

STUART McINTOSH (1924-2007)

Born in Adelaide and educated in Corowa, NSW, John Stuart McIntosh's career was put on hold during WWII while he served in Papua New Guinea and Borneo in the 2/6 Field Regiment. In 1947 he began architecture studies at the University of Melbourne, during which he developed a design philosophy owing much to the teaching of Robin Boyd. On graduating in 1953, he trained with architects Yuncken Freeman Bros, Griffiths & Simpson, then joined the staff of the Architecture Department of the English, Scottish and Australian Bank in Melbourne. He brought a fresh and progressive image to the bank's buildings around Australia from 1953 onwards as its architect-in-charge. His designs were a remarkable series of sculptural forms which derived from experiments with surrealist design techniques. Notable ES&A branches were at Ringwood, Vic. (1953-4), Taree, NSW (1955), Wingham, NSW (1956), Broken Hill, NSW (1956), Darwin, NT (1957), Sunshine, Vic. (1957), Traralgon, Vic. (1957), Parkdale, Vic. (1958) and Moe, Vic. (1963). Two of the last he designed, Malvern, Vic. (1959) and Canberra, ACT (1959-63) are regarded as his finest and have been recognised for their heritage value. Both use deep, closely-spaced cantilevered horizontal planes which appear to float across the facades to achieve a bold abstract sculptural effect. The Canberra building received the 1996 RAI A (ACT) 25-Year Award for enduring architecture.

McIntosh was one of the progressive Australian architects of the 1950s who made a vital contribution to the revival of rational design of tropical housing. Such a house in Darwin he designed in the late 1950s was elevated on steel columns with open 'in-line' planning, cross ventilation and an entire northern elevation of steel louvres without glass. He and Alexander Harris were architects for the striking modernist St Benedict's Catholic Church, Burwood, Vic. (1958). An outlet for Stuart's design flair was to compete in architectural competitions. In 1963 he won the competition for the design of the University of Queensland's Great Hall, in the form of an elegant glass temple raised on a grassed plinth. The roof and wide cantilevers were to be supported by lozenge-shaped beams aligned with a long axis focussed on the stage. He moved with his family to take up the University commission in Brisbane and set up a practice with Robert Garner. Sadly, there were insufficient funds to build the Great Hall and he was dismissed, due to a fractious relationship from which he did not recover. He advised engineers on the design of the Victoria Bridge, Brisbane (1965) and designed the Ansett Airlines Eagle Farm terminal, (1970). For the rest of his career he worked on speculative projects but closed his office in 1993. He entered, unsuccessfully, in a variety of international and Australian competitions, two of which were in Canberra: the National Memorial to the Australian Vietnam Forces, (1989) and Reconciliation Place (2001). Stuart died at his home in Brisbane. He deserves to be remembered for the considerable contribution he made to the evolution of modern architecture in Australia.



The Uni Pub, (Former ES&A Bank), Canberra. Photo: Ken Charlton

References:

- Igea Troiani, 'McIntosh, Stuart', in *The Encyclopaedia of Australian Architecture*, 2012, p.443
- Stuart McIntosh, 'Technique for Design Ideas' in *Architecture Today*, Feb 1960 p.15-17
- 'ANZ Bank' (Former ES&A Bank), citation in RAI A (ACT) Register of Significant 20th Century Architecture, 2002
- Peter Cuffley, *Australian Houses of the Forties and Fifties*, 1993, p.126
- Stuart McIntosh Collection, Fryer Library, University of Queensland.