy, filled with light and hope and optimism. It is a welcoming place. There is a calmness as we walk around the building. People smile, they laugh. It makes us feel safe, supported. It does not really feel like a hospital either. Yet as we listen to the architects talk about the project and reel off statistics about the building we are reminded that yes, this is a hospital, and yes, it is highly functional. Yes, it is considered world-class. Yes, it needs to look after our sick children for generations.

It is an intimidating brief and a masterful response. The sheer complexity is staggering. It would have been easy for the architecture to get lost in the resolution of all the functional requirements of the brief. It hasn't. The architectural design response has shaped and led the resolution of the programmatic requirements. This building is inherently functional and efficient. But the design of the Perth Children's Hospital is more than that: it feels special.

A light-filled central atrium provides a visual link between floors, connecting various places and levels. People move in and out of this space, heading to appointments and visiting clinics. There are places for kids to play while they wait to be seen by a doctor. The acoustics are carefully balanced; it feels busy and bustling but also quiet and

peaceful. The architects describe this central atrium space as the social spine. The anatomical reference is apt, as this space is the nerve centre that connects all the pieces together.

We walk around upstairs and see children fully engaged in their school work in one of the hospital classrooms. It looks like an ordinary primary school room: pictures on the wall, kids laughing as they learn. I'm reminded of the innocence of the users of this building.

Spaces are filled with colour and light. Views out make connections with the surrounding environment, particularly Kings Park. The ward windows frame an expanse of trees. You could be in the bush, relaxing down south.

It's an incredibly calm and gentle environment, even though the building hosts some of life's most confronting experiences – the care of sick children and the care of children who may have their last experiences here. Through all this fear and scariness, the Perth Children's Hospital is a building that is predicated on hope. We can heal our children when they are sick and vulnerable. We can help them. We can give them the best care possible. It is a reflection on our society that we have built a world-class hospital for our children.

The architects speak with pride as they describe how emotional and psychological safety was a key driver

for their design response. In many ways, this is an obvious concern, but emotions can quickly get lost in the complexity, functionality and practicality of delivering a building such as this. The amazing thing about this building is that despite the immense complexity and uncompromising functional and clinical requirements, the architects have managed to preserve a humanity within the spaces. They have created an environment that feels safe. It feels inviting. It is resolved and logical. Things just make sense. It feels welcoming.

The design is clever. It is forward looking and future proofed. Floor to floor heights are set with enough clearance to enable operating theatres and clinics to be adapted and moved around over time. The structure allows for a future vertical growth. A bridge connects to the adult hospital and enables future campus expansions. The building is embedded with sustainability and energy efficient initiatives that are the result of skilful design. Hospital wards are oriented to maximise light into the building, but also views out. The large atrium purges hot air at night. There's a huge solar array on the roof. The facade shading moves with the sun, enabling views but protecting the people inside from the hot Perth sun.

As we walk around the hospital, I see one of the architects trace a hand along the materials of the wall. It is a tactile





Perth Children's Hospital by JCV Architects and Urban Designers, Cox Architecture and Billard Leece Partnership with HKS Inc. Image: Shannon McGrath.



experience and you can see the deep connection that the designers have with the place. The hospital is delightfully considered in its use of materials. Small things make a difference: a splash of colour here, a texture there. Everything designed for children, considered from their vantage point and eye level. Lights in the corridors are offset so as children are wheeled around on their hospital bed looking at the ceiling they don't get the lights in their eyes. Artwork that interacts with you as you move with it. There are places to be playful, places to rest, places to heal, places to cry.

Colour is an important wayfinding element, a way to decode and break down the institutional scale of this big hospital, both for parents and children. The lifts are colour coded, and today we take the green lift, complete with ladybugs printed on the walls. Reconciling the robust and hygienic requirements of a hospital environment with spaces that feel humane and approachable is no mean feat. Materials here have long design life spans; they need to withstand decades of hygienic cleaning, remaining robust and resilient whilst still looking good. Yet somehow this building feels homely, tactile, approachable.

You can sense there is a strong connection between the people who work here. On the upper levels, staff spaces and lounges provide an opportunity for doctors and nurses to decompress, relax and connect with each other between shifts. Hospitals are so often segregated, siloed and isolating for health care workers. We forget that the people caring for our sick children are human and that the work they do can be incredibly traumatic. The design encourages social interaction with open work spaces that are deliberately collegiate and supportive.

Too big for any one firm, the collegiate attitude extends to the design team, a collaboration between JCY Architects and Urban Designers, Cox Architecture and Billard Leece Partnership with HKS Inc. You can see that this was a fruitful partnership. We are told that more than 200 architects and designers worked on the project, another staggering statistic. It is a great shame that JCY went out of business before the building started to be critically acclaimed and recognised. Their contribution to the project is clearly evident and it stands as a testament to their 30+ years of contribution to the architectural culture in Western Australia.

In many ways, the Perth Children's Hospital is symbolic of Perth's emergence as a global city. We expect the world's best care for our children. We also demand that the architecture of our public buildings should be more than a response to a functional brief. We need design that embeds magic into the architectural response. We need architectural teams that will relentlessly pursue a great outcome, despite the challenges. The Perth Children's Hospital delivers on this. It is a sophisticated, complex and thoughtful design response that is humane and approachable. It is a building that feels full of hope and optimism for the future. ■

*Perth Children's Hospital was awarded the George Temple Poole Award, the Jeffrey Howlett Award for Public Architecture, the Wallace Greenham Award for Sustainable Architecture, and the Julius Elischer Award for Interior Architecture in the 2019 WA Architecture Awards.*

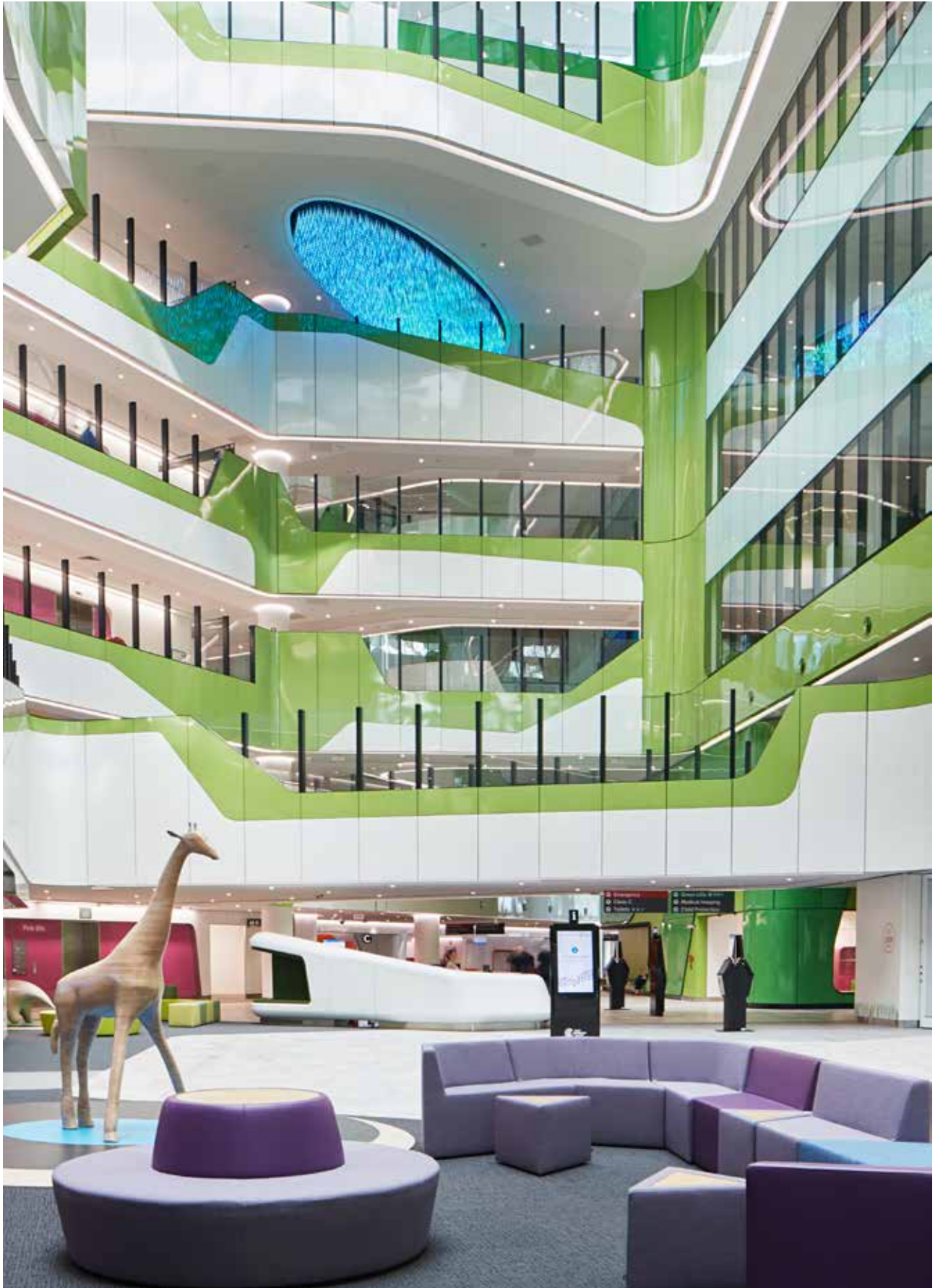


Perth Children's Hospital by JCY Architects and Urban Designers, Cox Architecture and Billard Leece Partnership with HKS Inc. Image: Peter Bennetts.



Perth Children's Hospital by JCY Architects and Urban Designers, Cox Architecture and Billard Leece Partnership with HKS Inc. Image: Shannon McGrath.





Perth Children's Hospital by JCY Architects and Urban Designers, Cox Architecture and Billard Leece Partnership with HKS Inc. Image: Shannon McGrath.





Punmu and Parnngurr Aboriginal Health Clinics by Kaunitz Yeung Architecture. Image: Brett Boardman.

# health and happiness in the desert

Author **Kelwin Wong**

They say it takes a village to raise a child, but what does it take to shape a building? We often attribute the design of a building to its architect: an individual who transforms a concept sketch into a built form over months or years. However, for the new Punmu and Parnngurr Aboriginal Health Clinics the decision was made to genuinely open the design process to the community, facilitated by Architect David Kaunitz (Kaunitz Yeung Architecture), while guided by functional requirements of the client, Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service (PAMS). The architect played a pivotal role as a facilitator and empowered the remote communities to design two health clinics they could call their own in the remote East Pilbara region of Western Australia (1,800km north of Perth).

The result is two clinics sited within the Great Sandy Desert, 1,000km apart which serve the communities of the Martu people. Life in the desert comes with its own set of challenges where the semi-arid climate ushers in extremely hot summers (up to 48°C) and warm winters. Despite the harsh conditions, the Martu, have lived in the area for at least 40,000 years, making them amongst the oldest living cultures in the world today. For these communities, being forced to leave country for medical treatment has a significant negative impact on their wellness. However, community involvement in

the delivery of the two clinics has had a resoundingly positive effect.

Working to a modest budget and within the constraints of the sites, the resolution of the two clinics a 14 hour car drive apart has successfully demonstrated how integral health services can be provided in a sensitive and meaningful way in which the communities have a shared ownership. It also highlights the techniques architects can employ to make engagement with communities inclusive, leading to insights of “a hundred little things” as David shares. While David does not have a specific list of these things, he often refers to them as the small design features included in the building that make a community member feel they have been heard and their perspective respected.

The architectural feature of the two clinics that reinforces this most notably are the art screens. These are laser-cut steel panels and inserts that mirror the artwork of four artists, two from each community. Local stories told visually are transposed onto the screens to provide the perfect counter to the utility of healthcare architecture. These screens are created purely for the pleasure of others, and their incorporation enables the buildings to pay respect to elders, the culture and the land upon which they sit. Encompassing screens engage the visitor by adding an experiential

dimension that a traditional painted mural could not; they serve as shading devices resulting in light and shadow that interplay within the interiors of the clinics throughout the day. It encourages a mother and child in the waiting room to tell stories, to talk about the elder who created the artwork and to discuss what the story represents. “I think that creates a whole kind of stimulating event and nourishment for the community” says David.

Materials and construction of the clinics respond to their immediate context, the harsh climate, through a thermally-broken skin within the modular units and a ventilated roof to avoid thermal bridging. Photovoltaics combined with load management drastically reduce demand for external electrical supply to the clinics. The sweeping shade pergola creates a permeable triple roof to avoid radiation. While there were aspirations to push the project brief regarding materials, the sheer remoteness of the two sites meant that Colorbond was one of the few materials to be able to withstand the climatic conditions. “These buildings need to be so robust, because even to send someone out 1,000km to repair something is a huge cost” explains David. For this reason, the clinics were based on a modular system constructed in Perth and delivered to site to ensure durability, reduced cost and embodied energy and site visits. ►





Punmu and Parngurr Aboriginal Health Clinics by Kaunitz Yeung Architecture. Image: Brett Boardman.



Punmu and Parngurr Aboriginal Health Clinics by Kaunitz Yeung Architecture. Image: Brett Boardman.



The programme was refined largely due to the extensive consultation process, which sought feedback from the community through a myriad of consultation engagements. “It is actually hard to explain how basic the approach is” says David, “There’s a lot of differences between groups. The general approach, and maybe it doesn’t sound sexy enough, is to go in there and take the time to listen.” This meant providing many platforms for conversations to occur by organising time to meet with the whole community, and further with sub-groups of the community, including women-only and men-only meetings. Gaining insight required listening and responding to elders and mothers groups’ feedback. This was a skill David developed during his time working previously in the Solomon Islands. There, often local culture meant that people did not speak directly about their concerns. “Someone might say something completely innocuous, completely minor, but after you think about it for a while, it might actually mean something.” During one of the Punmu consultation sessions, someone commented on the need for ‘something special’ for the waiting room. Follow up questions revealed there was a need for segregation. While most of the community said they did not want segregation, a few had said it was important. To accommodate all

perspectives, David made provision for the waiting room to be segregated in the future, should this become an issue. It was key in the design process to demonstrate to the community that every effort was made to accommodate even the smallest of wishes.

Taking the opportunity to completely involve the community to deliver high quality architectural outcomes has empowered these communities to maintain their viability. The reaction from the community of an empathetic design approach has been overwhelmingly positive. “When the artist for the screens came down the corridor, turned a corner and saw her work, she just lit up, burst into a smile and cried with happiness” recalls David. Another positive outcome for the community was the inclusion of a request for a cold-water bubbler integrated to the facade of the building. The bubbler provides the community with much needed respite from the heat, and has since made the clinic into a hangout for children who will benefit from drinking less soft drink.

The all-encompassing design process meant that the community felt a real ownership over the design of the clinics. The community elders reported to PAMS CEO Robby Chibawe they were happy with their new buildings, to which Robby replied, “that’s good,

they were designed by the white guy, the architect.” To which the elders responded “that guy was very respectful, and we like him, but he did not design the building. We told him what to draw”. ■



Karratha Health Campus, HASSELL. Landscape breakout space near to the Emergency Department. Image: Robert Frith.

# a day in the life of the karratha health campus

Author **Natalie Busch**

A combined collection of stories compiled from observation, data and user feedback.

---

## **5.30am Sunrise, Inpatient Ward:**

A cyclone yesterday threatened the coast. From my room I can see remnant clouds across the Burrup Peninsula. Gabion terrace walls stacked with local granite step gently down towards the surrounding street, positioned to protect the building from flood if disaster strikes. The new landscape is thriving: over 150 Eucalyptus trees and a fresh carpet of wildflowers. Mulla Mulla and Sturt's Desert Pea appear like an extension of the floodplain. I feel safe and calmed by this view.

## **8.30am: Telehealth Department:**

I manage appointments. Natural light from the courtyard floods into the public waiting area where I sit at my desk. A patient has arrived for her weekly specialist check-up via video conference. This technology saves her travel-associated expense and stress, while providing the best care. 25% more patients are using this service since opening. While waiting, her kids play in the courtyard. Double height glazing brings natural light from the courtyard into the waiting area and corridor. Six mature Frangipani trees were salvaged from the old hospital and transplanted into the courtyards, providing instant shade and a lush outlook.

**1pm: Staff Shift change:** It's hot outside now, 38 degrees and 70% humidity, but inside it's comfortable. Two huge underground tanks collect up to 30kl/day (the equivalent of one average sized backyard swimming pool) from air-conditioning condensate. The water is then reused onsite for irrigation.

Over 50 specially commissioned artworks and photographs depicting local life and the landscape are displayed throughout the building. Some days it feels like I work in an art gallery!

**6pm: Visiting Hours:** I'm anxious, yet excited to visit my wife and new baby. Parking and finding my way is easy and led by artwork marking the main entry. We pass an elderly Aboriginal man with a broken leg confined to a wheelchair. A friend has bought him outside to a seating area with views to the landscape beyond. Gas flares on the Burrup Peninsula flicker like birthday candles in the distance as the sun sets. It is nice to have so many outside spaces like this where patients, visitors and staff can find retreat, 'a moment to escape', especially at this time of day.

Walking through one of the shelters marking my route to the main entry, I notice artwork panels explaining that many of the new plants around the hospital were traditionally used by the Traditional Owners, the Ngarluma people to treat illness. I feel connected to the land, less anxious.

**Midnight:** Emergency! There is a swift arrival via helicopter to the Emergency Department. Karratha feels safe and connected for those who work remotely at mines and offshore.

**5.30am Sunrise:** Calm has returned to the skies. An early morning worker rides into town through the new health campus parkland. It is hard to see where the health campus boundary is, seamlessly blending in with the

landscape. People intersect the site going about their everyday routines. ...

After twelve months, and having endured category five Cyclone Veronica, the landscape and community continue to thrive. The project reflects a collaborative journey underpinned by a genuine desire to understand place as well as to serve the community. At the Opening, Terry Hill Pilbara Development Commission chief executive commented;

*"The legacy of the health campus goes beyond bricks and mortar; it's created new opportunities for residents and attracted a new wave of families to town."*

With a budget of \$207.15 million it is the biggest investment in a public hospital ever undertaken in regional WA. Acute services include an emergency department with direct access to an onsite helipad, surgical centre, two operating theatres, 38 inpatient rooms, two delivery suites and a maternity wing.

The campus creates a connection between the hospital and the surrounding environment. It invites interaction, promotes health, and services the community beyond its boundaries. As outpatients, the community has access to world-class telehealth conferencing, child health, counselling and medical imaging.

For the design team this project was considered to be more than just a hospital; instead a civic place where every user feels comfortable and protected. Above everything, it was about the experiences. ■



The Boulevard by MJA Studio. Image: Dion Robeson.



# the boulevard

Author **David McLoughlin**

Purpose-designed student housing has a long history, evolving concurrently with the design of universities as campuses. Moving students from their off-campus accommodation to on-campus was important, not only in terms of efficiency, co-locating their living and learning quarters, but also for power, ideology, politics and in the case of the American campus-towns, religion and morality. In the case of university rivalries based on opposing or competing perspectives think Oxford and Cambridge, or even The University of Western Australia (UWA) and Curtin University. Advantage might be gained from having students accommodated together on campus, reinforcing the friendships and power networks that would in the future be influential.

However, rivalry between universities in Perth in 2019 no longer resembles the Oxbridge of mediaeval times or even the UWA/WAIT duopoly of the 70s. Now Murdoch University, Edith Cowan University (ECU), The University of Notre Dame Australia and the Central Institute of Technology, as well as myriad other TAFE, vocational and tertiary education offerings represent a diverse and fragmented market, competing for students in what has now become a \$2 billion export industry for Western Australia. Some of these institutions are of a scale or configuration that they can offer on-campus student housing; however most are not. From this, the opportunity for off-campus student housing has emerged.

Student housing has most often not been about making place. Often exploiting a monopoly and located on the periphery of a campus, student housing is typically austere and functional, monastic and sometimes even impoverished. Exposed to a broad market though, the value of design becomes commercially obvious.

MJA Studio's The Boulevard housing project is a product of the changing role that tertiary education has within our economy and society. Not aligned to any particular institution, it caters for students at the many institutions which do not provide on-campus student housing. In order to do so, rather than being located on the fringe of a suburban campus it is located on the fringe of the CBD. Rather than an expected utilitarian design approach, it surprises with its empathetic design and generosity of detail.

The building sits in the emerging Stirling Street precinct of the City. Separated from the main CBD by the railway, east of the Northbridge entertainment district, this area was known until recently for small engineering and light industrial businesses, hostels, brothels and low-grade commercial buildings. The modest urban regeneration catalysed by the construction of the northern bypass tunnel of the late 1990s was focussed to the north of Newcastle Street. So for now, The Boulevard shares its setting with a couple of other recently

constructed apartment towers and not a lot else.

On-campus student housing at least has the offer of convenient co-location (UWA residential colleges), or potentially the promise of an exciting, innovative and education-centred campus town (Greater Curtin Masterplan). The Stirling Street location of The Boulevard cannot offer these. It also cannot currently provide a location within a bustling, diverse, activated city location. It may be many years before that potential is realised.

With the ultimate regenerated Stirling Street precinct due well in the future, juxtaposed with a current market for student housing, MJA Studio have sought to create a distinct community, vertically within their building. The Boulevard sits well now, interfacing via a large public lobby and reception at street level whilst anticipating the evolving urban environment.

The Boulevard is a substantial building. Housing a student population of over 570, this 23-storey tower sits across two lots previously occupied by a small appliance repair workshop and a converted cottage. Responding to the context, MJA Studio have made an important and generative first move, deriving the two-storey podium height from adjacent existing buildings, they utilised an offset H-shaped tower floorplan to reduce the apparent bulk of the building above so that it appears ►



The Boulevard by MJA Studio. Image: Dion Robeson.



The Boulevard by MJA Studio. Image: Dion Robeson.

as two narrower buildings. Relating the “grain” of their tower to the original lot pattern rather than to the aggregated superlot is sensitive and thoughtful, avoiding much of the damage often done by imposing huge tower blocks onto existing fine-grained urban areas.

The street interface appears similar to a typical shopfront or commercial ground floor configuration. However upon entering it appears more akin to a hotel lobby in contrast to the more typical apartment complex entry, limited scale and austere functional materials. The Boulevard's ground floor lobby is the first indication of something unexpected. The interior design of this space engenders an exciting, young and urban vibe, combining raw and austere materials such as glass faced cement render and concrete flooring, off form concrete, structural steel with visible welds, anthracite paint finishes and raw timber. This subdued, largely monochromatic palette is enhanced with elements in bright yellow, evoking an industrial theme.

The ground floor space is programmed as reception, entry lobby and socialising area; however a prominent elevated, glazed (and yellow) mezzanine meeting room at first-floor level overlooks a bright yellow stair connecting the two floors – the first floor being a more secluded semi-public meeting and relaxing area, yellow contributing to the interior design theme whilst acting as an important wayfinding device.

The main residential floors are located from the second level upwards. The residential rooms are interspersed with a range of communal and recreation areas. The relationship between these spaces is thoughtful and an important part of how this building fosters the creation of a community.

In seeking to create a community within this tower, more than just a neighbourhood, MJA Studio demonstrate a sociological understanding of urban design, picking up on the observations of Jane Jacobs (mixing of uses, smaller spaces and high permeability), William H Whyte (the importance of chance meetings, reciprocal gestures) and Jan Gehl (that the buildings are the edge containing the public realm, life happening between buildings).

This approach to making place is used skilfully in The Boulevard. On a macro scale, the planning ensures that the business of “just going about life”: ascending the lift, moving between one's accommodation and the study area, going to do the laundry, are all conducted within a social community where friendships and relationships are nurtured.

On a micro scale, Whyte's observations of what makes successful public places have been interpreted into this internal, vertical community. Adequate and diverse sitting opportunities, the use of different

levels of daylight, and the blurring of the line between “plaza” spaces and circulation all inform the design.

A range of different student room typologies have been incorporated. These range from a single self-contained “bedsit” style room, a two-plex for siblings or close friends, up to a 5 or 6 room “sharehouse” apartment. In addition to allowing a diverse pricing structure, this variety contributes to an overall strategy of helping students to achieve work-life balance, building empathetic and supportive relationships with their peers, all critical in this community which may be characterised for young people by being away from their family, social isolation, loneliness and high pressure.

The Boulevard is an innovative and well-designed building and a worthy winner of a multi residential award in the 2019 WA Architecture Awards. However what MJA Studio have done is more than just design a decent building: they have made an important and timely contribution to our understanding of the emerging typology of off-campus, purpose designed high-rise student housing at a time when a number of similar major projects are under consideration within the CBD. ■





Premier Mill Hotel, Katanning by spaceagency. Image: by Barry Williams.

# premier mill hotel – katanning

Author **Kelly Rippingale**

Place making is about creating a shared identity. Saving, conserving and interpreting places builds on identities created over time as built form and fabric embody the workplace and social activities of the people who inhabit them. The Dome Group's Premier Mill Hotel project, skilfully executed by spaceagency, takes the shell of a once-loved place and turns it on its head, boldly creating a new place in the Western Australian Wheatbelt and Great Southern region.

Spaceagency took on the challenge of creating a destination-worthy luxury hotel in an industrial landmark in a town known more for its abbatoir than its tourist appeal. The architects' design turns a once-busy industrial workplace into a new offering that the people of Katanning can feel good about and which welcomes their visitors.

A map has been produced to assert Katanning as a place. A number of staff were given the task of driving for three hours each in a different direction to report back on the points of interest to be found within the surrounding landscape. Provision of comfortable accommodation is the drawcard to bring coast-hugging visitors to the interior.

Katanning was on an early settler route between Perth and Albany traversed by Stirling and Roe circa 1835 likely following pathways created by its

Noongar inhabitants many generations prior. Now a regional service centre, 'Kart-annin', 'big meeting place', was the junction of three traditional Noongar domains – of the Wilman, Kaneang and Koreng people - and marks the convergence of biogeographical regions. Or as the hotel's web site has it: 'halfway between here and there and not far from anywhere at all'. The hotel now professes to provide a local meeting place for people from across the district.

The town developed when the Great Southern Railway was completed in 1889 although it was not gazetted until 1898. Piesse brothers Charles and Frederick built the Premier Roller Flour Mill in 1891, providing a cash market for local wheat growers. The Mill's whistle regulated the routines and daily life of the town – blowing at smoko, work day's end, and on special occasions. The whistle is cited in the assessment of significance as playing 'an important part in framing the identity of the town'. Alterations to the Mill in 1902 enabled the provision of electricity to the whole town until 1961, strengthening its local significance.

The Mill's retention is due to a long history of community activism, dating back to 1927. When assessed for inclusion on the State Register of Heritage Places in 1995 it was described as being in very good condition and with a rare and highly significant collection of intact machinery. By

the second decade of the twenty-first century however, the place was in disrepair and on the market to whomever could offer it the best chance of survival.

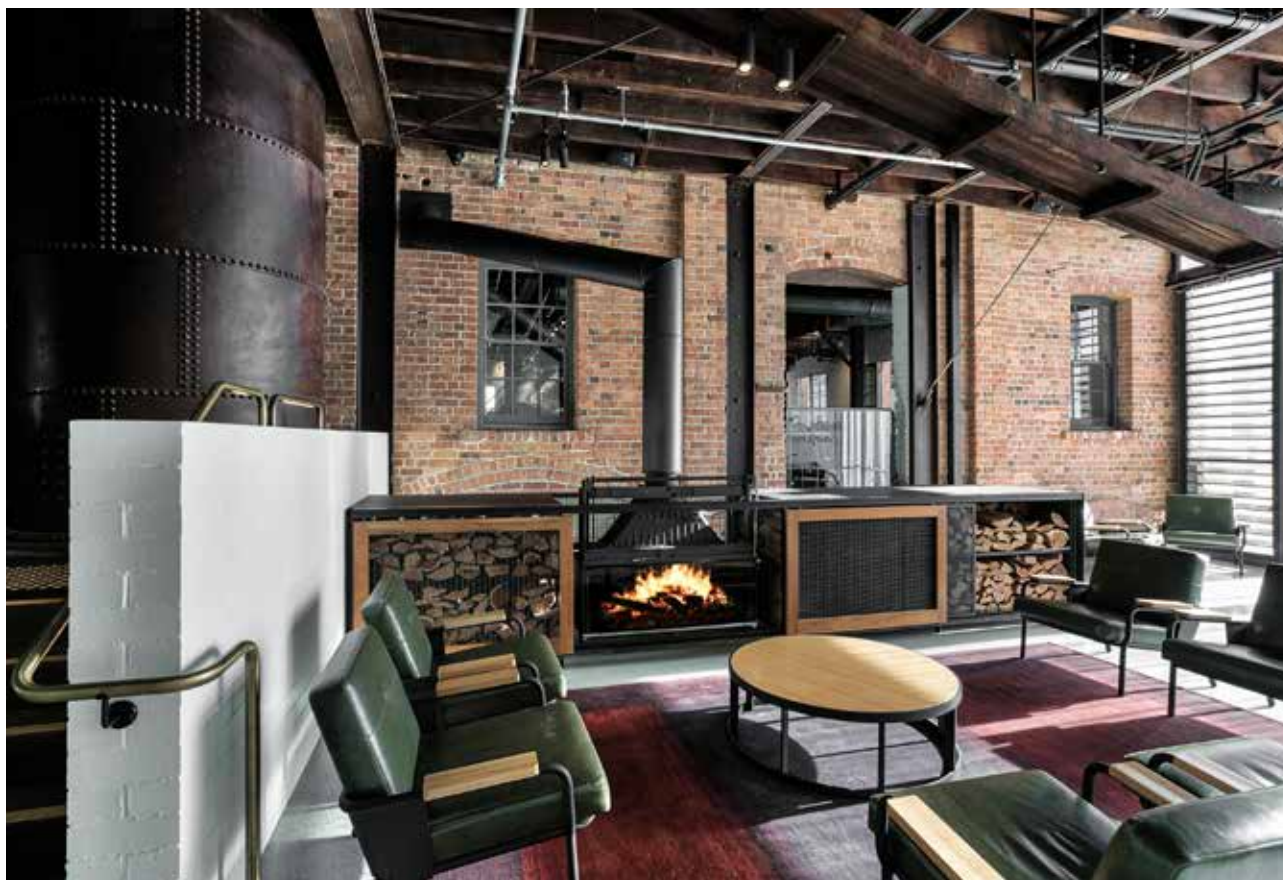
Community scepticism was high when it was acquired by the Dome Group for \$1 but the now completed Premier Flour Mill hotel is an impressive and ambitious example of revitalisation. The development is a bold move to bring tourism to the region through provision of high quality accommodation.

The result is a unique offering of architectural merit that delivers the architects' professed objective of being 'more than the sum of its parts'. The reception area is described as a 'kitchen' and is built around a newly inserted Aga stove that provides warmth and a heart to the place. With an adjacent communal dining table this insertion creates the sense of an archetypal farmhouse kitchen – one suitable for a whole town. The underground bar cleverly uses remnant machinery to ensure intimacy and simple placement of elements within the shared spaces – such as a single sewing machine highlighted at the end of a corridor on the first floor – subtly reflect stories associated with the place. Each hotel room highlights different aspects of the building, and the overall structure is celebrated in the main void. ►





Premier Mill Hotel, Katanning by spaceagency. Image: by Allan Myles.



Premier Mill Hotel, Katanning by spaceagency. Image: by Barry Williams.



The hotel has high quality finishes that never lose sight of its country setting. New elements, including the bespoke furniture, are a neat, contemporary, and a subtle contrast to the remnant fabric that is retained throughout the building and left in a raw state in the light well. This void takes visitors up and around the mill's former boiler which remains a strong feature. The new lift is visually open with a suitably semi-industrial palette.

Throughout there is a mix of discrete new detailing that is contemporary yet responsive to the heritage fabric. Interpretive devices are bold but also restrained in quantity without being didactic, and extensive remnants of machinery and equipment have been masterfully incorporated into spaces throughout the building. Incorporation of these remnant industrial elements and a reintroduction of the daily whistle shows an innate understanding of the subtleties of what is significant to the town and its people.

The Dome branding within the café area is relatively discrete and the space manages to be both intimate and open – the enclosing verandah allows extensive views outward to the streetscape and town while retention of machinery and structural elements creates inviting spaces. On the ANZAC day holiday that I visited the Premier Flour Mill, the café was busy with both locals and travellers and the hotel was expecting over 70% occupancy. I would

like to have had more time to reflect on how this new space interacts with the streetscape as the whole appears inward rather than outward looking. Inside the hotel, the lounge space is an inviting entry experience and the lack of a formal reception area is unusual but friendly. It offers a variety of spaces for different types of social activity – from meetings to group dinners - while the bar and rooms can cater for a range of function sizes.

Attention to detail in the accommodation rooms is impressive – each responding to its different place in the building - and there is lovely modulated light throughout. The comfortable farmhouse feel is maintained without compromising a contemporary aesthetic.

Similarly the communal spaces have interesting but subtle lighting with highlighted details in the floor and stair handrail of particular note.

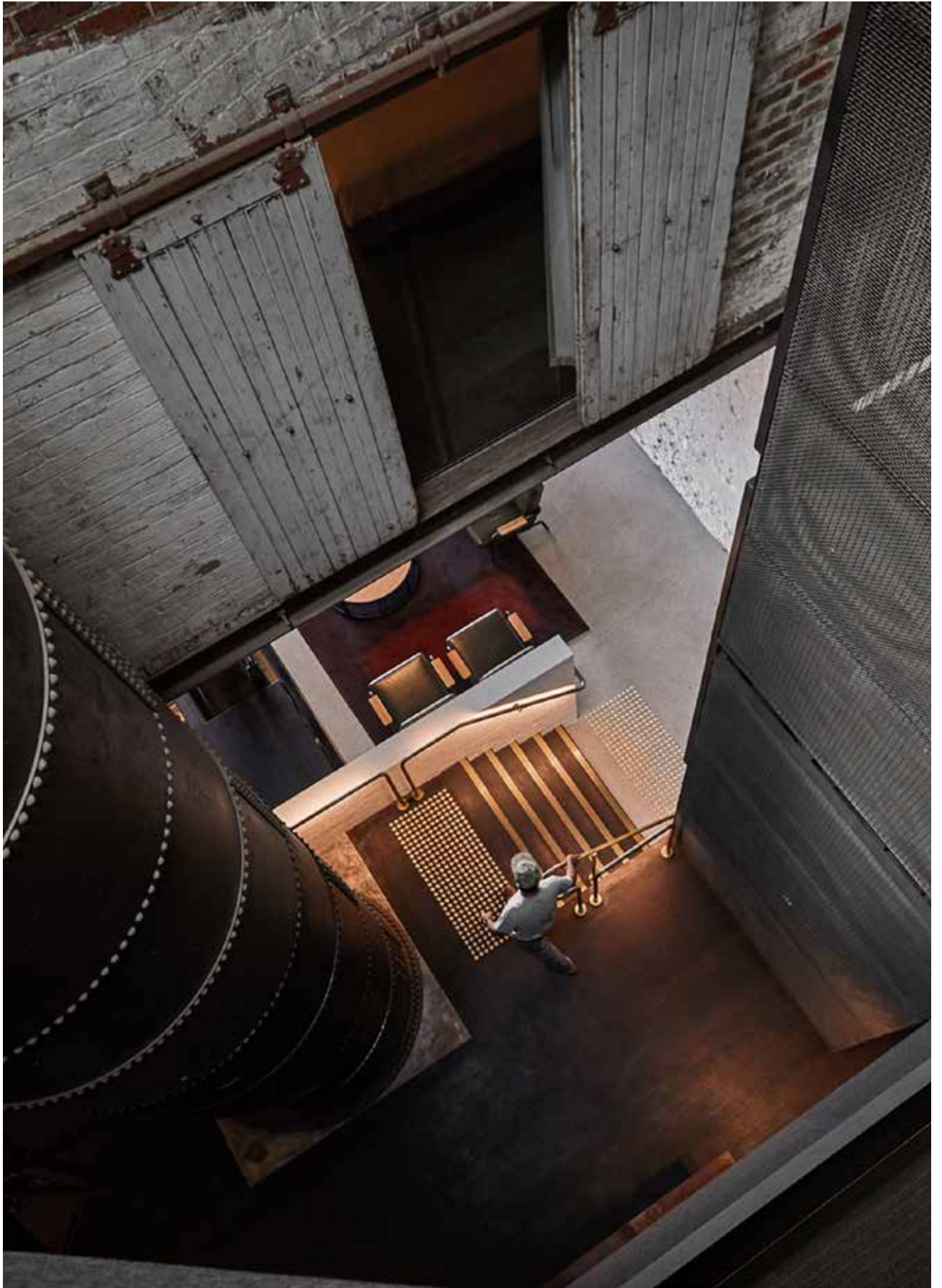
Employing 33 local people, the Premier Flour Mill is a high quality architectural achievement that is worth a visit and may well put Katanning on the map. It is a project that has married quality architectural detailing with an innately empathetic response to the significance of the place and its details. The owner's and architects' passion shines through. ■



Premier Mill Hotel, Katanning by spaceagency. Image: by Allan Myles.



Premier Mill Hotel, Katanning by spaceagency. Image: by Barry Williams.



Premier Mill Hotel, Katanning by spaceagency. Image: by Allan Myles.





The Cliffe, Peppermint Grove. Image: George Russo 1987. Source: State Library of Western Australia.

# what is heritage?

Author **Janine Symons**

## The Cliffe.

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The Cliffe, a timber 'gentleman's residence' was originally designed and constructed in 1894 for timber merchant Neil McNeil in Peppermint Grove, and subsequently extended by prominent architect JJ Talbot Hobbs. The Cliffe was placed on the State Register of Heritage Places partly for its rarity as an 'example of the use of weatherboard in a substantial 'gentleman's residence in Perth.'

The house was bought by the McComb family in 1960. Son David McComb was a founding member of the iconic Perth band the Triffids. The Cliffe, a sprawling house with basements, lofts and outhouses, was central to the Triffids output, providing both rehearsal and recording spaces. Historians and fans of the band wax lyrical about its importance as inspiration and refuge.

The threat by new owners to demolish the place after its sale in 1995 sparked local debate and fury, with many supporters arguing that its association with the Triffids should be a substantial reason to save it. After becoming one of the few places to be removed from the State Heritage Register (an action requiring a vote of both houses of Parliament), the Cliffe was eventually sold and is currently a private residence.

The debate around the potential demolition of The Cliffe begs the question 'what is heritage'?

Heritage is a concept that everybody seems to understand, but struggles to define. A working definition I recall from university is 'something from the

past that we wish to keep for the future', but that too begs more questions.

Heritage is not just ye olde buildings, and it is not just tangible. UNESCO lists 20 types of heritage, including sites, cities, natural sacred sites, handicrafts, music and song, and culinary traditions.

Traditionally heritage has been those things valued by the ruling class, although, as society becomes more pluralistic and inclusive, this is slowly changing. But any cursory perusal of official heritage registers reveals a preponderance of grand private and public buildings and the historical remnants of the dominant classes. When humble places are considered for registration: fibro workers' cottages for example, outside of the heritage industry there is often little understanding or support for their significance.

This official heritage, inscribed in registers and lists, is identified, assessed and registered in formal processes, usually underpinned by legislation and supported by guidelines and criteria.

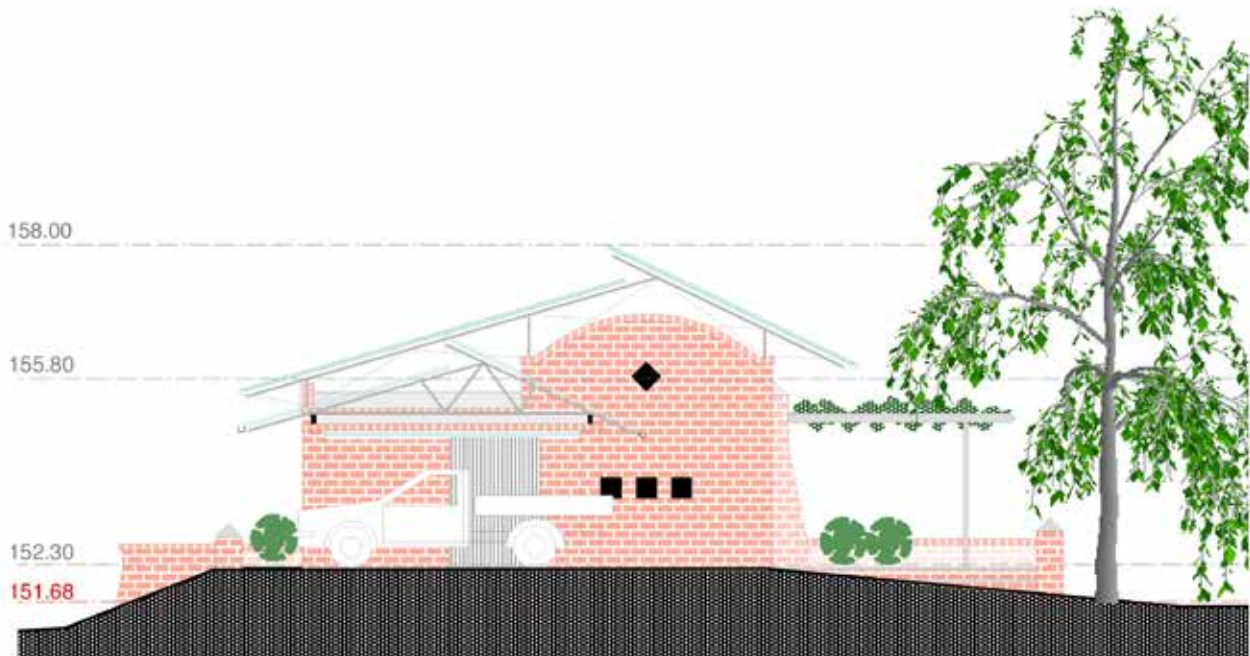
The Heritage Council of Western Australia follows a standardised process of heritage assessment, formally entitled 'The Assessment Criteria of Cultural Heritage Significance'. This process evaluates the place under consideration in terms of its aesthetic, historic, scientific and social values, and further considers both rarity and representativeness.

The Cliffe was considered to be of significance for its rarity as a substantial timber 'gentleman's residence', its association with the McNeils and

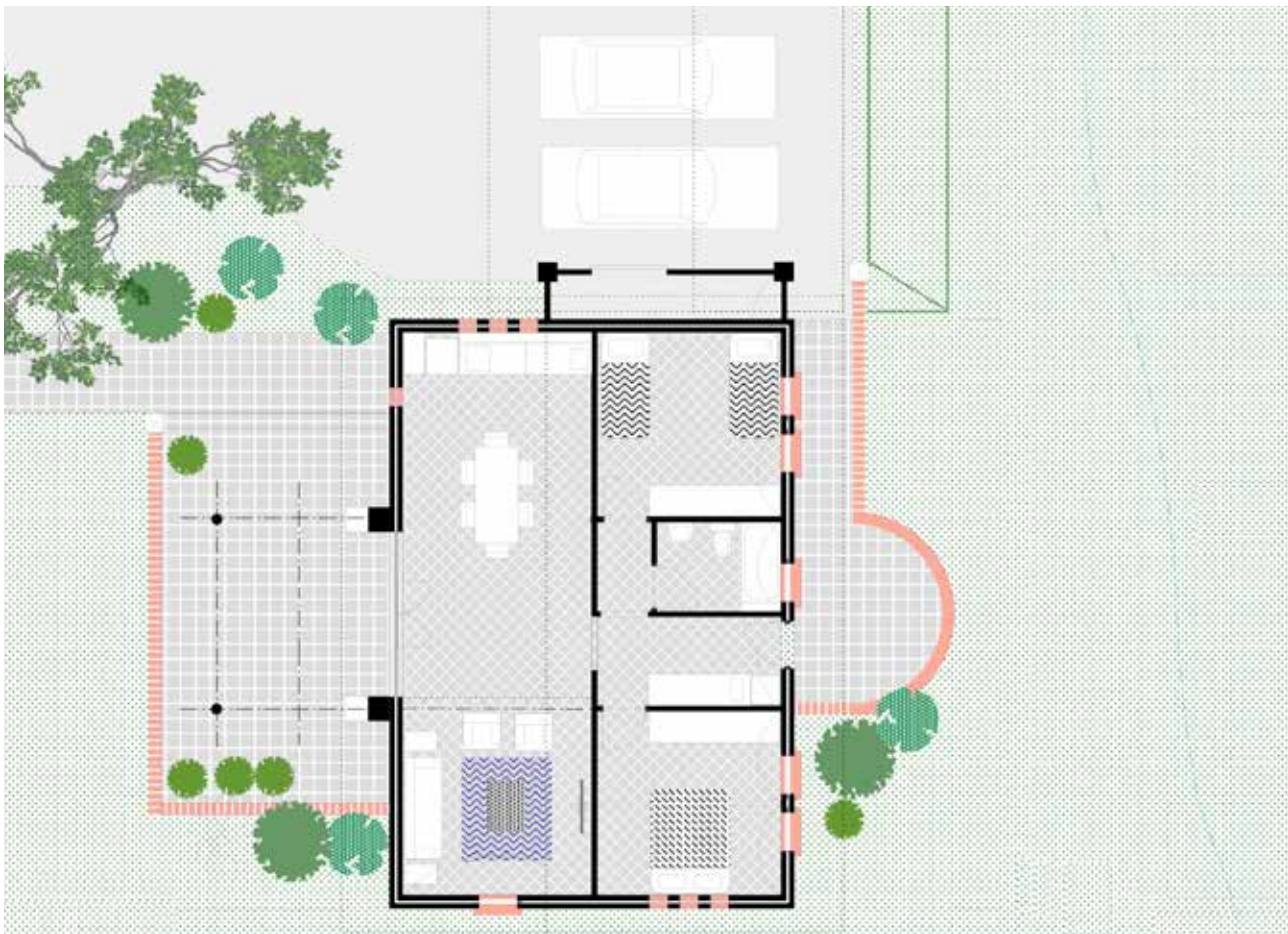
JJ Talbot Hobbs, and as one of the first houses built in Peppermint Grove. Sadly, the Council did not consider the Triffids, although they were well known internationally at the time of registration, and there is a plaque placed by the local government authority on a studio in London commemorating the recording there of the album Born Sandy Devotional. Not only do we often value physical things that are older, we often value people and events of the past more highly – JJ Talbot Hobbs as opposed to David McComb, architecture rather than pop music.

The music of the Triffids demonstrates that in addition to the formal heritage we are familiar with, we all have our own personal heritage, often far removed from the large houses and crumbling ruins of our state registers. Our fondness for registered places may be for reasons not inscribed in the official documents. It also suggests that heritage is not fixed, and whilst it is about the value of something, values change over time, and will vary across different groups of people.

For Triffids fans The Cliffe is clearly a place of Western Australia cultural significance, as the home of a band which made it on the world stage. Perhaps in another 100 years, if The Cliffe was to be assessed for its cultural significance again, it would be considered important, by the State, for its historical associations with the prominent McNeil and Brisbane families (owners) and with JJ Talbot Hobbs (architect), and the Australian alternative rock and pop band the Triffids. ■



Northam House by Kloppe Architects. Image: Kloppe Architects.



Northam House by Kloppe Architects. Image: Kloppe Architects.



# brian klopper, northam and surrounds

Alexandra Mackenzie in conversation with **Brian Klopper**

## Place, Projects.

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**This short interview intends to pick up where the publication, *Brian Klopper, Architectural Projects*, (2012) leaves off. In an interview with Jenny Officer, Brian Klopper says:**

*'But next year we are going to Northam, just Dave (Connoughton) and I, to build a little house...'*

Brian has now been in Northam for 5 or so years, and we thought it was time for a conversation.

*The obvious question to start with is, why did you move to Northam?*

There are a number of answers.

1. The simple or understandable one is, I like building little houses. The blocks in Freo were 300K and the blocks here were 60K. It SEEMED a profitable exercise.
2. Am I going back to my roots? Of course not, but the things you see in your early childhood stick with you a bit. I do like the distant views, the big sky, the rolling hills.
3. When I'm in a flippant mood, well Chekov went to Yalta, to which people reply, 'well Northam isn't Yalta and you are not Chekov.'

It's a combo of all those things I guess.

*Is it true that you grew up around Northam? Could you describe the house you grew up in?*

I grew up in a little mud brick house on the banks of the Mortlock River, about 10 km out of Northam on the York Road.

It was a little house with some kind of ancient plant a bit like a Bougainvillea, growing over the veranda. It was very pretty. But at the time I was so ashamed of it because all the kids in the town lived in blue tiled roof houses and something that was really 'proper'. Not a crappy little mud brick house. They had REAL bricks!

It could have been my grandfather who built it. It had a kind of a cellar, that was used to store milk etc. – a hole about 1500mm deep with a tin roof over it – that was a very South Australian thing and he was born there so it's possible he built it.

I went to a school with about 7 students for a few years and then for Year 2 the bus started up and we went to East Northam school and then we moved to Chidlow for my last year.

My father had a dream of running a big dairy farm there.

*Is there more to say about this dream?*

This dream thing happens to us as

architects – we fall in love with a project without really thinking through the consequences i.e. whether we will survive, which really means whether we'll make a profit!

Up until 3-4 years ago, inflation looked after us all: We're building a house in Fremantle and we've done a projection of it costing \$300k so we aim to sell for \$350k and we get expenditure of \$320k and a guy drops by and says, 'how much does one of these cost?' I say, 'never-mind one of these, what about this one... \$500k?' And he says, 'OK'.

So that's really the story of Northam. I knew property was cheap here but I didn't really investigate the value of houses. It turns out they were cheap too! I couldn't really sell the house with a profit, so I moved into it.

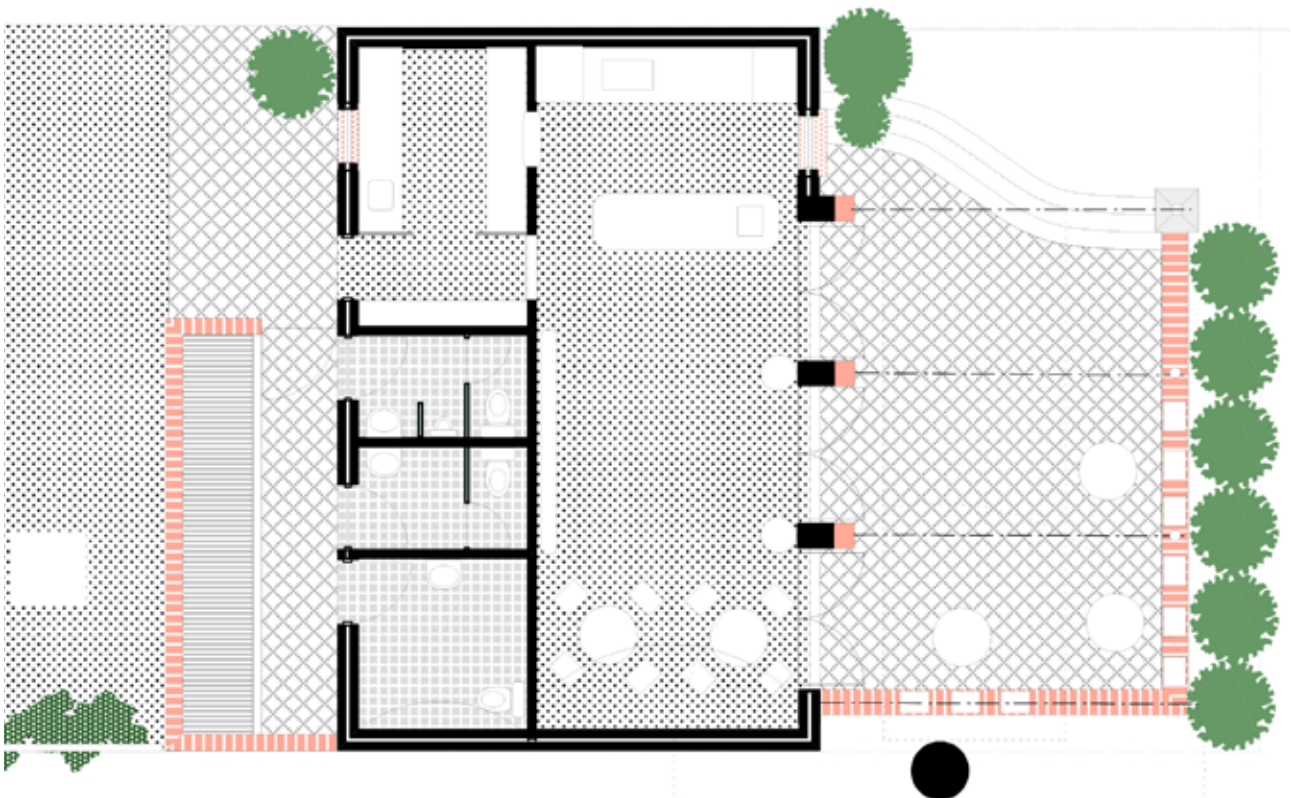
*So you hadn't considered to move to Northam before building the Northam House?*

No. It was a function of not being able to make a profit. Also, while we were here for the year of building we got to know the place, the weather, the people, and I quite liked it.

There are so many stories – the whole thing gets teased apart in Northam – in Freo you don't know what's going on for people. Here, you learn everything about everyone because you have



Wine Bar by Klopper Architects. Image: Klopper Architects.



Wine Bar by Klopper Architects. Image: Klopper Architects.

space between you. I wish I was Chekov because there are so many stories. I like that.

*When did the wine bar idea come to you?*

I moved here and then got a bit bored. So I wondered, what does Northam need? I came up with the idea of the wine bar, to be a point of difference from the pubs in the main street. Specifically, I thought Northam could do with a place where public servants, particularly the women, might feel more comfortable.

Again, without thinking through what a small bar actually entailed, I began.

*What does a small bar entail?*

It requires a liquor licence firstly. I spoke to a lawyer for a price to manage the licence. He charged too much so I thought, 'I'll go through the process myself.' It took 18 months to get the licence and other approvals and then a year to build. I used the same vault forms as the house. It was good fun to build.

*The house and wine bar are quite similar in form. One is a house and west of town and the other is a bar and in town. What were some of the challenges of the wine bar that were not a part of the house project?*

We had to deal with flood levels in both projects. For the wine bar we had to address universal access including toilets, levels, parking and appropriate ramps.

Council was great actually. The complexity was in the building permit and with the nonsense of some of the Codes. For example, Australia requires universal access toilets of 2.3m x 2.4m. Pretty much everywhere else in the world the requirement is 1.5m x 1.5m. An extra 2sq m and not necessarily for more functionality.

*What was it like to finally open the bar?*

Well at the time I had no experience serving alcohol! But I did have experience with wine and conversation, especially through our long standing tradition of Bellissimo dinners which had been going for over 20 years.

*So the wine bar is a re-creation of wine and conversation from the Bellissimo dinner tradition?*

Yes and it certainly has worked as that! This doesn't necessarily translate into number of glasses sold though! Profits have not been very good.

*It's also a place for some incidental culture?*

Yes, we're doing tango dancing. The Tango instructors do it for free. They suggested it. It's the former local magistrate and her partner who run it. We've had movie nights, Casablanca, Breakfast at Tiffany's. We've also hosted wedding and birthday parties. I have an exhibition of some of my drawings starting this week. The aim with these activities is to get people in to experience the place.

*Have you done other projects out this way at other times? Toodyay Library? Was there also a proposal for a walkway?*

Yes, Toodyay Library in 2009. I had bought some property in the town around that time and the Council asked me to do the library. I believe this was around the same time as doing the St. Hildas project. And before that, the unbuilt walkway in 2004.

*Would you like to expand on those projects?*

No, I think that will do. ■



# client liaison

We asked people what they thought of their new spaces... and of their architect.

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## Nigel Oakley

**PREMIER MILL HOTEL, KATANNING**  
**ARCHITECT: spaceagency**

*Describe the feeling of being in your new space?*

It is incredibly transformative in the sense that you feel that you have entered and are then enveloped by a different world; a world of 1890's industrial ingenuity fused with modern hospitality chic... with a wonderful sense of warmth and welcome. I have observed the impact of the building on many first-time guests and it is not an exaggeration to say that for most it is quite literally breath-taking. Magical is another word that comes to mind and I see this particularly in the eyes of children when they visit. This was expressed beautifully by one little fellow who was a house guest with his family recently. I overheard him asking his Dad if Harry Potter had been here!

*What's your relationship to this building and how did you meet your architect?*

We are the owners of the building. Our company Be Our Guest Holdings has had over 30 years' experience in the food and beverage industry through the operation of cafes and restaurants and in particular the Dome café brand which we own.

Over the last 15 years particularly, we've had the joy (and some pain!) in becoming adept at the adaptive re-use of heritage places for hospitality. Having completed some 20 heritage projects for cafes and restaurants we felt ready for a bigger challenge and we just could not resist the idea of taking on a crumbling 1800s Flour Mill which also happened to be held in formal regard by the State Heritage Office as one of our most significant industrial buildings. The prospect of twinning our expertise in cafes with a push into the boutique hotel space was something we found incredibly exciting. We actually first met our architect 30 years ago when Michael Patroni designed the core elements that went into the very first Dome café – elements which still form part of the Dome signature café footprint to this day and which I believe are testament to what great design is all about in withstanding both fib and fad. Whilst Michael had long since moved on from working with Dome, I approached him all these years later because I felt that he was somewhere in our corporate DNA and he would ably come to grips with the idea of building a new independently branded boutique hotel and ensure that whilst separate it could still nestle appropriately into a family of complementary offerings including a wine bar and a Dome café.

*What do you think the architectural team brought to the project?*

First and foremost spaceagency ensured that architectural brilliance was applied to the areas of the building that needed it. In a heritage setting it is often about choosing critically what not to do as much as it is choosing what to do at particular touch-points. From the cantilevered staircase soaring up through the three level space occupied by the old steam boiler through to the fireplace in the main lobby and the stunning interior elements in the rooms designed by Dimmity Walker there is a quiet confidence in the work here. I personally hate it when I see design for design's sake applied to everything in a space or building. The architecture at the Premier Mill Hotel is wonderful in the sense that it gently reveals itself over time through immersion. I love the fact that there are many subtle details that no visitor would ever likely pick up as a key feature, but which together without doubt work to put an undeniable emotion into the way people perceive their experience of the hotel. The other point of great joy for us was working with Michael and Dimmity as a collaborative team. We were a highly engaged client on this project which meant that the inevitable points of "design/re-design and construct" on the fly which so often happen on heritage projects were ably managed. It was a



Nigel Oakley in the Katanning Mill before the works. Image: Nic Ellis.

proud moment when Michael told us on his final inspection visit that he had never in his career seen such a flawless and uncompromised execution of the as-designed architecture. I think we all fell in love with the building along the way and you really can feel that in the final result.

*What was the most pleasant surprise of the outcome or process?*

The particular joy with this project was taking an entire community on a journey over a three year period both before and during construction. Although very dilapidated, the mill was at the very emotional core of the town and its sense of identity. We recognised and celebrated this from the get-go and we had regular meetings in the Town Hall and a managed a very engaged Facebook site. We have in many respects created a social enterprise with the project in so far as it has created a social hub for the local community as much as it has opened up doors for regional tourism in an area – which to date has been very under-exposed in spite of its historical significance and incredible natural beauty. Being under three hours from Perth we are very proud of the fact that the Premier Mill Hotel is now playing a part in showcasing this very special part of Australia's South West. Our company employs a social historian full-time. Of great joy in this project has been discovering incredible stories

about the place which have as a result become part of the architectural narrative. For example, the mill was built in 1891 with engine capacity beyond that actually needed for a flour mill. This was a deliberate move on the part of Frederick Piesse, the Mill's founder. He was obsessed with the idea that Einstein's "ever-lasting electric light" should be able to be distributed. This obsession resulted in the Premier Flour Mill being the source of the first commercially distributed electric light in the then colony of Western Australia and both power stations have now been conserved and restored as part of the re-telling of this story. Similarly, research informed us that many people in Katanning did not need to wear watches or look at clocks because the Mill's steam whistle would sound reliably and loudly across the whole district at two hourly intervals every day from 6am to 6pm. The mill whistle was a much loved icon that fell silent with the Mill's closure in the 1950s. This provided us with inspiration to find and restore the Mill whistle. From mid-March 2019 it will now sound at noon on a daily basis. The fusion of stories, architecture and heritage creates a powerful and emotional sense of place.

## Dan Mulcahy

### RESIDENCE

**ARCHITECT: Philip Stejskal Architecture**

*Describe the feeling of being in your new space?*

I am not really sure what to say. Peace. Calm. Comfort. Engagement. Movement. The list can go on and on. This feeling usually changes with the 'space' that I am, both within the building and within my mind. One of the goals of this build was to provide a place of solitude and then upon my choosing provide me with a place of engagement. This brief has been nailed. Ground floor, curtains drawn, not a soul knows I'm home. Pull them back, opening up a full width bi-fold wall of glass and the world of light, the clouds of the sky, the sounds of garden, the outside comes flooding in. This is a true outside/inside house at my choosing. Perfect.

Move upstairs, lie in bed and it's exactly the same. Screens providing mottled and dancing light. Feeling real comfort in isolation but still a huge connection with the day. Decide to walk up a flowing spiral stair and the entire horizon from the roof terrace awaits.

*What's your relationship to this building and how did you meet your architect?*

My relationship? Ah, I had forgotten ►



Philip Stejskal and Dan Mulcahy. Image: Philip Stejskal Architecture.

the language of the architect. Perhaps the right word is self. So many things I look around at I feel are a reflection of my own mind. Light, dark, open, closed, linear, curved, calm, busy. Which I guess is great because I feel pretty comfortable with who I am and I've been living within my own head space since forever!

As for meeting Phil, it comes down to an often quoted song lyric, "putting in the hours, like a stalker". I would walk the streets, stare at buildings, take photos, the stuff we all do and for some of us the stuff we have done all our lives (my parents got me onto this early in life). Eventually one day whilst staring at a house that I had known forever the owner happened to come out on a bin run. A few questions later and an invitation to come inside ensued. Then a referral. Then another referral. Then the first date. Love was to follow, who would have known? The best part of that process was when I did find this architect, he knew just about everything I was talking about. I would talk about buildings I liked, he knew them. I would describe photos of building I had seen, he would tell me where in the world they were and who had designed them. I had found my architect.

*What do you think the architectural team brought to the project?*

Things that I wouldn't have thought of I guess because really, it's their bread and butter. It's what they do and it's why you choose this pathway, I think. With this particular project, when I purchased the land parcel it already came with a set of approved plans from another architect. I played around with these trying to put my own thoughts and influence into them. The very first thing that PSA did was to move the location for the home to the east and place it on the boundary. A simple move, something that I would have never have been able to pull out of my mind as it was never there, simple, yet so amazingly spot on.

Working with a team, if aligned properly, is always better than as a singular. While you are thinking about that, I'm putting my thought into this and someone else is problem solving something else. More heads are better than one. We are all a product of our past experiences and if someone has been there before, share it, and we can grow from it. The key takeaway from working with the team is that a more holistic outcome could be achieved. More than a practical material structure, a sense of space, a sense of whole.

*What was the most pleasant surprise of the outcome or process?*

That it worked! I think in the design phase, both with the pencil and paper at the start and also with the human hand once the building starts, it can be very easy to get blinded by the practicality of what you are striving for. Ensuring all the various components of what you are after are included. This includes loads of pros and cons, changes for many reasons, variations, substitutions, the like. During this stage you are very point focused at the million plus points there are to focus on.

One day when the building had been handed over and in the practical completion defects stage, I was bogging down on the this and that of things that were not sitting perfectly with me. Selecting a natural product and having its face exposed means you need to allow for variances (didn't think of that one did ya!). I was getting caught up in it all. Enter with a visiting friend and he stopped me with a simple question, "Does it work?" The chaos and angst of my brain paused and wow, that's it isn't it? Does it work? Yes it does. Perfectly. Would I do it again? Every day of the week.





Cottesloe Lobby & Landscape by Simon Pandal Architect. Image: Robert Frith.

## Judith Jackson

### 19 BROOME ST – LOBBY & LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Simon Pandal Architect

*Describe the feeling of being in your new place?*

Well I don't live in the units, but I own one of them. I feel a great sense of pride with the entrance completion. Before the project commenced we felt rather ashamed of the lobby and entrance area. We wanted a welcoming entrance for the apartment complex, for those who lived there and for those who would visit. The building now, I feel, has a relaxed, cool and peaceful feeling. It feels timeless, which I love. It will age well. We will still appreciate and enjoy it for many years to come. The lobby now reminds me of buildings around the Mediterranean. The multiple dome concrete roof gives a kind of scallop shaped appearance internally for the ceiling. The multiple arches give a lightness to the interior. You feel like you're by the sea. This, along with the turquoise tiles, feels as though it's emulating Mediterranean villas, being in one that is centuries old.

*What is your relationship to this building and how did you meet your architect?*

We met Simon Pandal Architect through one of the people on the strata committee.

*What do you think the architectural team brought to the project?*

They were able to design an entrance that complimented the existing building. They added interest, design, and a new life to what was a box-like compressed entrance. The building itself was built in the early 70s and painted white. The original entrance was drab and dark. A very small underwhelming entrance. The architect was able to enhance it with this design. The residents and community are very pleased with the result. We now have security codes which we did not have before. The residents' committee members are elected at an AGM, the members make up a group of representatives who own some of the units. One of the members lived in the apartment complex. Roy in the committee, oversaw the process through the construction; he liaised with the architect & builder. During the planning stage, all committee members liaised with the architectural team. We found it to be a productive collaborative process.

There were a few issues that were brought up but they were amicably and easily resolved. The end result is a delight; it speaks for itself.

*What was the most pleasant surprise of the outcome or process?*

I think the most pleasant surprise is the garden beds up to the entrance along the pathway; they have been planted with succulent plants. As they have grown, they seem to have evolved and enhance the seaside setting of the building. It brings a casualness to the exterior. The garden bed walls vary up to a metre in height, the walls are either side of pathway with the garden beds raised. They differ roughly from a metre in width then taper off to 1/3 of a metre. Some plants have grown to a metre in height so far, they were planted roughly 12 months ago and have proved to be resilient native plants. Initially, I felt somewhat disappointed with the garden beds, felt they were too small and slightly sparse. But now it all compliments the design beautifully. The interior turquoise walls and tiles were a bit of shock initially, but now the interior looks light, breezy, it has a freshness to it. The other residents share the same sentiment. We wouldn't have it any other way now. ■



The image features a minimalist, abstract design. A solid grey background is partially covered by bright yellow geometric shapes. In the bottom-left corner, there is a large, solid yellow rectangle. Above it, a series of parallel yellow lines of varying lengths are arranged to create a sense of depth and perspective, resembling a staircase or a series of steps. On the right side of the image, a vertical yellow structure with horizontal lines suggests a window frame or a modern architectural element. The text 'public places' is centered in the upper half of the image.

public places





Willetton Senior High School by Hassell. Image: Douglas Mark Black.

# teaching belonging

Author **Fiona Giles**

## Schools as Community Hubs.

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Schools play a critical role in setting children on a positive life path, a responsibility our society takes seriously with mandatory attendance and a prescribed curriculum. Schools which provide a sense of a place where pupils feel they belong, “make a difference for both students’ performance and adolescents’ satisfaction with life.”<sup>1</sup> They also sit in a wider context, becoming a permanent focal point of many communities and outlast any particular student cohort. How a school interacts with the surrounding community can enrich an existing neighbourhood or create a sense of place in a new one. Inspiring passionate students who feel embedded in their place requires strong leadership and excellent teachers, yet the impact of excellent design should not be underestimated. And while many aspects of education, including the design of learning environments, are standardised, the way these are delivered can reflect the individual identity of each organisation and each community.

I considered two schools that have both won the Hillson Beasley Award for Educational Architecture: Willetton Senior High School (WSHS) by Hassell and Mother Teresa Catholic College

(MTCC) by Parry and Rosenthal Architects. The award highlights projects which make a significant contribution to the advancement of educational architecture in Western Australia.

WSHS is a public school with a campus founded 40 years ago and the architect appointed via a government Request For Proposal process, and MTCC is a private school in a new suburb with the architect appointed following an invited competition. Both are excellent examples of ego-free architecture that contributes to a strong community. Each project has a unique way of developing the student while connecting to their local community. Their procurement, stakeholders and site constraints are very different, yet both have a strong sense of place. The first focuses on respect for others and a sharing of diversity, the second conjures a sense of self, identity and a feeling of being part of a bigger whole.

For this article the architects, David Gulland of Hassell and Leon Slattery of Parry and Rosenthal Architects, were asked about their design process and their thoughts on place-making within these schools.

### **Willetton Senior High School**

Hassell were appointed by the Department of Building Management and Works (BMW) who serve the Department of Education (DoE) with the school as user of the building. In order to avoid future difficulties with new principals or teaching staff, DoE and BMW aim for consistency across Western Australia with detailed standardised briefs describing exactly what each room requires. Where the rooms are located and how they might be related to each other is determined through the architectural process.

The teaching staff at Willetton Senior High School is stable, the business manager has worked at the school since its inception in 1977 and has seen less than a handful of principals in the four decades since. The school’s aspiration towards high academic achievement means the wider community is fortified by families moving to the neighbourhood. When asked about the existing community at Willetton, Hassell’s David Gulland’s first thought was of the students; “As soon as you walk through the gates, you notice how the kids treat each other – they are respectful of visitors and friendly to each other”. Hassell strived to respond to the existing community in the re-organisation and clarification of the existing campus with the new buildings ►

1. OECD (2017), “Students’ sense of belonging at school and their relations with teachers”, in *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students’ Well-Being*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-11-en>.



Willetton Senior High School by Hassell. Image: Douglas Mark Black.



Mother Teresa Catholic College by Parry and Rosenthal Architects. Image: Robert Frith.



reflecting the existing strengths of the school community and sequenced to respect the student cohort.

Throughout the design process there was a desire to represent the aspiration towards tertiary education. To achieve this, Hassell sought to make the development “feel more sophisticated and urbane but not as if a spaceship has landed” while also being careful to provide a development that had agility to adapt over time according to changing technology. The standardised brief dictated much of the interior of the buildings, so Hassell found “the external spaces become almost more important than the buildings themselves.” Acting as a central organising hub for the project is a large covered area. Envisioned initially as a meeting point, the covered area evolved into an informal study zone for final year students working toward their ATAR. The space is shared by all students, allowing younger students to be exposed to the study habits of their older peers and so giving them something to aspire to. Hassell notes that the space “wasn’t set up that way, the kids took it over and the school gravitated towards running it like that.” This appropriation of space shows how the design team created room for the students to take ownership resulting in successful activation and strengthened community ties.

On top of the typical complexities of program, budget, and brief, Hassell had to work with existing crowded buildings while maintaining the operation of the school. The careful management of the construction process in a school of over 2000 students was a complex, but critical component of the design. Regardless of when construction occurred it was always going to be the most important year of school for at least one cohort of students. An approach which did not adequately acknowledge the rights of students to undisturbed study could very easily cause mayhem for someone’s exams. Hassell managed a process of compromise to ensure that new arrangements could maintain safe circulation and minimise disturbance.

The existing school sits in residential context on a main road which curves around the site and through the suburb. To connect with the streetscape and announce the school, the two new buildings to the north and west have feature elements on their second storey which act as beacons. The buildings were built to the edges of the site to increase presence but to also deal with access control while reducing the amount of fencing required.

This project expertly navigates the complexities of existing community in schools, including those of the students and the wider community. The message

of respect for the existing community rings loud and clear be it through respect for students’ continued learning during staging, respect for the broader school community, or respect for the existing neighbourhood through thoughtful and subtle architectural forms.

### **Mother Teresa Catholic College**

In 2011 the site for the new school in Baldivis was rural. It was as an extensively farmed paddock with poor soil quality whose nearest neighbours were several kilometres away. The Mother Teresa Catholic College acted as a beachhead to anchor the future development of what is now a growing residential community,

The appointment of the architects for the new college was conducted through an invited competition. Stakeholders included the Catholic Education Office, the college itself, Baldivis Parish Church, the City of Rockingham and the Baldivis community. The competition brief required ‘school buildings that make a statement, have a dynamic presence and be *for* the wider community.’

Parry and Rosenthal Architects was awarded the design contract for the primary school and have remained continually engaged for the subsequent stages. Their clear design intent and longevity of engagement has given a ►



Mother Teresa Catholic College by Parry and Rosenthal Architects. Image: Robert Frith.

consistency through the architecture which manifests in an engaging narrative, precise detailing and a strong community developed with the college's stakeholders.

Because Parry and Rosenthal Architects were engaged from the outset they have been able to take a master planning approach across the whole site. The primary school has a community orientated focus around a central court which is shared with the church community and maintains an expansive rural feel. Early childhood facilities branch off from the rest of the primary school so that younger children can engage with the main shared spaces but also have the ability to retreat and play in their own, more protective space. The high school by comparison is more dense and feels more urban. The buildings are closer together and adopt an urban street scale. As you move through the college, the progression turns from rural to more urban, it gains more complexity and confidence, following the same development path as the students themselves.

The safety of the students it is important when inviting in the wider community to a school site, and view lines to monitor this access is enabled through planning measures. There is only one way into the civic space, past the administration, allowing the school to know what and who is entering into the space without necessarily

controlling what's going on. There is strong visibility throughout the campus which enables people to be welcomed into the facility without the risk and worry associated with strangers being unnoticed. The passive surveillance approach allows a mixing of broader community and school. The resulting space is reminiscent of an active village green which is reflected in its use for the Baldivis Christmas Carols which are held here each year even despite other civic spaces developing – a testament to community belonging.

Parry and Rosenthal Architects have used rammed earth on a scale not usually seen in schools or in general. Rammed earth gives a sense of permanence to the new buildings which aspire to the permanence of the landscape. It is also a material that gives the buildings a unique identity, Leon Slattery of Parry and Rosenthal said “to us creating a dynamic presence was not about choosing a trend, it is about getting a genuine building.”

This project has blended the new school community with the church community and the new neighbourhood which has grown up around it. The long engagement of the architects has allowed ideas and relationships to develop and the school to grow with the community around it. The college's population operates as a city in microcosm; the early childhood centre is a protective introduction to school, then students grow

independence from the connections made across the primary court and can develop to graduation within an increasingly complex high school experience. The neighbourhood at large is welcomed into the school which acts as a community centre, providing a sense of strong materiality which exudes a sense of permanence and place for a new suburb that is less than a decade old. ■





'Appearing Rooms Forrest Place' by Jeppe Hein 2012. Image: Briana Martin.

# playing with place

Author **Jen Scott**

Making, placing and indeterminate boundaries.

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I think you make a place by enacting connections or relationships between things. The quality and character of these relationships can have a far more significant impact on the vitality of a place than the things themselves. One place where relationships and boundaries are blurred is the mutating 'Appearing Rooms Forrest Place' by Jeppe Hein in Forrest Place for the City of Perth Public Art Collection opened in 2012. Water jets intermittently from the floor and children play amongst these fountains. Relationships are continually evolving and this lack of permanence adds complexity to place. One way to think about dealing with this conundrum in design is to contemplate boundaries as similarly changing. This might seem counter-intuitive to an architectural situation that has strict divisions between inside and outside to control climate, temperature and security. However I want to demonstrate a way of place making that adds consideration of indeterminate and intermediate boundaries to the design equation.

The British psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott conceived of the intermediate boundary as a place where culture occurred. For him, this boundary was located between the internal experience of being human and the interaction with the outside world. An example of Winnicott's way of thinking is the 'transitional object', a term he coined in the early 1950s<sup>1</sup>. The 'transitional object' can be a teddy

bear that is intensely adopted by a child to the extent that the teddy must go everywhere the child goes. Winnicott described this object as being both the physical object itself and the way the child imagined the teddy to become animated, such as Christopher Robin's Winnie the Pooh.

So what has this to do with making places through architectural means? The inside and outside of the 'transitional object' are between the imagining of the child and the physical presence of the teddy bear. Similarly, culture is enacted between the physical confines of the outer world and people's imagination. How we then account and allow for people's imagination in the way they interact with places might be something worth considering in our design approaches.

Architects and designers could play with the boundary between inside and outside. It is not necessarily fixed and can be a place of imaginary delight. An enchanting instance of this indeterminism that encourages a creative and imaginative interaction is 'Appearing Rooms Forrest Place'. The walls of water that appear and disappear can render the participant inside or outside while standing in the same spot. Water also has an ephemeral quality, inconstant and translucent. The boundary of this artwork within Forrest Place is itself indistinct. When the artwork is closed, space it once occupied is still used by the public. But

the memory of the water walls lingers in the imagination.

Hein describes the relational aspect of his art by saying "I see my artwork as a tool for communication and dialogue. In this situation, if the water is turned off, you have just a square - there is nothing else and not a lot of people. But suddenly if you turn it on, you are activating the area and making an energy point but only because people are using that energy. People are drawn to the water and begin to experience other people. It is really important."<sup>2</sup>

The boundary between adults' places and children's places is also blurred. Although not explicitly signaled as a children's playground, there is a clear invitation to play. This playfulness is owned by children and can sometimes be a little disquieting for adults to display in public. Nonetheless Hein's interactive sculpture invites all ages to engage their playful faculty. The minimalist design: a three by three grid of grating belies the playful interactions between people and the shape of water. Architecture and sculpture can be playful by creating an environment where multiple conditions of place co-exist and are encouraged in the imaginations of the users.

Imagination is an essential aspect of creating enduring vibrant and vital places. Inherent in user creativity is connectivity and change where boundaries express the relationships between things. ■

1. Donald Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 1971    2. Stephen Bevis, "The man behind the water walls", *The West Australian*, Thursday, 22 November 2012



State Theatre Centre by Kerry Hill Architects. Image: Courtesy Kerry Hill Architects.



# kerry hill influencing public place

Author **Marco Vittino**

At the prospect of writing about Kerry Hill I hesitated, questioning how much I could contribute to the interpretation of the architecture and the man behind the work, having only been a part of the practice for two years. I accepted primarily because of a strong affinity with and appreciation of the work, but also because of the deep impressions left on me from the time spent around Kerry in the Singapore and Perth offices, working on commissions that I can now only dream about, on sites that were beautiful beyond belief. And so the words that follow are little more than a personal re-visitation, and an attempt to contextualise the work that Kerry Hill Architects has been producing here in Perth which has become pivotal in the city's evaluation of architectural quality.

Kerry often recited proverbs and had a fascination with haiku, the traditional form of Japanese poetry. Both stem from the idea of carving away at something that is complex, to arrive at the very essence of the 'thing' that is being described with as few words as possible. This approach was very much reflected in the practice of his work and the work of his practice, which is underpinned, I believe, by a reductive process rather than an additive one. From my own personal experience of being around Kerry, he was always preoccupied with finding the spirit; of a site, a brief, a material, a culture, a

tradition, a person or a 'thing', without pre-conception of what it ought to be. When I strive to recall times spent around him I visualise Kerry sitting and looking intensely at a drawing or a model, assessing and re-assessing until the right equilibrium was found. I am reminded of him quietly thinking until he found the right words. They were usually few.

Behind this calm and considered person however, was an unrelenting energy which drove Kerry to produce a body of built and unbuilt work that without a doubt has transformed and influenced architecture and architects throughout the world.

Here in Perth we are fortunate that Kerry's practice legacy now has a strong presence in the architectural fabric of the city, particularly since a departure from Australia in his early career did not facilitate an easy re-entry, despite his great success abroad. So, whilst in the early 2000s the office in Singapore had important commissions all over the world, here in Perth KHA was trying hard to establish itself but had little local work in their beautifully appointed Moat Street office. Given the status of his practice at that time one can only speculate on the reasons for this, but I believe that conservatism and reluctance largely explained the lack of trust and faith in this new player on the scene.

It wasn't until 2005, when the Government of Western Australia, following an International Design Competition, commissioned KHA to design the new State Theatre Centre, that Kerry was able to set up a fully-fledged practice in the Fremantle offices. What we saw during the subsequent six years was the emergence not only of one of the premier pieces of architecture in the state, but also a remarkable local practice that has since given us a multitude of buildings that have greatly contributed in the recalibration of our benchmarks for good architecture in Western Australia, particularly and importantly within the public realm.

It is interesting for me to contemplate the work that KHA has produced here in Perth in light of my own experience within the practice and involvement in projects in Asia, where elements of history, tradition, vernacular and context are so vastly different to those found here. In other words, those 'things' that Kerry felt strongly drawn to and tried to distil from other cultures, and which are really not so evident in our own cultural setting, lead me to question whether it was difficult to design with the same methodology or if it is even possible to consider the work in the same light?

The success of the State Theatre Centre in Northbridge was to signal the beginning of a series of competition wins for the practice that would see it ►

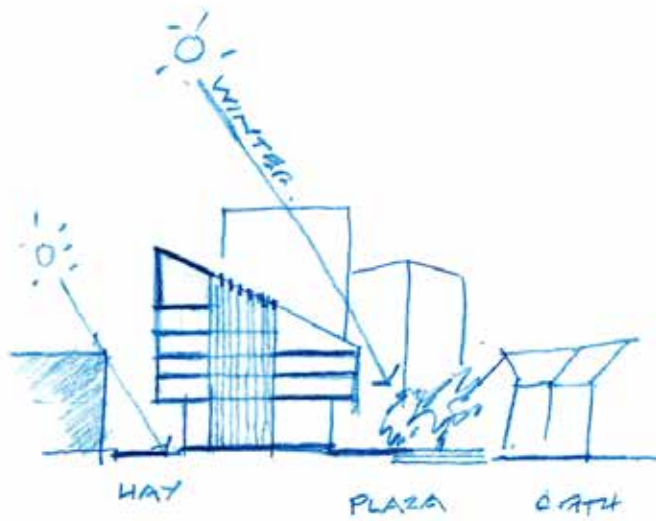
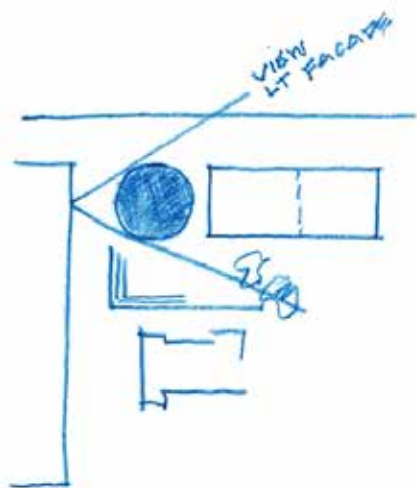


State Theatre Centre by Kerry Hill Architects. Image: Courtesy Kerry Hill Architects.

take on the transformations of two other major urban centres, one in Perth City and the other in the heart of Fremantle. It's important to look at the State Theatre Centre to understand some of the underlying ideas that make this such an important addition to the city fabric. The site selected for the new theatre was extremely confined and restricted and it was the simple idea of stacking the two main theatres that essentially resulted in the winning scheme. This planning strategy freed up land to allow the proposal to engage and establish a dialogue with the surrounding urban context. The building is inclusive of and extends into the public realm, inviting one into a serene internal courtyard. This space is both an extension of the city and a performance space in its own right. The existing William Street tenancies were integrated and rearranged to relate to both the street and the courtyard, retaining their original status but also activating the inner space. And, being a Kerry Hill building, alongside the primary volumetric consideration is the usual immaculate display of good planning, material references, impeccable resolution and attention to detail. In addition, the main theatre spaces work impeccably from a technical point of view and are a match for any world class small performance venue.

Work on another site, bound by Hay Street to the north and St Georges Terrace to the south, with Barrack Street to the west and Pier Street to the east consequently became an important commission, containing a number of significant historical buildings including St George's Cathedral, the Lands and Titles Building designed by George Temple-Poole, the Perth Town Hall and the Old Treasury Building. Through a highly transformative process this city block has today become a major attraction for food and beverage, hospitality and entertainment and a clever insertion includes a new office tower that is nestled inconspicuously within this heritage precinct. The overall project was a pluri-commission involving KHA, Palassis Architects, and Hassell, which resulted in the demolition of less important historical buildings, the conversion of the significant heritage buildings, and the introduction of new buildings including the office tower and new City of Perth Library. Whilst the overall scheme has resulted in a multi-function space that has re-invigorated a tired part of the city, a major contribution at the urban scale is the creation of a new internalised plaza that responds to environmental conditions and surrounding context.

KHA's collaboration in the renewal of the Treasury resulted in an outstanding example of a contemporary insertion within a heritage context but it's the Perth City Library, once again the result of a competition win for KHA in 2011, that I will further discuss. The proposition is fundamentally a response to the immediately adjacent urban fabric; the tapered cylindrical form enables clearer views to the surrounding historical buildings by opening up the public circulation areas and eliminating the hard edges of an orthogonal volume, and also allows for greater solar penetration to the newly conceived plaza to the south. It establishes a strong identity for this important civic building and explores a radial planning typology that works not just at the urban scale but delivers at the human scale by providing a series of spaces within the library that are experiential and engaging of the surrounding environment. The perimeter stairs, decreasing in dimension as they ascend, are both rational and poetic and give the user a memorable and shifting bird's eye view of the adjacent historical buildings. The children's play room on the upper level is a peaceful space that includes an external courtyard tree, challenging our pre-conceptions of what a library in the centre of a city might be. ►



City of Perth Library by Kerry Hill Architects. Image: Courtesy Kerry Hill Architects.



City of Perth Library by Kerry Hill Architects. Image: Courtesy Kerry Hill Architects.



The third urban scale project is the result of an international design competition for King's Square in Fremantle. KHA won the commission in 2013 after being shortlisted alongside CODA (no longer in practice but reformed as Fulcrum) and McBride Charles Ryan Architects (VIC). In this winning entry, three formal elements are proposed and described as a 'veranda', a 'city lawn' and a 'civic drum'. The veranda is used as a formal device that reinforces the building's civic nature and gives it an appropriate scale. The city lawn is an inclined green public 'square', creating both a stage on which to engage with the historical Town Hall building and a new urban space for the Fremantle community. In some ways these two elements contradict one another and re-present the notion of civic and public. The civic drum is literally an elliptical cylinder within the building that houses some of the more symbolic and public functions, such as the Council chambers, community hall, exhibition space and a multi-purpose room belonging to the subterranean library. The project, due to be completed in 2020, is a major commission that promises to transform this historic part of Fremantle.

Repeatedly, but in different ways, we see the same process re-appear. This approach I believe underpins the rigour of the work by way of investigation and

re-investigation, through a commitment to assessment and re-assessment until an appropriate solution is found. This culminates in a fine balance of formal devices, good planning, material and proportional investigations, and an engagement with the context of a place. Establishing the connections to place are within grasp for the KHA Asian portfolio, whereas the work here in Perth, at least for me, is not as easy to interpret since the sources of the underlying references are less evident and tangible.

Upon final reflection I am reminded of something that Ignazio Gardella enunciated. It was a declaration that in order to *speaking about architecture you need architecture*. The substantial architecture and the practice that Kerry Hill has left behind will without a doubt continue to be spoken about and reflected upon. The way in which Kerry himself spoke about architecture was with a clarity that made it all seem easy but I believe that those simple words were the result of a much more complex philosophy that reached far beyond formal issues.

We are all conscious now that the office of KHA will be going through a transition as the absence of Kerry must be strongly felt. Whilst we can only speculate on the direction that the work will take, I feel certain that the rigor and commitment that Kerry had for his

work is a continuum embedded within the practice. He has undoubtedly left lasting impressions on me and I look forward to further conversations on the nature of the work that will arise from the office in future. ■





Kings Square Fremantle by Kerry Hill Architects. Image: Courtesy Kerry Hill Architects.



Yagan Square by Lyons, iredale pederson hook architects and Aspect Studios. Image: Courtesy Lyons Architects.



# processes in placemaking

Authors **Olivia Kate** and **Charlotte May**

## Defining Yagan Square.

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Yagan Square is conceived as a meeting place which merges existing physical and visual lines in the city, connecting the densest urban areas of Whadjuk Country through different timelines. As a transitional space, it fosters inclusiveness by facilitating incidental meetings of different types of people. This is not a “traditional” meeting place: nothing is too structured. The non-hierarchical integration of building and landscape promotes different modes of habitation; you can come, go, stay, wander and meet. From no vantage point can one survey the entirety of the site; there is always a level out of your field of view, a corner you cannot see around, or a structure that you cannot see into. Encouraging the visitor to explore makes the space seem larger than it is, not dissimilar to visiting Country or going for a bushwalk.

The western concept of ‘place’ is shaped by land forms, cadastral boundaries, buildings, natural systems, mappings, cultural understandings, individual and collective memories, and the passing of time. The word ‘Country’ represented within Indigenous culture conveys an all-encompassing idea of humanity entwined harmoniously with nature.<sup>1</sup> The design team sought genuine Aboriginal sense of place in both the outcome and process, demonstrating that Aboriginal engagement and major

civic projects can go hand-in-hand. In this article we turn our gaze from architectural outcomes to processes in order to evaluate the success of making place simultaneously for communities that are Indigenous, non-Indigenous or both.

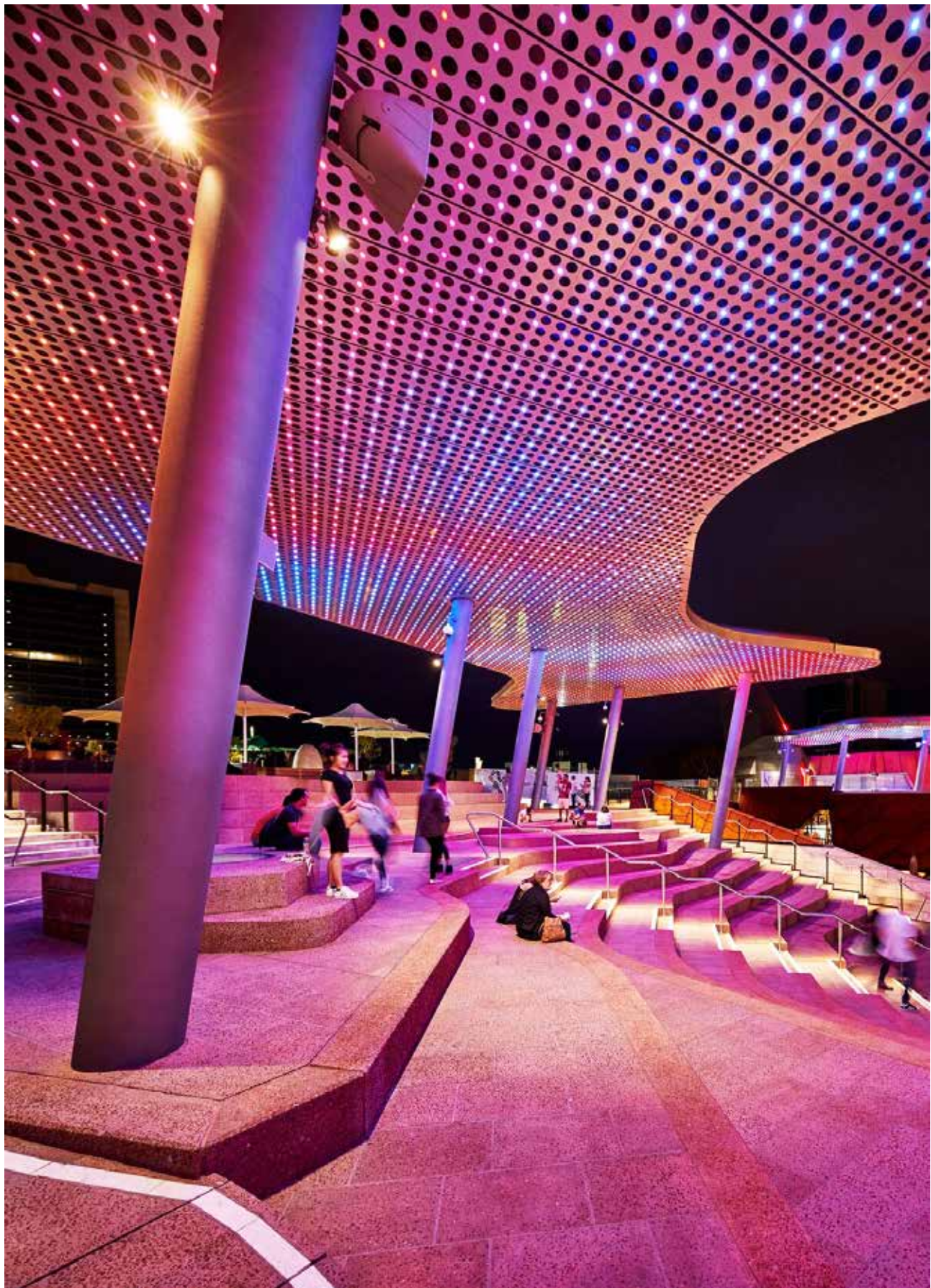
According to the 2011 ABS Census, 0.002% of Australian architects identify as Indigenous (compared with 3% population parity).<sup>2</sup> Due to a lack of Indigenous representation in the profession, the inclusion of Indigenous design principles and cultural expression in built form has resulted from consultation with Indigenous community groups. Typically the design of public buildings that make reference to Indigenous culture and place-making, do so through symbolism and abstractions,<sup>3</sup> that is, Indigenous culture as perceived through a non-Indigenous lens.

Following a design competition the winning design team for Yagan Square was Lyons, Iredale Pederson Hook architects and Aspect Studios in consultation with local artists and the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC). While the competition brief did call for some Indigenous representation, the winning design investigated how the project could be more explicit with regards to acknowledging Traditional Owners and

actively engage with local Aboriginal communities from conception, rather than designing for Aboriginal approval.

Through regular meetings with the Whadjuk Working Party (WWP), the design team received endorsement and support of architectural work from members representing different Whadjuk families. The architectural team have acknowledged the success of the consultation process set up by the MRA, and the willingness of the Whadjuk people to actively engage with the process and project. The MRA and WWP’s ‘Kaart Koort Waarnginy’ (‘Head Heart Talking’) framework formed a cyclical and continual process of engagement, referencing the six Noongar seasons as a foundation. This approach allows engagement to continue after the building is completed and “*the place transitions into a life of its own.*”<sup>4</sup>

The project was initially given the generic all-encompassing title of “City Square.” The Barnett government decided to change the name to Yagan Square, honouring the Noongar leader who resisted colonisation. The change of name occurred prior to consultation – out of the hands of the design team, consultants and Aboriginal community involved – and was contentious for the Aboriginal community. The acceptance of the WWP to work with this name ►



Yagan Square by Lyons, iredale pederson hook architects and Aspect Studios. Image: Courtesy Lyons Architects.

demonstrates a willingness to arrive at the best possible outcome.

In a post-colonial context, where western policies and urban design are engrained so deeply in city life, it is difficult to pay homage to the Traditional Owners of the now stolen land. The approach should prioritise sensitivity to culture and stories, acknowledge the displacement of Indigenous people through settlement, and take steps toward a reconciliation where both cultures can share, make use of, identify with, and belong to the land. The design team on Yagan Square negotiated the dichotomy between Aboriginal narrative and colonial forms by merging a level of abstraction with a degree of figurative images, thereby engaging with pre-colonial and post-colonial histories side-by-side. The conceptual thinking that underpins the project considers it not as a museum, but as a field of ongoing creative engagement with the Traditional Owners.

One of the key artworks incorporated in Yagan Square is Paul Carters' *'Passenger'*. It tells the story of Fanny Balbuk, a Whadjuk woman who walked from Heirisson Island to Lake Kingsford (now Perth Train Station and Yagan Square)

with blatant disregard for the colonial buildings in her path. Through this work, Balbuk's tracks are uncovered and celebrated by visitors who can walk alongside them or forge tracks of their own. The convergence of pathways is a theme that continues beyond the artwork to the organisation of the space around it. Beyond a pragmatic necessity to negotiate the sunken train lines from the station through the site, the terraced pathways bury the train tracks to bring to light the human tracks. This broader narrative moves the project away from one-dimensional representations of Aboriginal storytelling, allowing visitors to Yagan Square to create their own narratives through their experience in the space.

In a post-colonial era where the city has already been divided and modified beyond repair, how can architecture serve to foster inclusiveness, educate the broader community, and facilitate the agency of Noongar people on their Country? The fact that the tensions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous place-making come to the fore when considering Yagan Square is a testament to the project's recognition that these tensions exist, and an attempt on behalf of the architects, artists and consultants to reconcile the

different needs of different groups. This project lays the groundwork for how Australian cities may approach public architecture in the future.

Traditional and contemporary uses of site have been elaborated in the narratives of Yagan Square. This is a place that confronts the history of times past, but also creates its own narratives within the space, which can be nurtured and shared in collective thought. The liberty of the visitor to contemplate many perspectives and arrive at their own unique conclusion makes this a successful project, this diversity of viewpoints stems from true collaboration from conception. As story-tellers, the role of an architect is to share the stories of many through built form, and carve space for new stories to unfold.

*Yagan Square was awarded the John Septimus Roe Award for Urban Design in the 2019 WA Architecture Awards.*

*Note: Thanks to Dr Richard Walley (WWP), Nick Abraham (SWALSC), Neil Appleton (Lyons Architects), Finn Pedersen (iph architects), Adrian Iredale (iph architects) and Daniel Martin. ■*

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Sunset Hill overlooking the beach and the Snake Pit. Image: Douglas Mark Black.



# the coastal cultural landscape of scarborough beach

Author **Tilly Caddy**

I have it on good authority that the surf breaks at Scarborough (and Trigg) are the best in the metro area (beaches to the south are protected by Wadjemup (Rottnest Island) and Meeandip (Garden Island), while beaches to its north are shielded by outer reef.) But it isn't purely the physical environment that has made this coastal landscape such a destination. A pulsing beach, surf, rock and roll, skate and car culture gives Scarborough Beach an edgy and unique reputation amongst Sandgropers and visitors alike. The completion of Scarborough Foreshore Redevelopment last year draws on and celebrates the rich history of this Perth coastal hotspot.

Historically, the Western Australian coastline was a fishing, hunting and leisure ground for Noongar groups in the warmer months.<sup>1</sup> With disregard to this fact, Scarborough was named after an English Beach resort in North Yorkshire by a Melburnian developer in 1892.<sup>2</sup> It became a popular beach holiday destination in the 1930s (and the exotic location of my grandparents' honeymoon). Residential attraction followed with the West Coast Highway offering easy beach access since the 1940s.

An alfresco café called "La Spiaggia" (The Beachfront) opened in the 1950s and soon became the ultimate local dance spot, nicknamed 'the Snake Pit' in reference to the popular rock and roll dance style of the time. "Don had

imported a jukebox from America, the first ever in Perth. We were amazed at the huge crowds of teenagers that came to dance the jive and to watch the dancers"<sup>3</sup> reminisces owner Rosina Errichetti in an online collection of stories titled 'Chronicle Scarborough'.

While the Snake Pit saw Scarborough Beach pulse with life, binge drinking and violence blighted the pristine coastal landscape. In 2013, the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority (MRA) and City of Stirling pledged a combined sum of just less than \$60 million to redevelop the Scarborough foreshore in an effort to shake off its seedy reputation and encourage investment growth.<sup>4</sup> This process began with the undertaking of Community Consultation and development of the Cultural Compact document and Masterplan. Parallel to this process was the creation of the Scarborough Edge Creative Template, led by Paul Carter of Material Thinking. This uniquely poetic document and time capsule of Scarborough Beach identified stories that made the place significant. A consortium of designers, led by landscape architects TCL (Taylor Cullity Lethlean) (Melbourne) and UDLA (Perth) with engineering by Arup, brought the design brief to life in the dazzling redevelopment we see today.

The one kilometre long redevelopment is traversed by two parallel north-south promenade connections, generously wide, with activation nodes sleeved in between. Designed with capacity

in mind, activation was an important part of the brief for the MRA, without compromising the pedestrian experience. "It's hard to make a really popular public realm that has different levels and is on a busy road into a highly functioning event space," explains Shea Hatch, Senior Landscape Architect at UDLA. "Most event spaces are purpose built for that reason. To have access through a public realm or construction site is really challenging".

The built palette comprises a natural suite of neutral, sympathetic selections of limestone, concrete, and timber. When there is colour – as in the playgrounds rubber softfall, bouldering walls, basketball half court and skate bowl – it is blue, emulating the ocean and the sky. When design decisions needed to be made, UDLA pared things back. One simple yet clever design choice involves using limestone rock mulch instead of the commonly used brown bark mulch. This not only avoids the introduction of an additional element to the material palette, but from a distance allows the generously sized garden beds to blend into the dunes beyond whilst also staying put in the sea breeze.

Today the name 'Snake Pit' now refers to the activity hub consisting of three basketball courts, world-class skate plaza and bouldering walls as well as a 3.6m competition grade skate bowl. Developed by UDLA and TCL in consultation with ENLOCUS, these are





Sand blasted memories of the Maslin Children. Image: Tilly Caddy.

designed to encourage and cater to all levels of participation, whether that be as a spectator, beginner or pro.

Though it was not part of the original Masterplan, UDLA and TCL identified the need for a new children's playground. The Creative Template identified a Whadjuk Noongar Dreaming story in which the spirits of ancestors lost at sea return to the land in the carcass of a Blue Whale. UDLA worked with Neville Collard and Richard Walley to develop this story to create a children's playground with artist Jahne Rees, of Scapism.

The concrete 'skeleton' of the whale features vignettes of children's drawings by the three children from a local family, who were lost in the 2014 MH17 tragedy.

"The Maslin family saw a beautiful alignment in the whale Dreaming story and the notion of returning home that was subtle in nature," reflects Shea Hatch. According to Scott Lang, director at UDLA, "It was one of those moments where we just went, 'Wow, what a beautiful story.' As a family they would go to a local restaurant where the paper on the table would be adorned with Mo, Evie and Otis's artwork by the end of

the meal. Their mother Rin Norris sent through many scans including napkin scans and then Jahne consulted further with family, developed stencils that were subtly sandblasted into the concrete whale bones. It was done in stealth for want of a better word." Shea adds, "Something that kids could discover and tell their parents about."

There is no plaque or written inclusion on site referencing the artwork or formalising the memorial in the usual fashion. These beautiful inclusions challenge our perception that a memorial requires signage as formal recognition. Walking through the playground I felt honoured to know of their inclusion within the project, a moment of quiet reflection when you run your hands over the sand blasted indentation.

The brief acknowledged the weak existing physical and visual connection to the beach from the entertainment precinct. To rectify this, the giant turfed Sunset Hill, was formed from which to experience the uniquely West Australian view of the sun setting over the Indian Ocean. The mound creates an amphitheatre framing the skate bowl as well as providing vantage points into the Whale Playground and onto the

beach. Scott Lang explains "The idea is that it is a completely inclusive place to experience the coast because that is what we are all down here for."

To the south sits WA's first beachfront pool designed by Christou Architects and Landscape Architects Plan E. As explored in the Australian Pavilion at the 2016 Venice Biennale, the pool (like the beach) is a lens to explore Australian cultural identity. Both are recognisably part of the Australian dream, as places of recreation and celebration embedded into our psyche.<sup>5</sup> The inclusion of the pool might not sit right for some Scarborough locals who could swim before they could walk; however this device allows swimmers of all ages, abilities and confidence levels to make a splash, regardless of the sea breeze, weather conditions or mention of sharks.

The beach is Perth's great social equaliser, attracting locals and visitors alike. Yet the programming inclusions of the Scarborough Foreshore Redevelopment reimagine the coastline to be experienced by even those who are not necessarily interested in the salt, surf and sand experience. ■

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Agora by Penhale & Winter with Kieran Murnane. Image: Katherine Lu



# agora

Author **Tess O'Brien**

WA based architecture practice, Penhale and Winter, in collaboration with Kieran Murnane, were the selected architects for the 2019 MAAS (Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences) Architecture Commission. The competition is in its second year and sought proposals for a temporary space, to be a central focus during the Sydney Design Festival. The brief called for a structure that was immersive, interactive and engaging, multi-functional, and capable of accommodating events.

The successful design, Agora, sits atop the forecourt fronting Sydney's Powerhouse Museum adding an entry experience to the space. The architects have created a temple-like structure and looked toward archaic examples as key reference points. Standing at the base of the existing forecourt's stairs, the feeling of arrival is heightened as the structure looms tall and proud above. While moving along the street, the midnight-blue boxes morph between strong, oblong walls and delicate column like portals, revealing framed glimpses of the museum building behind. Ascending the stairs, I realise that the experience of an agora is felt at two different scales: a city scale, and a human scale.

This temporary structure is another fragment of the group of buildings that comprise Sydney's Powerhouse Museum. As people pass through the colonnade on their way to the museum, the tall walls present a feeling of grandeur and celebration. They also

form a third boundary that further defines the forecourt as a place of arrival, and events. For just a few weeks the Agora transformed an otherwise exposed forecourt into a courtyard-like space. On the opening evening of the Sydney Design Festival, guests enjoyed their wine and cheese surrounded by 19th century brick of the old power station, the glassy reflectiveness of the exhibition space and the pared back contemporary materials of the Agora. With the fading evening sky above and the city beyond these three defining edges created a rich urban moment.

At a smaller scale, within the temporary structure: Two civic rooms are carved out in a way which encourages milling about rather than moving through. Located at either end of Agora, the rooms are practical in size for small gatherings, meetings, or simply resting in the shade after a visit to the museum. On stepping inside the walls, a view up to the sky is captured. A steep, angled roof lowers the experienced height of the walls to a human scale and simultaneously draws the eye upwards. In this instance the beauty and intricacy of the project is revealed in its section.

Within each room there is a darkened space that functions as a backdrop for presentations. Painted in a deep blue, the apex of the steep raked ceiling of this engulfing space vanishes when gazing upwards, it takes a moment for one's eyes to adjust. The blue panels meet in the finest of points, a degree of delicacy that is in contrast to the

weighty boxes of the overall plan. Shane Winter notes that the project explores the relationship between the horizontal feeling of the colonnades and the vertical sense of the rooms – a dialogue that is expressed in distinct material qualities and finishes.

Gazing across the walls and internal spaces of Agora: a humble combination of timber framing, shade cloth, raw fibre cement sheets and paint are composed in a brilliantly thrifty combination. They take on a beauty bought about by refined execution. A smart recessed column base detail allows for a graceful connection to the ground. The project is distinguished in the interactions between materials. The timber framing silhouetted as light passes through the shade cloth creates a fleeting moment of play between structural pattern and light. The powdery smoothness of the fibre cement sheets sit next to the deep blue blur of the taut cloth.

Reflecting on the MAAS Architectural Commission, Penhale and Winter note that they had to be extremely agile in their thinking. Changes associated with material finish, their proposed structural system as well as budget and time restrictions compelled the team to move quickly in their design thinking while keeping their core ideas grounded. The end result is a temporary architecture that manages to nestle comfortably into its place with a strong sense of permanency. ■



The Waverley Brewhouse by Finespun. Image: Dion Robeson.

# bottled up

Author **Jess Beaver**

A decanting of transformative hospitality spaces.

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For new additions in old buildings, forms no longer require a rigid following of function. Landowners, developers and architects are working together to refresh underutilised areas and empty buildings, to retain a rich nostalgic fabric threaded throughout Perth. Hospitality spaces in particular cover all realms of design intentions—from soft, warm, sultry nooks to edgy, loud social hubs. Well-considered interiors take us to another place; and it's like we've ended up exactly where we should be.

## **Freo.Social – Benson Studio Breathing new life into Freo's musical backbone**

The live music scene and its associated iconic venues are suffering to a point of near extinction. There's something about music that brings with it strong social bonds, a connection to craft, culture, creativity and community. The now retired Fly by Night site held true to its name from 1986 until its retirement in 2015. Benson Studio, a local Freo design studio has collaborated with client and community to bring life back to this underutilised site.

Sited within the heritage listed artillery drill hall, Freo.Social is a project three years in the making. And it shows - the intricately detailed project is threaded throughout with history, transforming a dormant key street-corner in Central Fremantle into a landmark icon.

Walking through the spaces with principal designer Michael Benson the venue initially seems overwhelming in size. Yet, as you pause and distill, the venue reveals a neat series of breakout spaces that lure you in. From the entertainment hall (signposted by neon light) you wander between the folds of metal and art deco shapes through the heritage buildings to a microbrewery which boasts a rotating experimental beer brewed in-house every week. Alongside the traditional hospitality offerings of food and drink, spaces exist for co-working desks, artist workshops - even a playground, interpreted as a little homage to music. The spaces aim to accommodate all ages and walks of life, whilst providing an opportunity to encourage interaction around every corner. Freo.Social truly encapsulates the brief of becoming a multi-faceted space. Despite a generous capacity, the interior spaces pull in and out from the overarching shell, welcoming a spread of locals and visitors alike and allowing patrons and staff to meet a new friendly face fresh off the street.

Every inch of Freo.Social's walls, floors and ceilings have been considered – the drill hall has exposed etchings in the original concrete floor (a discovery whilst on site). And the connecting hallway is covered wall-to-wall with intricate hand drawn illustrations by local Perth artists. Its past lives as a drill hall, indoor badminton court and music

club are intertwined in the new story, a landmark building is given a new lease on life. No heritage brick or piece of truss has been left unturned – the harmonious and historical narrative of the building shines through every detail seen today. The aspirations led by the design team in close communication with the clients have delivered a holistic social connector for the port city and wider community.

## **The Waverley Brewhouse – A new found sense of place (+ building breweries out of a van)**

Coming from a hands-on background working on construction sites and within some great architectural studios, Finespun began in 2009. Now in its 10th year, they prefer the more interesting projects to keep things rolling – and hospitality tends to fall into this category. From Mechanic's Institute and Secession-inspired whisky bars, to revitalising the old Fremantle town centre with nautical charm, Finespun nail the balance between achieving the best outcomes for the client, staff and patrons. Aesthetics, scale of economics and efficient planning that aligns with the offerings on the shelf, all come together in the final space.

A more recent project saw Finespun at the design helm for Australia's fastest built brewery – The Waverley Brewhouse, a full design followed





Freo.Social by Benson studio. Image: Josh Ludlow.



King Somm by Robeson Architects. Image: Dion Robeson.



by a 28-day build contained within the new rooftop dining precinct at Westfield Carousel. There was a shift in the typical shopping centre model with investments into comfortable, accessible entertainment spaces – not just for shoppers – but creating a destination for locals. Familiar Western Australian materials form an industrial palette and highlight the shine of the brew tanks taking centre stage. Open space has an injection of soft colours and plants which meet the need to appeal to a wide demographic – not just the masculine drive associated with breweries, but also appeal to the key demographic of daytime trade – families. Finespun have used their technical finesse and hospitality know-how to instil feelings of a local nostalgia. Quite the feat when faced with demanding timelines, long hours on site, closely managed budgets and still meeting the needs of key stakeholders and patrons. The Waverley wants locals to take ownership of each stool and nook, and so it becomes that welcoming place you can call your own.

**King Somm – Robeson Architects**  
**Opening up your [second] home**  
**to the locals**

More renowned for their award winning additions and bespoke residential designs, Robeson Architects like to have a hand in some fun hospitality projects from time to time. For their own project

a perfect site was found on King William Street. Even a quick walk through the heritage listed shop (whose past lives include a billiard hall and bookstore) ran sparks through the imagination and there was a buzz as the first ideas were scratched onto yellow trace.

Simone Robeson's (principal at Robeson Architects) thoughts on hospitality spaces are on point – they are made for people to let down their hair. Being the client/architect and falling in the demographic of the target audience provided a clear brief for King Somm: “Comfortable, cosy, unpretentious, yet contemporary and kinda cool.” Most importantly, the bar needs a really good vibe. Memorable moments transgress the fitout (although there is a great amount of detail considered in all areas – lighting, colour, seat heights etc.) Simone says that getting so hands on as the Architect heightened the benefits of the final outcomes – mapping out the bar flow in masking tape and ensuring functionality, layout and flow ensured that it wasn't purely aesthetics that made the venue shine. The secret ingredient is making the space comfortable for both guests and staff.

Keeping all of this under control, as well as juggling the needs of the Heritage, Planning, Building and Liquor Licensing authorities, means there is a lot of

attention to detail required. The bar was built in a neat 4 months with a very close collaboration between architect, builder and fabricators with details often resolved on site.

And from the resulting experience it's clear the value a good designer can bring including “to the business' bottom line.” King Somm is making its place as the crafty, cruisy locale for residents and visitors of Bayswater alike. For this fresh-faced local, it's only early days - but the doors are open and the architects, owners and patrons all have massive smiles on their faces.

Great hospitality design creates a place you can call [a second] home. ■

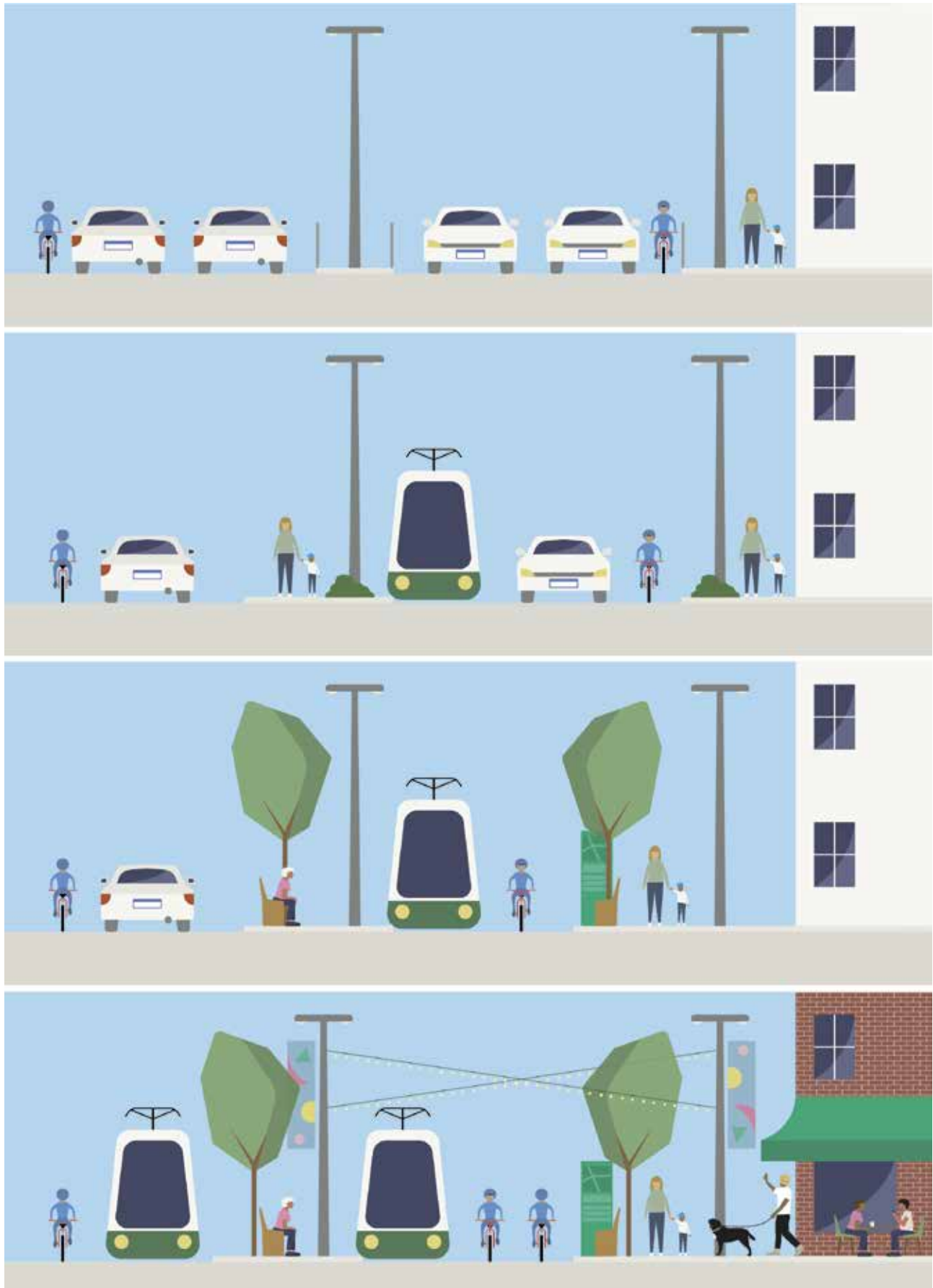


Illustration: Kelwin Wong.

# streets as places

Author **Dean Cracknell**

*"It is difficult to design a space that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished."*

William "Holly" White - urban analyst.

As the veins of our urban fabric, streets define the image and ambience of a city. The high quality and well-used streets of the world's most liveable places, such as Melbourne, Vienna and Vancouver, perform a dual role. These streets successfully function as a transport network and as a corridor of lively public places. Increasingly, streets are being recognised for the vital role they play in healthy, liveable communities. Thoughtful infrastructure can support local businesses and inspire vibrant social spaces. Flexible streets are fundamental to a sense of community.

## **Streets and Roads are Different**

Thoroughfares can be social and active places or they can prioritise vehicle movement. It is very difficult to achieve both simultaneously. Consider a road, a black bitumen strip running through the urban fabric or landscape. A street on the other hand evokes a different image: people, shops, houses, an active place. In my mind, streets and roads are different and should be designed and managed accordingly. Streets are for people with activity, comfort and greenery the top priorities. Cars can be accommodated, but should not be dominant. South Terrace in Fremantle is a social meeting place, an economic and tourism drawcard, whilst still allowing slow speed vehicle movement.

From the 1950s onwards vehicle movement was the main (sometimes the only) priority of road and streets. "If you plan cities for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic. If you plan for people and places, you get people and places," said Fred Kent, Project for Public Spaces. In the majority of cases in WA we are still planning for cars and the management of traffic. Planning places through a traffic management lens with the idea of making it easier to drive encourages more people to drive, more often. If we plan the built environment around the ease of pedestrian and bicycle movement it is likely more people would walk and ride. A conscious choice needs to be made: do we want cars, or do we want people and places?

## **Flexible Streets:**

### **Healthy, Social, Economic and Green**

Streets can accommodate a vast array of uses and activities. Streets can be places to socialise, trade, relax, exercise, meet friends and neighbours (intentionally or incidentally), hold events, green the urban environment, provide animal habitat and manage water. The assortment of street activities and users can be diminished or supported through traffic, road and planning regulation.

Within Western Australia streets and footpaths are the most frequently used places for physical activity. Streets are on our doorsteps and are essentially free to use. Yet it is not often that we think of streets as essential for the health of individuals and our communities.

Being on lively streets satisfies our need to be around people and can lead to chance encounters. It opens up opportunities for the sort of voluntary, incidental interactions that build trust, and as Jane Jacobs was quoted in the Grattan Institute 2012 Social Cities Report it "the small change from which a city's wealth of public life may grow". It is on the street that we are most likely to meet our neighbours. Social connection is crucial to wellbeing, and humans have evolved in an environment where group membership is essential to survival. Human to human interaction fundamentally influences the structure of the human brain: the need to socialise and connect made us who we are today.

Active and well-designed streets as community places can be drivers of economic development. The Heart Foundation's 2011 *Good for Business* discussion paper found walking and cycling to local shops is beneficial for business, good for the local economy and is essential to the success of revitalisation strategies. Retail vitality could be served by traffic restraint, public transport improvements and a range of measures to improve the walking and cycling environment such as wider footpaths, cycle lanes, trees and seats.

Streets and road reserves take up 25% of the available space in urban areas. This provides an opportunity to make urban areas greener, cooler and more inviting. What if we used our road reserves as public spaces for street trees, gardens, small parks, and alfresco areas? ■



Image: Lance Ward.



# a trace of dwellers

Author **Lance Ward**

For as long as I can remember I have been fascinated by the city, a sprawling urban landscape that is a central hub which draws in people and objects while also facilitating the interactions between them. These interactions often leave behind small clues or traces, hints of how people inhabit spaces, how they occupy, interact and bring personality to spaces. Sometimes these traces are a result of a purely practical action, such as hanging clothes out to dry, yet the only space available to do so is the exterior of a window. These seemingly mundane or everyday actions leave traces that give insight into how people interact with and inhabit spaces and thus create places.

My interest in these everyday traces comes not only from the actions they represent but a curiosity towards the story or narrative that lies behind them. A simple object can give insight and tell a story of its owner and the

way in which they occupy city spaces. A blanket laid over a Forrestdale Fresh box, tells only a fragment of a story: where the objects came from and who they belong to. Yet the space which they occupy and how they are arranged provides insight into the conditions of the person and their attitude towards the space. The blanket, box and water bottle occupy the space in defiance of the rules clearly posted on the doors behind them. Yet the words “Do not obstruct” seem to resonate in the way the owner of these objects chooses to make this space their own place regardless of the fact it is a defiant act.

An act of defiance, such as leaving behind a discarded coffee cup can also give insight into the creativity that occurs from interactions within the city. The choice of a city dweller to position an object so that it rests against a component of the space that was not intended to be used

this way creates new and interesting interactions from something as simple as a discarded cup. Similarly a fire exit adorned with small fake peaches gives insight into that person's aesthetic choices, adding creativity to what should be a purely functional space. All of these details and traces from the city are hints and small stories of how people occupy the city and create places through their interaction and occupation of space.

I specifically try to highlight these traces through the use of formal composition, creating images that allow these traces to become the main subject matter of each image. It is important to note that these images are not staged and instead are found within the city, creating a feeling of exploration and an observation of how people occupy the city and make spaces into places. ■



Image: Lance Ward.



Image: Lance Ward.







place in practice





St Denis Church Joondanna, by Ernest and Iris Rossen. Image: Alistair Dickinson.

# iris rossen

Author **Leonie Matthews**

## An Extraordinary Life.

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Architect Iris Rossen (nee Raymond) led an extraordinary life. Born in 1928 on the Greek Island of Cephalonia, she moved to neighbouring Corfu with her mother, Alice, and younger brother, Neville, in 1938. During The War her family moved as refugees to Crete and were evacuated, first in 1940 to Alexandria then Cairo, and then in 1942 to Cape Town. It was here that Iris completed her secondary education and won a scholarship to study at the University of Cape Town, choosing architecture because of a love of drawing and mathematics. Professor Leonard William Thornton White head of the school at the time, having taken up the position in 1937, after serving as the Vice-Principal of the Architectural Association in London for four years. Iris recalled that the school had a good reputation at the time, with a theoretical position based on logic and function.<sup>1</sup>

During her time at university, Iris was influenced by the Jesuits and developed a deep Christian faith and commitment to the Catholic Church. This enduring commitment was reflected in her family, public and professional life. Iris excelled as an architecture student and graduated with first class honours in 1949. She was awarded a distinction for her final dissertation, a joint submission with fellow student Ernest Rossen whom she married in their final year of study.

After graduating Iris and Ernest moved to Salisbury, Rhodesia, where she worked for Parker and Parker

Architects. In 1959, Iris and Ernest moved to Vancouver Island, Canada and two years later to California, USA. They immigrated to Perth, Western Australia in 1962.

While raising their nine children Iris continued to collaborate with Ernest on projects. Most notably, on the design of St Denis Catholic Church Joondanna, completed in 1968. Iris was responsible for the interior design including the striking front doors of the Church.

In 1972 Iris commenced practice in association with Peter Hunt, before establishing Iris Rossen Architects in 1977. Specialising in schools, healthcare and churches, the practice completed close to 400 projects, including 32 churches, 28 schools and 6 monastic buildings. The work is characterised by a logical approach to planning with an emphasis on the user experience and spatial relationships. St Thomas More Catholic Church Complex is a good example of this. The design demonstrates a simple arrangement of the key components – the church, parish centre and presbytery - organised around courtyards and linked by a covered colonnade. The Church is a simple square arranged on the diagonal allowing parishioners to “gather” around the sanctuary. The planning for St Thomas More Church is based on the theological idea, that the church building is the place for communal worship, and the idea of “gathering” was the driver of not only the practices church commissions but also of their schools and healthcare projects.

Iris was an active member of numerous committees and in 1972 was involved in organising the inaugural Religious and Liturgical Art Exhibition held at The Old Fire Station gallery, an important venue of the Perth art scene at the time. 27 artists participated in the exhibition which included works by Hans Arkveld, Joan Campbell and Guy and Helen Grey-Smith amongst others, as well as a poster designed by Iris. In 1986 she was involved in the coordination of the Papal Visit to Perth which included transforming Belmont Park to accommodate the Papal mass congregation of one hundred thousand people. This included designing the layout for crowd movement, control and safety, and designing the backdrop, sanctuary, furnishings and vestments for Pope John Paul II.

Iris retired from practice in 1995 and was awarded the Architects Board Award for “her outstanding contribution to the profession through her work and in the community”<sup>2</sup> in 1998. The following year she was awarded Life Fellowships from the Australian Institute of Architects and the Royal Institute of British Architects. Iris passed away in December 2018 in Perth, leaving behind a considerable legacy. While her contribution has been recognised professionally, a detailed study of her significant body of architectural work is still to happen. Let's hope that's not too far way! ■

1. Iris Rossen, notes from meeting with author, 8 August 1991. 2. Paul Rossen, Vale Iris Rossen, 2019, courtesy of the author.





Arianne Palassis in the studio. Image: James Whinerary, courtesy Fremantle Biennale.



# stacked

Jaime Mayger talks to **Ariane Palassis** and **Tahmina Maskinyar**

A practice from the hull, not the helm.

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With both a passion for architecture and a discomfort with the traditional definition of an architect, many graduates are making the difficult decision to step beyond the industry's field of view in pursuit of something more. Equipped with the invaluable rigour and creativity of the architectural process, many surface and excel as everything from anthropologists and design communicators to makers, educators, project managers and place consultants. This interview is part of a germinating conversation to seek, explore and celebrate these many unique and varied applications of architectural thinking beyond traditional practice.

In the previous issue of *The Architect*, we discussed the value of stacking multiple skills and experiences toward a novel practice of architectural thinking, applicable beyond building buildings. In this interview, Ariane Palassis and Tahmina Maskinyar share their personal and professional experience in practising versus enabling design.

*What do you do?*

**Ariane Palassis:** I always have a moment of panic when I am asked what I do... Currently, I'm teaching design at Curtin College, practising at Palassis Architects, working on my own

sculptural work, and I'm on the board for the 2019 Fremantle Biennale.

I have not been practising in architecture for about eight years, returning to it just last year. In that time, I've done textile design, tried to work as an artist and was part of a partnership called *Feast your Eyes* with Sarah Blangiardo – we did lots of community engagement and programs, creating platforms for emerging creatives.

**Tahmina Maskinyar:** Rather than falling into practice straight away, I graduated in 2011 and began teaching full time at University of Western Australia (UWA); this gave me some time to expand my thinking about what I wanted to do with my architectural training.

I then worked at CODA (now The Fulcrum Agency) where I was exposed to a diversity of project types and modes of design application. After a couple of years in practice, I began to gain an interest in the ways that architectural education and design thinking could benefit younger kids, and so for a brief time I began a Master of Education. Following a stint at the Perth Zoo I am now working as an art consultant for FORM.

My professional path sounds a bit tumultuous, but everything has helped me get to where I am today.

*How do you relate to the profession of Architecture now?*

**AP:** I feel like a barnacle on the hull – attached and going along with where it takes me! I left architecture because of stress and anxiety. Teaching kept me involved in theories and current projects while I wasn't practising and I kept myself involved in the architecture community. But, I don't consider myself a true architect. I refer to myself as an 'archi-ma-TECT', simply because I'm not registered. But in everything I do, my thinking is still fundamentally architectural – my spatial and environmental sensitivities have been attuned through my study and practice in architecture. I've gained other skills along the way but architecture has always been a base.

**TM:** I'm a very silent person in the background, drawing in lots of different stakeholders and bringing everyone's input into one common outcome. I think architects have a lot of value to add to that space.

**AP:** Don't you ever get frustrated, wanting to have direct input?

**TM:** Absolutely. But it's not always my place. The only way I see authentic design being created is by working with a variety of professions, expertise and individuals. It's about how you can take your discipline and make space for other disciplines for the best outcome. ►



Westralia Urinal 9, Midland Railway Workshops. Ariane Palassis with Tom Muller. Image: Agency 296.

*What learnings from architecture do you regularly come back to?*

**AP:** A lot of the things I have done, I could not have done without having studied architecture. Much of my art has to do with site and objects; places being repositories for human memory and experience, tapping in to those memories, or exciting that imagination around lived experience. Site analysis is a big part of that. This was always one of my favourite things in studying architecture. Now in practice, I am lucky to have found a place doing research – uncovering the layers of context and history in a site.

I'm also constantly looking at things and working out how they were made. In my art practice, a lot of what I do is experimenting with the properties and qualities of materials. For example, my recent sculptures have been developing a process by which I weave rope and melt it. It is extremely cathartic. That's going into different methods of fabrication now – I'm extending the idea and potentially putting it into architectural cladding. So my practices are also constantly shifting between art and architecture.

**TM:** A lot of the work I do can be broadly understood as consultancy – I work with others. Without being exposed to architecture I wouldn't be able to manage those relationships as well as I do.

Being in that conduit space, between artist and client (sometimes between

the sector and the client), you see all the layers that are involved in creating authentic outcomes – the research, contextual information, relationships, stakeholders. I'm really interested in how over time, true collaboration across disciplines, and also individuals, can bring systemic change.

Through my training in architecture I can see the synergies between art and urban or architectural practice, and how these can come together to positively transform or sustain a place.

**AP:** Much like me, you've found something engaging about working with a broader set of professions, professionals, expertise and fields. We were taught that architecture happens in this pristine bubble. Whereas the truth is, you're dealing with so many factors that affect a design. It's that cross pollination and collaboration that I find most interesting.

**TM:** The year after I graduated was the first year the course work structure changed at UWA to allow students from other faculties to take on first year design studios. At the end of year exhibition last year, you could see the breadth of alternative subject exposure. That, I think, is a benefit to a student.

**AP:** Also, you're given so many practical and technical skills through studying architecture. I know people that have gone into animation, game making, 3D scanning and imaging, graphics, art, design, fashion. You have so many avenues.

*Do you think the profession is representative of that breadth?*

**TM:** Not standard practice. I feel traditional architectural practice is trying to redefine itself but the systems around our practice don't necessarily allow that to occur – the way projects are set up, the almost rote learning approach to registration, resource restrictions, shorter deadlines, and the perception that an architect can present a project in isolation. Whilst these aren't necessarily always bad things, I feel it is a sign of the practice being out of touch.

We have this generation of established architects that are phenomenal. But I think the dynamism in practice is coming from a lot of younger firms who are delivering project models that are outside typical architectural practice. This younger, entrepreneurial generation have great ideas about what practice can do but need these systems around practising to allow for their approach to be considered.

I think we're just in this murky next-phase of what architects can provide to communities, cities and places, at this cusp of slow evolution – and that's really exciting. ■

# design at the heart of things

State Planning Policy 7.0, the Apartment Design Policy and Design Review Guide.

Design WA Stage One is here. The Architect spoke with a local planner and architect to find out what it means for good design in WA. Nic Temov, now Principal at Hames Sharley, managed the project at the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage and Phil Gresley, Director at Gresley Abas Architects, was lead consultant on the Apartment Design Policy component of Design WA. Nic and Phil talk us through a change that has been building momentum for 15 years.

*So, why are we excited? What happened?*

**Nic Temov:** This is the first time design quality has been embedded into the planning system. So if you're a planner or a designer it's very exciting.

**Phil Gresley:** State Planning Policy 7.0 embeds ten principles of good design into policy to guide design review and decision making: context and character; landscape quality; built form and scale; functionality and build quality; sustainability; amenity; legibility; safety; community; and aesthetics.

**NT:** And those principles are written into the highest form of planning policy, that is backed by legislation (through the Planning and Development Act). The R-Codes Volume 2 (also known as the Apartment Design Policy) and Design Review Guide are also part of the reform.

**PG:** At the moment I think some planners are grappling with what this reform means. It's not something that

they need to be concerned about or react against. This change will support what planners already do to enable better outcomes for the community.

Two thirds of Local Governments in metro Perth already have Design Review Panels. The first was in the 1980s but most have been recently implemented. Through these panels (of planners and architects) developers have the opportunity to seek independent advice on the outcomes expected of a good quality development. Design Review is not a box ticking exercise. There is no 'Deemed-to-Comply' pathway – it's a performance based system with each site being measured on its merits.

**NT:** Design WA creates a common benchmark, giving all Local Governments the tools to introduce the same processes in their area. New standards for apartment development in the Apartment Design Policy will push for better design.

**PG:** In the past when a development proposal was not supported by the decision maker (like a local government or JDAP) on design quality grounds it was difficult to defend in an appeal at the State Administrative Tribunal (SAT). The previous planning framework was so light on design quality provisions that it was hard to defend decisions to reject poor design outcomes – such as bedrooms with no windows. Design WA changes that, it 'brings some teeth' to decision makers in relation to good design.

*Who stands to benefit from this shift in Planning Policy?*

**NT:** The community, good designers and good developers. A lot of developers are already working to these standards and have been for years. During the policy development process they told us that good design outcomes don't necessarily cost more. For developers, profiting from good design involves early collaboration with skilled designers, and promoting the everyday improvements you'd notice as a resident living in a well-designed place.

**PG:** Under the current system planners have struggled to apply a system of 'rules' to get good outcomes. I think that's because design is a system of trade-offs rather than rules. Architects are well qualified to use design thinking and design skills to weave and balance multiple issues. As architects, we can enter into a dialogue that understands the needs of the potential developer, and we can represent the community to get the best design outcomes for occupants and neighbours.

**NT:** Architects are trained, through the iterative studio process, to present a design concept and negotiate through complex matters early on. State Planning Policy 7.0, Design Review and the Apartment Design Policy fit hand-in-glove with this way of thinking.

**PG:** I'd encourage everyone to look into the new policies, and to follow through with the professional development that's being rolled out. There are big opportunities for architects within



this process. The design review process empowers architects to enable their clients through good design: to provide a service that will give their clients a smoother development application process.

*Design WA Stage One focusses on apartments. What will be the most tangible changes we'll see in our neighbourhoods?*

**PG:** I'm really pleased to see that site design response is such a key part of the Apartment Design Policy, and that it is backed by the design principles in State Planning Policy 7.0. I'd like to think that all planners and architects consider the impact of any new building on the surrounding area. Design WA brings us together to be able to achieve that more effectively. On the ground we'll be seeing more trees, more green. It will become obvious that buildings are being designed to respond to their context.

**NT:** There are new provisions and guidance for mixed-use development too. So the design and position of commercial tenancies at the ground floor, and all of the important but often overlooked things like car parking entrances, servicing areas, storage and utilities must be considered early on. This can improve the spatial relationship of the building to the street and make it easier to get around as a resident or visitor.

**PG:** You'll notice better light and ventilation inside. It is now a requirement to consider these things

at the site planning stage. And this is something which hasn't been taken seriously enough in many recent apartment developments.

**NT:** It goes further than simply providing light. Consideration of outlook is important, too. For example under the Apartment Design Policy we won't see large amounts of obscured glass restricting views from apartments.

**PG:** I think we'll see an increase in awareness and general understanding of what makes a good space and a good apartment. Things like northern aspect and cross ventilation can become part of developers' and estate agents' sales pitch, and part of what people recognise helps make a space comfortable.

*We've heard the process to create Design WA was different to other policies. In what way?*

**NT:** Often policy reform starts with a government announcement, then policy writers have to work backwards to try and achieve it. It was different for Design WA. Early ideas started through conversations with practitioners and industry contacts. The Office of the Government Architect was an important part of this.

**PG:** The process was unusual in that it grew from collaboration. Planners, architects, urban designers, landscape architects, developers, local government – every little silo that exists within the production of the

built environment was included. It was really exciting because good urban design outcomes come when people collaborate. So even the process of developing the policies...

**NT:** ...was reflective of what we were trying to achieve. It's taken just over four years and lots of workshops and meetings with hundreds of stakeholders. Over that time we've noticed something special has been created going beyond the policy documents themselves. Architects started to learn about planning policy and processes, and planners gained a stronger appreciation for the role of architects to balance competing matters when they're designing. And that's the magic. You can't create that shift in culture through policy alone. It takes effort, energy and good relationships for everybody to get on-board and use the momentum.

**PG:** Now we have design at the heart of things. Design is now the basis for evaluating the quality of development in Western Australia. ■



Artwork: 'Counterpoints', 2018. Artist: Penelope Forlano. Image: Dylan Tarbett.

# liveliness in public art

Author **Penelope Forlano**

Public art contributes to placemaking in varied ways, often encouraging reflection, social interaction and storytelling, but it can also help to create a sense of liveliness from inert materials.

Take Tony Jones' 'Eliza' sculpture, arguably Perth's most famous public artwork. We all know her well, famous for her attire, rapidly changing political views, reminding us to ask "r u ok" one minute and confusing us with something obscure the next. We look out for her to see what she has to say today. What makes this public artwork such a significant contributor to Perth is the way it engages with people. Visually dramatic and defining her 'spot' on the river, the placement tantalisingly just beyond reach makes engagement all the more alluring. The community appropriate her for their needs, their meaning, adapting her to the changing mood of the times. By appropriating her, they give her a voice and make her come *alive*. She is not passive but beckons an interaction perhaps not originally intended or expected.

'Eliza' may be figurative and an unusually apt example, but are not all public objects highly contextual with unforeseeable modes of interaction and able to become lively in other ways?

Research on objects of deep personal meaning and attachment over time are often also viewed as 'lively' through interaction or more passively by keeping the memory alive of a person,

place or event that is precious. It is the ability of objects to keep a story alive that connects to people and place. In this way, research in person-object attachment theory informs what can become enduring and meaningful for community. Attachment objects carry within them the essence of someone or some place of significance or a memory that cannot be replaced with another object. Over time the object can become inextricably loaded with meaning and encourage direct attachment to the user or community.

Public art should perhaps aim to create this liveliness, where community can imagine the object imbued with personal meaning relevant to them and that can evolve over time, through appropriation, engagement and fluid meaning.

The recent backlash against the proposed removal of Brian McKay's artwork from Central Park<sup>1</sup> and the community support for repairing the damage to Tony Jones' 'C Y O'Connor' statue<sup>2</sup> attests to this community attachment. Just like a personal heirloom, once the community have gained emotional or psychological ownership it truly becomes an integral part of a place. The community in these instances has tried to save these works, thereby keeping them alive.

My recent PhD research and public art works have explored these ideas theoretically and through practice. Both the Fremantle College artwork

'Kaleidoscopic Wave' and the sculpture 'Counterpoints' engage the spectator through reflections: a dynamic surface that is everchanging with perspective, time of day and the seasons. 'Counterpoints' evokes a needle shape, a carved stone spearhead, or the sense of looking into an oversized water droplet and seeing the world around it in its surface. It is an eye reflecting what it 'sees' back to the viewer and a frame to visually connect places near and far.

'Kaleidoscopic Wave' is at once static and caught in motion with its everchanging surface. It acts to ignite various meanings by recalling childhood memories of kaleidoscopes and ways of seeing the world, the Whadjuk people's meaning of this place as a link between wetlands, and the specialist maritime teaching at the school.

Whilst interpretation is always subject to context and spectator, the works are intentionally open to enable the opportunity for ongoing speculation on its meaning. Additionally, with their changing appearances they bring the spectator into the present moment, as the work does not appear identical every day but appears to show change through reflection. The surface is alive with change.

Inert objects that engage with changing audiences, capture memory, are appropriated by the community, and imbued with a liveliness can become beloved community heirlooms. ■

1. I Tyrrell, Claire. (2018, October 30). *Holmes a Court leads protest against move to shift art from Central Park*. Retrieved from <https://thewest.com.au/news/perth/holmes-a-court-leads-protest-against-move-to-shift-art-from-central-park-ng-b881004811z> 2. Barry, Hannah. (2018, February 27). *Mystery of broken North Coogee statue continues with reports of a 'catamaran'* Retrieved from <https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/mystery-of-broken-north-coogee-statue-continues-with-reports-of-a-catamaran-20180227-h0wqmu.html>

# people making places: the FuBa experience

Author **Courtney Babb** and **Paul Shanahan**

“community is where community happens”<sup>1</sup>

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Place and community may be usefully understood as things that are made right here rather than things out there to discover. Making places and sustaining communities requires a collective effort: to make sense of important issues, of problem solving, and pooling resources to catalyse and sustain action. Over the last four years we've seen this effort pay off in Bayswater, with State Government Funding commitment to the upgrade of the train station and renewed interest in planning for the revitalisation of the town centre.

The Bayswater town centre is situated adjacent to Bayswater train station, on the Midland rail line just six kilometers north-east of Perth City centre. There has been little investment in the town centre for many years, and business and social activity in the once vibrant high street has declined. With the new Forrestfield Airport Link and Ellenbrook Rail Line, the town centre will become one of the busiest transport hubs in Perth and the first urban centre travellers will see when emerging from the airport tunnel. There is a renewed optimism for the reinvigoration of the town centre.

In 2015 a group of volunteer residents and local business owners formed Future Bayswater (FuBa). The initial catalyst for the group's formation was a response to a pocket of vocal opposition to the first ever mixed use development proposal in the Bayswater town centre – a twenty metre development of apartments and shops. FuBa came

together to give voice to an alternative narrative, a voice that gave support to well-designed development in the town centre that would contribute to a sustainable, safe and active place.

In 2016 and 2017 FuBa ran a speaker series to inform an ongoing civil dialogue about development and urban issues in Bayswater. FuBa hosted a range of experts on various topics including urban sustainability, quality apartment design, urban public health and heritage, in local venues including the Bayswater Bowling Club and the Bayswater Hotel. The speaker series included talks from Piers Verstegen from the Conservation Council WA, Marion Fulker, CEO Committee for Perth, and Philip Griffiths, member of the Heritage Council. It was an important early step in developing capacity in the group and the broader community to engage with the often complex issues, ideas and processes associated with urban development and renewal.

Since then, FuBa has worked with a property owner with a vacant building in the town centre to create a “revitalisation hub”. This created a space for initiatives, events, planning, and discussions to occur. FuBa have engaged the community through activation initiatives in the town centre, demonstrating how a critical mass of people can create a sense of excitement and vibrancy. These initiatives include five “Burgers; Beats; Beers and Ideas” events where at one

event alone 882 attendees engaged in a range of interactive and hands-on activities, including videographies, and family-friendly participatory games.<sup>2</sup> The group is also in the final stages of planning a growers market which will bring people back to the town centre on a weekly basis and help local businesses to thrive.

FuBa's membership now reflects a broad cross-section of the community: interested residents and business owners, including residents from various professions such as town planning, urban design, architecture, placemaking, community engagement, health promotion, education and more. With over 3,000 on-line followers, the group has harnessed support and generated collective goodwill to inform debate about what makes a good town centre and a vibrant future-focused community. This process has involved a mix of strategy, experimentation and learning through experience.

FuBa has also been proactive in advocating to all levels of government and at various key planning stakeholder events for greater investment in the Bayswater Town Centre and train station and a more cohesive approach to transport and urban planning. The State Government has committed \$146+million to the upgrade of Bayswater station as a catalyst for the Bayswater Metrohub redevelopment as part of its Metronet initiative. ■

1. Gottlieb, R. (2008) quotes Thomas Bender in *Reinventing Los Angeles: nature and community in the global city*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

2. The participatory games were run by Curtin University students as part of PlaceAgency, a national university and industry partnered project.



# finding a place in the profession

**Anjana Balakumar** explores the experience of several architects' first steps into the profession.

## SUE WITTENOOM

After I graduated, I stayed in Perth to organise the 1985 architecture student conference. Then I went to Sydney to find a practice which thought of the 'bigger picture'. I registered after about five years in two firms, and then we had a recession. I realised I was interested in briefing, planning and strategy so I went back to university and did a full time MBA, which was a fantastic complement to my architecture degree. I thoroughly enjoyed the introduction to organisational behaviour and the opportunity for problem solving.

Following my post grad, I joined Lendlease. I was thinking about family, and Lendlease was one of the few places that had in-house childcare. I went into corporate advisory roles at the front end of big building projects. This involved a lot of stakeholder engagement, which I loved. That realisation led me to DEGW, an architectural practice known for its strategic briefing and the programming of educational facilities. And that led to master planning in universities, and briefing and research for schools. Now I work freelance. I also founded Softbuild, which is a change strategy consultancy for the renewal and reinvention of buildings, spaces and people.

There is so much that is not within the remit of any degree, so however you can expand is important. The dimensions for registration are broad, we have people specialising in many different areas. It is useful to ask yourself through

your career: What are my skills? What am I good at? How can I make the most impact with my skills? An architecture degree can lead you anywhere.

## CHRISTOPHER VERNON

There was never a laser-bolt moment, where I suddenly realised what I wanted to do with my life. Landscape architecture appealed to me, because it was the natural world from a physical design point of view. For me, some of the best architecture is landscape: it is all about the ground plane! I studied at Ball State University in Indiana. Michael Graves, Dan Kiley and Garrett Eckbo showed me that everything, be it a store front, the cover of a magazine or what one chose to wear was a design choice. Design was not just a 9-5 job, but a way of life.

This is also what interested me in history. Political and religious beliefs are expressed through the built environment, which in turn builds consequences. Shortly after graduation my interest in history led me to Chicago where I focussed on the heritage work of Frank Lloyd Wright. I enjoyed the research and it led me into teaching.

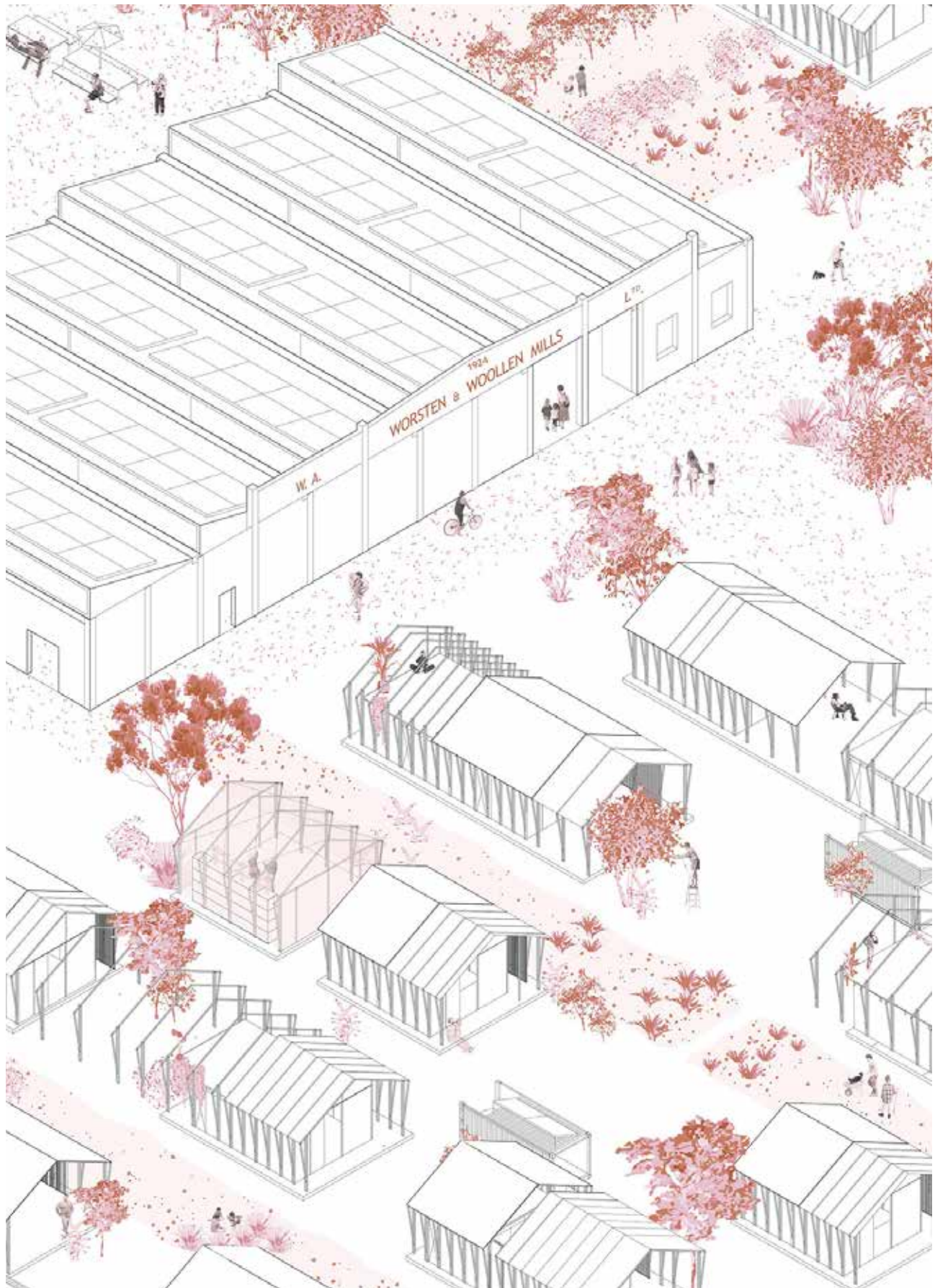
It might be a cliché, but learning is a lifelong process which extends beyond graduation. Try to cultivate ambition and excel, but be mindful that it can take time and work, and that part of the process is failing.

## NIC BRUNSDON

I really had no idea what I was doing in university. I was too young. After graduating I took a year off. After around 6 months of doing nothing but watching TV and getting fat, I moved to Melbourne. Wendy Nettle and Mike Morris took me under their wings and exposed me to projects well before I was ready. That learning on the fly gave me confidence that I'd be able to cope with running my own practice one day.

I was doing houses for rich people. And then I moved to the Middle East and did projects for even richer people. I ended up being gone from Perth for around 8 years. My interest in cities and what shapes them came after I'd decided that Perth was going to be home. I want Perth to be a great city and it felt important that I try my best to be a part of that. Possibly my work over the past 10 years has been in opposition to the earlier parts of my career.

I'm wary of 'common' routes and the 'right' way. People are more interesting with unexpected detours. Plus, there's nothing worse than being stuck somewhere because you thought it was the right thing to do. Take time out to understand what you want out of life and your career. There's no such thing as the standard architect. I really believe in the power of the hybrid professional, having something unexpected in your architectural practice gives you immense power. ■



Student work. Image: Sarah Brooke.

# architecture of assemblage

Author **Craig McCormack, Beth George and Mark Jecks**

A summer studio for University of Western Australia (UWA) architecture and engineering students explored contingencies of responsive, mobile and fast architectures. This project in the port city of Albany developed from the prospect of using sea containers to house, transport, and deploy energy generation systems, as well as architectural components and systems. It connected to Richard Weller's presentation of 'sustainability without hope,' in which human settlements might need to mobilise in response to climate change.<sup>1</sup> This is dire, yes, but not discouraging. It forces into sharp focus a sense of urgency, and the imperatives for architecture in mitigation, in action, and in empathy for humans and ecologies – urban and organic alike.

Though the studio was situated in Albany for only a short period of time much unsolicited community engagement arose. Locals' reactions were curious and ultimately protective. People on the street regularly engaged with the students to discuss the future development of Albany. Baristas in the local café talked to us as we ordered our morning coffees, happy that we were focussing on their city, but concerned about what we might suggest for the place they loved.

Students developed propositions for three sites and three sets of considerations. In each situation the shipping containers themselves were

to be structural or to curate space. A major constraint was that all proposed components should be only what can be carried on a truck, and that all elements and modules should be able to be erected largely by hand.

The first of three briefs asked students to respond to the requisite changes to a section of Albany's port for receiving, fitting out and dispatching the specialised containers for the other two scenarios. This also involved a public interface, exposing the workings and ambitions of the program to locals and those travelling via ship. The industrial site encouraged a series of engaging responses that challenged the stereotypical portside building stock. Student designs sought to include the public and provide access to the usually restricted working port that could serve as models for other similar conditions across Australian commercial waterfronts.

The second brief was set by economic drivers, such as the inability of many Australians to retire as homeowners, and local events such as the recent burning of the campgrounds at Sandpatch during a bushfire in June 2018. A little like a coastal shanty town, student projects were to be laid out expediently to form an accretive and semi-permanent settlement. Student responses offered a variety of sensitive strategies that resisted significant site alterations with a focus on protecting the natural character of the large site

in the face of encroaching suburbia. Students placed an emphasis on catering for a wide variety of residents. Proposals were inclusively designed for grey nomads; people with disabilities; and families small, large and expanding.

The third brief called for the systematisation of public programs and amenities that could assemble, unfurl, and reassemble elsewhere. This could be seen as a sister program to the second brief, or as anything from camp, to festival, to refuge centre. We sited this as an appendage to Bruce Munro's Field of Light and proposed a connection with the water tank at Albany's Mount Clarence. Students faced a considerable challenge to design a proposal that would be flexible enough to integrate successfully into an exposed, road-base site, dominated by an immense water tank.

During a weekend workshop where engineer Michael O'Hanlon assisted with the technical fidelity of the students' designs, the Albany Deputy Mayor Councillor Greg Stocks paid a visit. He encouraged the students to explore innovative architecture that embodied a sensitivity to the local ecology and incorporated renewable energy resources.

Albany is an exciting location for exploration of mobile and self-sustained architecture. It has a strong precedent for green energy and leaders with a will to explore atypical urban models. ■

1. Richard Weller spoke at the Australian Urban Design Research Centre on October 3, 2018 about his project, "The Atlas at the End of the World."



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