

SuperStudio 2021: An Architectural Response?

Brief:

SuperStudio 2021 would like you to explore a vision of how architecture for the future may reflect the concept of evolving **identity in connection to people, practice and country**. Reflecting upon self, take the opportunity to **rethink the future of education and practice working together**.

We chose to take on the challenge of architecture in relation to identity connected to "First Nations and indigenous heritage." We had many initial ideas about how we could respond to the brief. To begin with we cycled through many different project ideas about how to design a building which responded to this. We tried to create a building which would reconcile with the past and build a brighter future.

However, every idea ran into similar roadblocks. These came in a number of forms, but a fundamental issue occurred every time, that is that the land is not ours to build on. If this is the case, which it is, is any architectural response appropriate? The core issue which faces every project - how or what can you build on stolen land? Our short answer, you can't. You cannot build on another people's land, at least not without consulting the owners.

We came to the realisation that architecture in Australia is a continuation of colonial practice, without targeted change this will continue.



Architecture in Australian colonisation and occupation

From the declaration of Australia as “terra nullius” right up until the present day architecture has been a major part of colonisation, occupation, and discrimination of the first nations people and their land.

So architecture is complicit with colonisation, how can this narrative be changed? Our answer was to request permission to build. Before we proposed any building we wanted to know we had permission to build the land and we want to know our building will not negatively effect first nations people. Our initial idea was to write a hypothetical letter asking about these things to the indigenous community. However all projects face this problem and while one letter might solve one problem, largely the narrative continues.



Australian Architects Acknowledge Complicity in Colonial Practice and Declaration for Change.

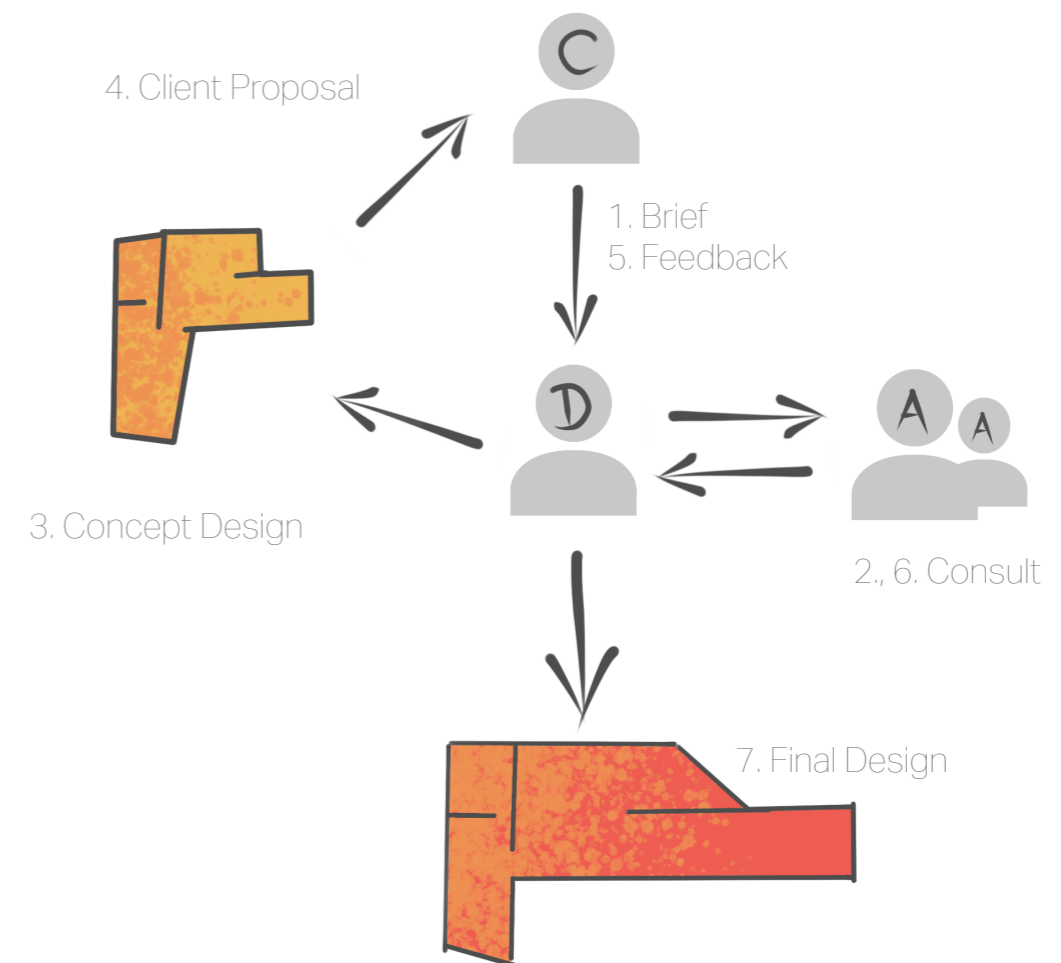
We decided what we needed was to design an industry wide social movement. These actions need to be taken on a large scale before the story begins to change. How could we facilitate this?

Our first step was to design a letter template for these kinds of communications with first nations people. A way anybody could request permission to build land and a review of their proposal in relation to local indigenous culture and values. After this we were inspired to try and push this concept further. We began to design a declaration Australian architects and studio could sign, declaring they would consult local indigenous people any time before building on their land. A strong precedent was the very inspiring Australian Architects Declare a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency, which had a similar take on a different problem. This was the final path we decided to travel, resulting in a first draft declaration, and proto-website with a built in letter template.

This is an initial draft template for a formal agreement, one that aims to return power to the Aboriginal people through acknowledging them as shareholders in architectural development.

While it might take time for these ideas to pass government legislation there is nothing stopping each of us from taking action now. This is where our response has been targeted.

The Design Process Revised



Australian Architects Acknowledge Complicity in Colonial Practice and Declaration for Change:

We wish to acknowledge that we are *Occupiers of the country* in which we work. We acknowledge the role that Architectural practice has played in the *justification of Colonial Occupancy* through the designation of 'Terra Nullius'. We acknowledge the ongoing inhibiting and removal of access to country through property markets, the drawing of plots and the *making permanent of displacement* through land development and other means. We acknowledge that through these actions *all Architectural interventions on Country are political*, and that without the *guidance and involvement of*, and *consent* from Elders, Community leaders and people of country Architecture will act as a *continuation of colonial practice*. *We acknowledge our complicity in colonial practice and declare a need for change.*

We Will Seek To:

- Seek Consent with community Leaders and Elders in the Proposal process. So that Country may never again be taken
- Walk Country, Collaborate and Seek Council with Community Leaders, Elders and people of Country in the Planning and Design process. So that Culture is understood, respected, and taught throughout the design process.
- Design So that access and connection to Country is maintained wherever possible. So that architecture may never again be weaponised to withhold access to Country or displace communities.
- Design With Country. So that values of First Nations people are respected, maintained and upheld through our practice.
- Evaluate all new Projects, to ensure Architectural practice plays a positive role for all communities
- Design to Help tell Stories. So that Connection to Country and the tradition of Story Telling is maintained, shared and cherished within and across communities.
- Embody Advocacy for the Awareness, Respect and Representation of First Nations People.

Sincerely, Signatories of the: *Australian Architects Acknowledgement of Complicity in Colonial Practice and Declaration for Change.*

Link to Website:

https://xd.adobe.com/view/acfd6cb2-98bf-42be-a319-34923633fb6e-f9ae/?fbclid=IwAR11VnB8MYyWdZTwWo9a1uy_jlTfDfzkQkE9_flywr1Fy1aEa4PRTL-pek

