

AUTUMN 2015

THE ARCHITECT

PERTH 2005 - 2015



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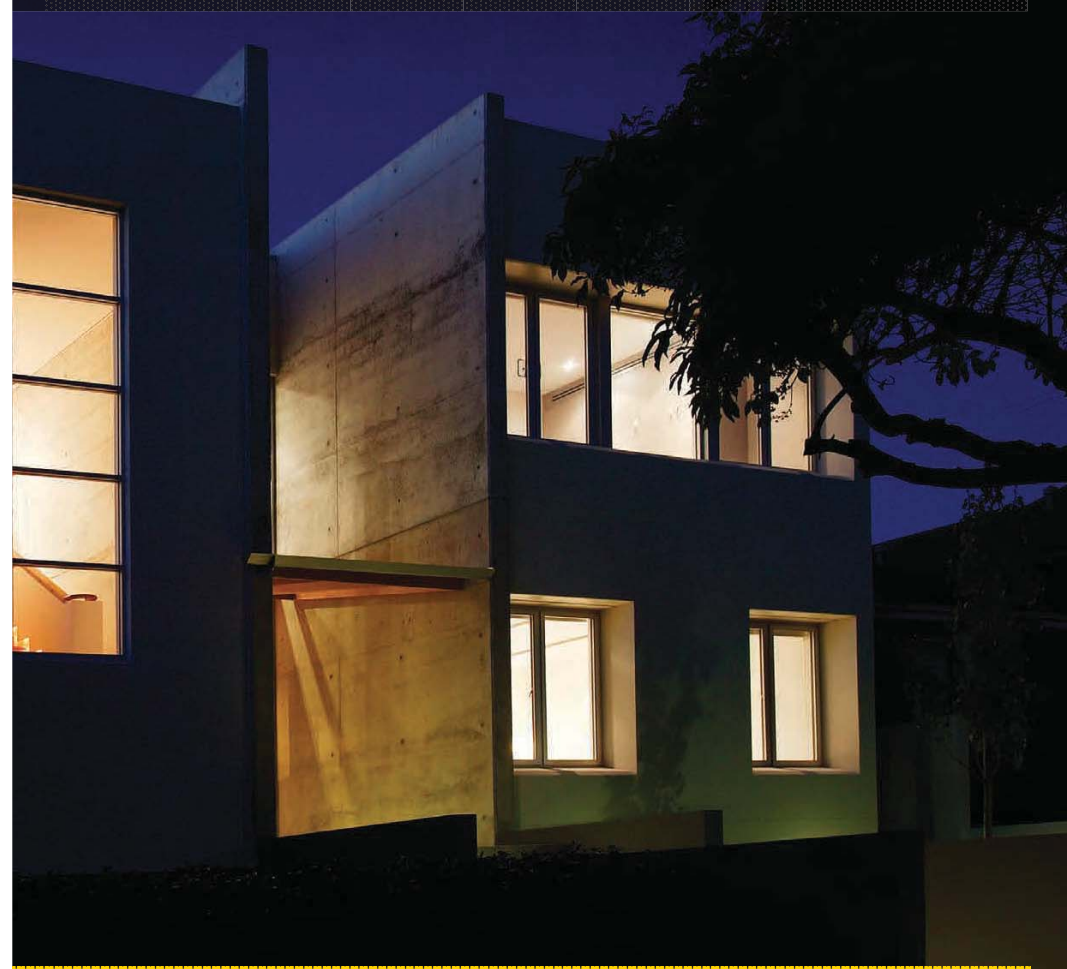


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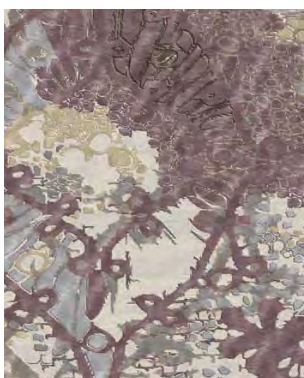
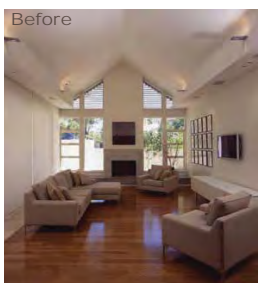
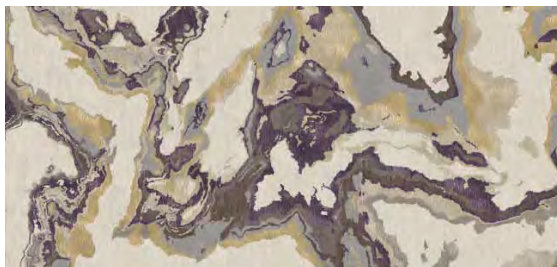
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PERTH ARCHITECTS

editor's message

Author **Olivia Chetkovich**

2005 - 2015 has been a period of great change in Perth and as our city, suburbs and surrounds continue to develop, we thought the Autumn 2015 issue presented a timely opportunity to reflect on this immediate and dynamic past.

And whilst I have certainly appreciated their proliferation, it's not all just small bars. In the city predominantly, major ambitious architectural projects have changed our built landscape, reflecting an unmistakable confidence (do I need to even mention the Arena, State Theatre Centre...). Projects promoting the use of civic space (both completed and to be realised) are bringing liveliness to the city, prompting public engagement, interest, critique and anticipation. As a result of the investment in the inner suburbs, the definition of these areas has been extended – not just in terms of their increasing relative proximity to the city, but also in their evident shift in lifestyle and identity.

However, is 'vitality' the only, or most important, measure of success of a developing city centre or suburb? It has certainly been a focus in the

past decade but the response of the built environment and its role in the investment in our city is also crucial. As we explore and develop our identity, we ask more of our designers, planners, developers, decision makers and the Perth public itself to contribute to this movement.

With proposals to increase density on our suburbs' doorsteps, the next 10 years of change in Perth may indeed be concentrated in this realm, should this density be realised. As Perth becomes more accustomed to density, a change to the grain and understanding of our suburbs and the development of infrastructure (both built and social) to accommodate this, will no doubt demand the investment and engagement in these areas that we have seen in the more central precincts.

So as we continue to look forward and imagine the changes to come, we present here a reflection on ideas, initiatives and developments of the last 10 years in our changing city. Speculations on 'PERTH 2005 – 2015' are presented from key decision makers, members of the

architectural community and contributors to the public discourse. Essays and investigations into this theme invite you to see the city through the eyes of architect as participant, public figure, photographer and academic. Students have also engaged in this examination: Beth George's PhD work investigating mappings of the City has informed design studios in the Master of Architecture course. Selected work from this course will be exhibited at Australian Urban Design Research Centre in July of this year. Initiatives, organisations and responsive governance measures continue to develop, reflecting and informing the nature of our changing built environment. Projects of both large and small scale are explored. And as we present this content some ask the question, 'is Perth fixed?'

So please read on. It's not just a pat on the back (although there's a fair bit of that – but why not?), but a reflection, a moment for recognition and an exhibition of this period of development that will continue to inform our future. ■

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Cover Image
Tabula – Grids: CBD and Northbridge
Beth George

state president's message

Author **Philip Griffiths**

A great deal has been said about what is wrong with the city of Perth and at the same time, an enormous amount of creative energy has gone into how to make it a better city. City Vision has been looking at and trying to promote notions of a better city since 1987. Many architects, landscape architects and urban designers have given much thought to making Perth a better and more lively place. National and international talents have been here to stimulate thinking.



As with all cities, change is the product of a combination of factors. Typically the fortunes and major changes in our city have been prompted by mineral boom cycles: gold, iron, nickel and then more recently iron again, gas, and many other resources. Historically the city became the Paris of the southern hemisphere on the back of the 1890s gold boom. A huge amount of development occurred in a short time and produced diverse and yet well related streetscapes and buildings.

Subsequent booms had a more sporadic impact and much of the change was not for the better. A series of unrelated developments caused destruction and created a small number of architectural gems such as Council House and Dumas House. The pause at the end of the 20th century arrested a number of large developments and allowed some rethinking to be done in the current cycle and to great effect.

What is different about 2005 - 2015? Again prompted by a mineral boom, the City has seen a large amount of development and redevelopment. A shift in attitude by the City and State appears to have brought to reality some of the ideas that have long been held. The election of the current Lord Mayor of the City of Perth in 2007 has been a part of the shift in attitude with a City Council that is aware of the ingredients of a lively and successful city. Opportunities have been sought and barriers reduced. Ideas are nourished. A review of plot ratio, new licensing laws, promotion of under-utilised spaces, a focus on design quality and innovative responses to the City's heritage have all contributed to a much improved city.

Increases in the residential component of the City's makeup have also contributed. So far a lot of the growth has been in a sector that is downsizing

accommodation. One would hope that this will change and include a lot more young people.

Sure, we have looked at other cities for models and Melbourne is a favourite, but we are bending those models to our unique environment. There are the obvious large projects that are either in train or can now be evaluated. Brookfield Place is one that has been properly road tested and pronounced a success. Other successes are small scale and some are ephemeral, ranging through small bars, Fringe Festival and the like. Perth in January to March 2015 shows what the City can be at times.

Government investment in Yagan Square and Elizabeth Quay will also impact in a significant way and, one would hope, add to the mix of ingredients that makes the City a better place.

One of the most important ingredients of change has been a 'can do' attitude, rather than an over-regulated environment that finds all kinds of excuses for not doing things. If the advances made in 2005 - 2015 are any indication, Perth can look forward to a more vibrant future and to becoming an increasingly attractive place for our guests and for ourselves. ■

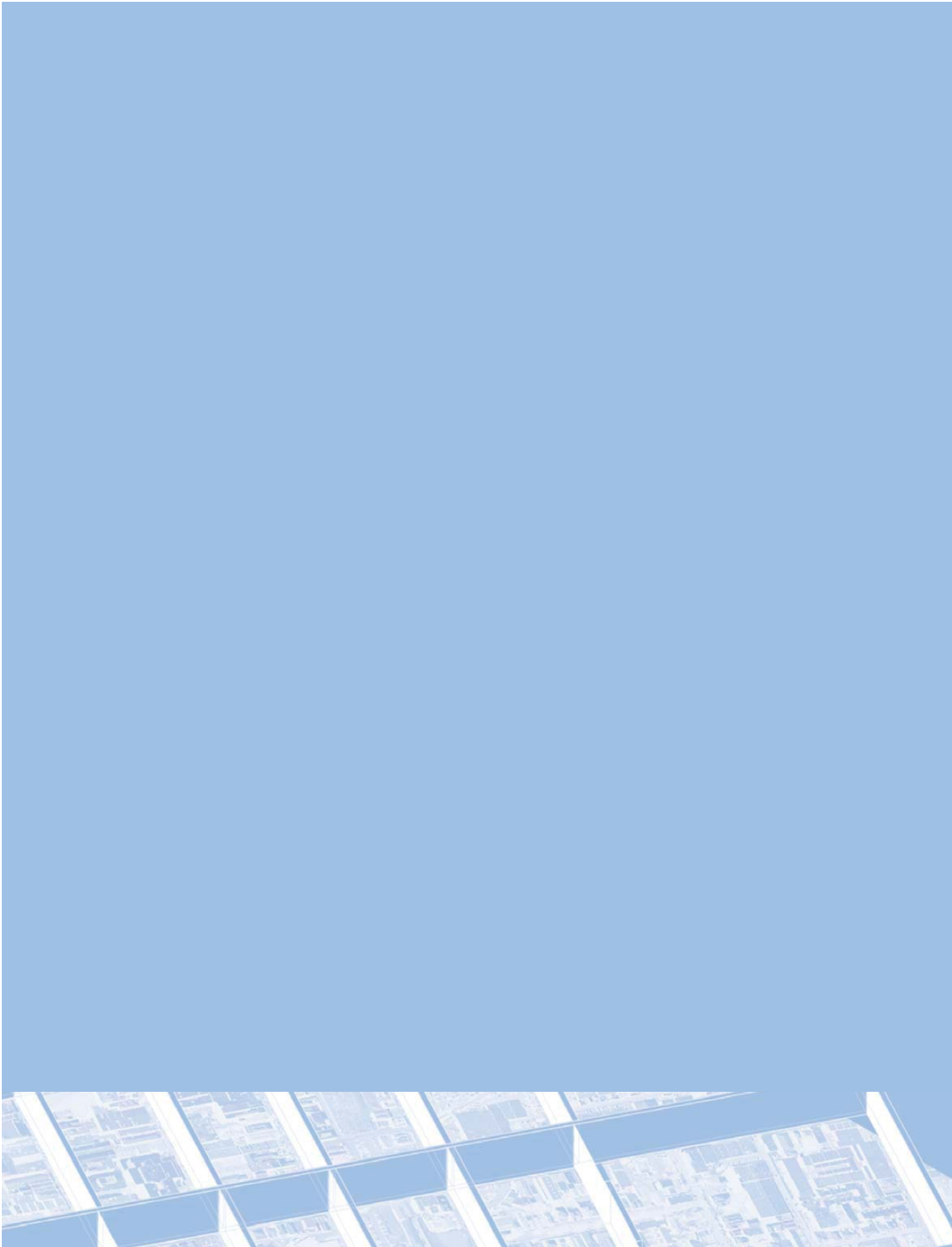
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2nd february 2015

Author **Nic Brunsdon**

As the winner of the 2014 Emerging Architect for WA and the 2015 National Emerging Architect (Australia), Nic shares his perspective on PERTH 2005 – 2015.

I've just been for a swim. My feet are still sandy and the ocean is 20 metres away. What an absolute fucking privilege. I suspect I'm being asked to write this as some kind of a marker for Perth. 'Hooray! Look how far we've come!' Pats on the back, good job, keep it up.

I've got some problems with this. It means we're dealing in comparisons. To mark something, you've got to evaluate it against something else. Sydney and Melbourne spring to mind. They're our closest aspirational centres, and we're smitten with each for myriad reasons. Like a younger sibling still unsure of themselves and enamoured with their big bro's swagger. Most often the object of affection is not better endowed; they've just been at it for longer. In the context of Perth, it's the most obvious thing and something that, like family dynamics, becomes less important with a rising maturity.

Simply, clearly, importantly, we are not these places (or any other places) and we need to stop looking elsewhere for validation or resonance. Here, we have half as many people spread over twice as much country. This is our unique problem. And our exquisite opportunity.

...It's now been three hours since I wrote that bit above. I've just been told my friend has died. I remember being

at a party and ranting at him. "You! Perth needs you! Come back at once!" I do that a bit. With him I meant it.

It's a nice (as in logically sound but not emotionally pleasant) lead-in to my next bit and what I feel is going to be the thrust of this piece. Perth: its beauty and its terror. I'm lifting this from a poem called *My Country* by Dorothea Mackellar¹. The part I'm referencing goes...

*I love a sunburnt country
A land of sweeping plains
Of ragged mountain ranges
Of droughts and flooding rains
I love her far horizons
I love her jewel-sea
Her beauty and her terror
The wide brown land for me.*

I love this poem. My grandmother used to read it to me. I love that stanza, most especially 'her beauty and her terror'. To me, that's the condition of life in Australia, and specifically wide, brown, far, blue Perth.

My friend couldn't live here. Living here meant death (and morbidly enough, living away has now meant that too). A common story, he, and countless others, would return here during that magical two week rush over summer where it would be families and friends

and fun and sunburn. The beautiful times. He, and me circa 2004-2009, delighted in all of Perth's magnificence yet had no idea about how to fashion a career out here. Two weeks of bliss and then back to a somewhere else, anywhere else, as swiftly as possible.

That's the challenge. How does Perth get 'sticky'? I've said before that I want Perth to be a place that is a joy to return to and difficult to leave. I guess we've got one part of that equation humming – the other needs work. Is the stickiness answer as simple as 'this place only works when you hit 30 and you need your parents as babysitters for your as yet unborn kin'? I really hope not. This one is a long-game that many bright people are working hard at². Something that, for brevity and a lack of expertise, I'm going to dodge at this point.

One of my friends (hi Sean) has a theory that I subscribe to; that Perth offers you ample anonymity and that that is a rare and wonderful thing. Perth, like nature, is completely indifferent to you and your needs. It (and he) means that you can do what you like here and be unprejudiced by fashion, trend or precedent. I really like that.

If you compare that with the mega-cities (both Western and Eastern), they have so much riding on you being there. ►

You are the tiny imperceptible cog. You are, in the smallest way, the justification for the continuation of those places in whatever way they design themselves³. It's the paradox of the heap⁴ in human form – indulge me one second – if you have a pile of sand and you remove one grain, is it still a heap? It is? Good, so if you can continue to remove one grain and it still remains a heap, what happens when you get to the last grain?

If that's too obtuse, and it just might be, I'm trying to say that the mega-cities are because they are. If you live in London, you are London! London is you! If tomorrow everyone in London said "fuck this, I've had enough of shit weather" and left, it would be over, the heap, the 'London', is gone. But they don't leave (although they should, it's rubbish). People beget people. Event begets event. It's very hard to change something that is already in motion and has a heavy inertia.

What I think this all renders down to is the innate ability, for both the good of each of us and the good-ness of a city, to be able to carve our own 'erosion track' (another borrowed term). To feel like Robert Frost⁵ and not the grain of sand or the tiny Swiss cog. To be like a dog doing circles before bed (and the dog is endlessly curious, it's a different bedcircle every night) – having the facility, interest and conviction to start your own trail (or follow near to one), and not get caught in the packed dirt of others. That's what's so depersonalising

about those mega-cities, the sense that you're always walking in someone else's shoes. And that is the essence of why I love Perth and why I love now. Everyone is a part of something recent here.

Perth hasn't yet defined itself. From where I sit, I think Perth is a healthy adolescent with all the nascent emotion and maturity of a human one. We're in the process of making some clumsy mistakes, rubbing up against some arbitrary boundaries and mixing with some sketchy crowds. We could very easily be great, hell, we just might be.

Which opens up the notion of, 'greatness', how do you mature into that? I was listening to a podcast⁶ last week and they were talking about the idea that the key to great cities wasn't 'grounding' but 'mobility'. Mobility is an inviting concept. I take this to mean that you want your urban spaces not to look for fixedness, but responsiveness. Flexibility over rigid zoning and capricious legislation. I guess it's a part of what we started Spacemarket for – in-built metropolitan contingency. What a wonderful plaything that would be.

We live in a beautifully terrifying place mostly indifferent to our daily theatre. For our own advance, how about we back in those good people who are trying to parent this teen? This is God's country. We need to preserve the wild sangunity that a sun setting into a warm ocean can rouse. I can see a supportive society with

a structure that champions one another: promoting talent over tenure, optimism over cynicism and idea over hierarchy. I feel the seeds of this are already sown. I think it's time to be done with cynicism. Local papers are built on it. It is the most boring and wasteful emotion. Be a participant, don't be a cynic. Be a contributor and be a critic in areas where you are expert. If you've committed to abiding in a city it is incumbent on you to work to improve your small corner. Life is short and you'll be dead soon. Make more of a heap of our beautiful pile. Erode down some desire tracks. Take a divergent path, see beauty and get a little bit terrified. This is our opportunity and our opportunity is now. ■

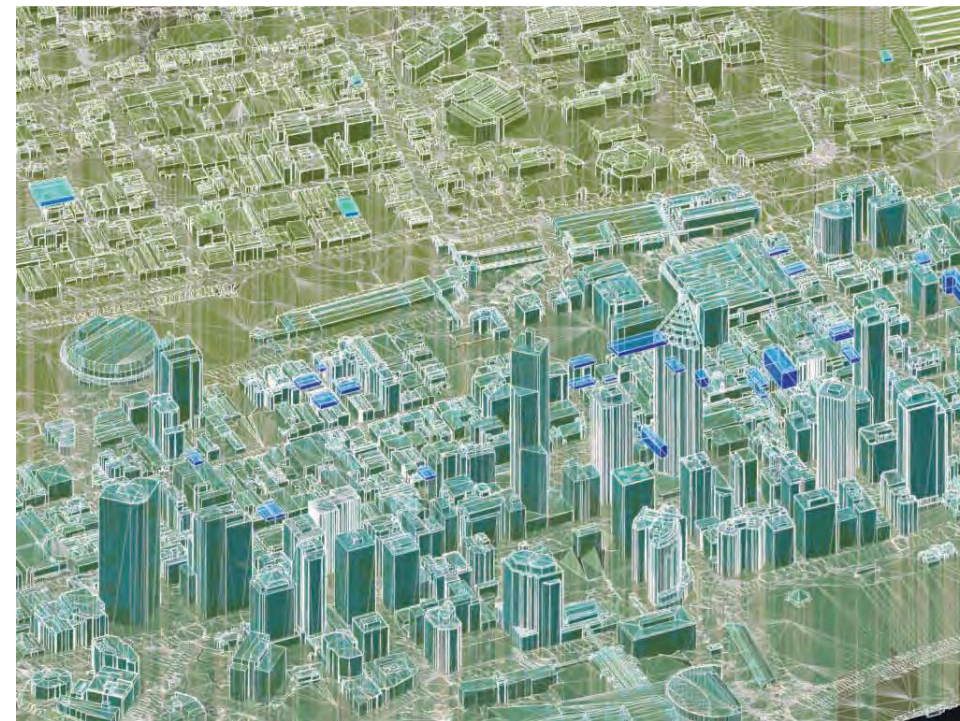


Image: Beth George, Spacemarket

Notes

1. Core of My Heart, Dorothea Mackellar, The Spectator London 1908. This next bit is great and especially relevant in this context: In an interview in 1967, Mackellar described her reasons for writing the poem: 'Not really a special reason. But a friend was speaking to me about England. We had both recently come back from England. And she was talking about Australia and what it didn't have, compared to England. And I began talking about what it did have that England hadn't, that you couldn't expect to know the country to have. 'Cause, of course, there are lots of wonderful things, especially in the older parts, but they're not the same, and, of course, the people who came here first... I'm not blaming them for it. But it was so different to anything they'd known, they didn't understand.'
2. I went go into all of them, but as a start: The Committee for Perth, the various Town Centre Networks, FORM, a few local governments, Spacecubed, MRA public places, Fringe, PIAF, Open House Perth, etc
3. I was at a lecture given by Richard Weller (Boomtown 2050 and general dreamboat) and he talked of the grinding effect of mega-cities. I immediately thought of people-meat going through a city-mincer and that visual hasn't left me.
4. From Wikipedia: The paradox goes as follows: consider a heap of sand from which grains are individually removed. One might construct the argument, using premises, as follows:

1,000,000 grains of sand is a heap of sand (Premise 1)

A heap of sand minus one grain is still a heap. (Premise 2)

Repeated applications of Premise 2 (each time starting with one fewer grain) eventually forces one to accept the conclusion that a heap may be composed of just one grain of sand (and consequently, if one grain of sand is still a heap, then removing that one grain of sand to leave no grains at all still leaves a heap of sand; indeed a negative number of grains must also form a heap).
5. Just in case this is a missed reference, it's 'The Road not Taken' by Robert Frost. Seminal and oft-cited. 'Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, And sorry I could not travel both...'
6. 'Architecture on Air,' Mark Morris

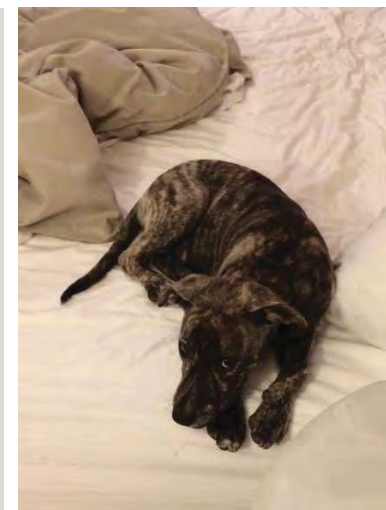


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MERGE emerging architects - a ten year retrospective

There are few people who know the history of our local emerging architects' network. If you have attended a '3 Over / 4 Under' forum, a 'Regi(fru)stration' seminar, a 'Talk on a Practice', an 'Emerging Architect Prize Talk', a 'Gold Medal Breakfast/Lunch'... well you have enjoyed the fruits of MERGE. So who exactly is MERGE and why does MERGE exist?

In 1998, the then Royal Australian Institute of Architects established a Western Australian Young Architects Committee (YAC) to provide a collective voice for young architects within the State Chapter. In 2006, the committee reformed under the banner of MERGE Emerging Architects. MERGE seeks to bridge the gap from study to practice and to provide an environment conducive to professional development, intellectual stimulation and the social growth of young and emerging people in Perth's architectural scene. MERGE's mission is to assist its members in establishing and developing their architectural career by providing opportunities to network with other professionals and familiarise themselves with the challenges and issues relating to architectural practice in Perth. (Extract from EmAGN newsletter December 2007).

Almost a decade on, the MERGE committee - a combination of young registered architects, graduates and Student Organised Network of Architecture (SONA) representatives - continues to deliver educational and social events. As industry trends and partnerships have evolved, MERGE has introduced new events in collaboration

with other professional groups ranging from 'Revit Tutorials' to 'Site Tours', establishing bridges between future leaders of the built environment.

Since the formation of MERGE Emerging Architects in 2006, there have been six Chairs. They reflect on the decade that has been.

Paul Edwards
MERGE Chair 2006-2008

As one of the original founding members of YAC in 1998, I was involved in assisting RAlA to address the perceived gap between student/graduate and established professional membership. We were charged with the task of creating opportunities to aid the transition of students and graduates into the Perth architectural profession. Many students didn't work in the profession prior to graduating and found they were competing for only a handful of jobs when they did graduate. Those who were engaged with the profession before graduating made valuable contacts which assisted them in the transition from student to graduate and gave them a distinct advantage in commencing their architectural career. Further networking

opportunities run by MERGE enabled them to build on current, and establish new, working relationships which has produced many successful Perth practices we know today.

Todd Paterson
MERGE Chair 2008-2009

I am proud to say that I was in the delivery room the day that MERGE was born. I joined the committee at a time when similar groups across the country were banding together to establish a national network under the umbrella of the Institute, and so EmAGN (Emerging Architects + Graduates Network) was born. At the same time YAC was renamed to MERGE. It was a great time for cross-fertilisation of ideas with the national body. During my time as Chair we introduced the 'Small Bar Tour' and 'Architecture Film Night', as well as built on the highly successful '3 Over / 4 Under' forum, which continues to be a fantastic event during Architecture Week. We also nurtured connections with other professional industry bodies through the Young Professionals Network, which provided great networking opportunities with Engineering, Accounting, Law and Public Relations professionals, all



Left to Right: Paul Edwards, Todd Paterson, Dean Adams, Yen Nee Goh, Elvin Chatergon, Mimi Cho. Images: Merge.

of whom are critical to the success of an architectural practice. During my time as Chair I met a lot of very smart and interesting young architects across Australia who have emerged as award-winning architects and even a TV personality. I know they will ensure the architecture profession will be sustainable and profitable into the future.

Dean Adams

MERGE Chair 2010-2011

By the time I became Chair and during my term, MERGE had established its reputation for delivering architectural discourse and networking events for young architects in Western Australia. Events such as '3 Over / 4 Under' began to include international architects and the MERGE photographic competition debuted at Architecture Week. MERGE further supported young architects in Western Australia with the establishment of the Emerging Architects Prize. Through these events and other initiatives MERGE has provided an avenue for young architects to present, discuss and exhibit their architecture. I see this exposure for young architects as MERGE's main ongoing contribution to the architectural community in Western Australia.

Yen Nee Goh

MERGE Chair 2011-2012

The focus of my term as Chair was to strengthen the relevance of our events and interaction with peer groups. We saw an increase in our small team of volunteers, which boosted the level of enthusiasm tremendously. This enabled us to continue with our efforts and introduce 'Regi(fru)stration' nationally with the aim of providing face-to-face discussions and Q&A opportunities for graduates embarking on the Architectural Practice Examinations. As architectural practices evolved into multi-disciplinary practices encompassing planning and engineering, MERGE's mission in providing opportunities to network with other professions became increasingly crucial. The inclusion of engineers and planners as speakers at our staple events such as '3 Over / 4 Under' was a step towards encouraging a collaborative approach when discussing design amongst ourselves.

Elvin Chatergon

MERGE Chair 2013-2014

After being actively involved with MERGE for the best part of three years, my main aim as Chair was to expand our professional network to include Young Quantity Surveyors, Young Engineers

Western Australia, Young Builders Alliance and also Local Authorities such as Town of Cambridge. I also wanted to ensure MERGE remained a fun, vibrant and relevant committee to encourage even greater team growth and reach out to graduates and students. To fulfil these aims we started a number of new initiatives: the 'Sandcastles Competition' in collaboration with YEWA, held at City Beach; the 'Site Tours' series in collaboration with YBA, inaugurated at the Old Treasury Building; and the 'Revit Tutorials' series held at Curtin University and the University of Western Australia. These have helped arm students with skills required to gain employment in today's increasingly technology-reliant and hyper-competitive construction industry, whilst gaining exposure to industry professionals in the classroom. We also evolved well-established events such as '3 Over / 4 Under' to include guest speakers of international repute, namely John Wardle and Paul Pholoros, and enjoyed partnerships with new sponsors. Additionally, when the National Architecture Conference came to Perth last year, we couldn't pass up the opportunity to run fringe events to complement the official program. I believe that MERGE is one of the most relevant organisations in Perth within the field of architecture. It promotes the profession to the entire spectrum of architects and acts

successfully as a gateway from student-ship to the challenges of practice.

Mimi Cho

MERGE Chair 2015–

At university, it was comforting to know that there existed a network of people who had once stood in my shoes and would be there to welcome me into professional practice. Both Dean and Yen Nee's committees had a strong presence at my university - a credit to them and the SONA representatives. I joined the committee promptly after graduation and have since enjoyed watching ambitious concepts come to fruition. During Elvin's productive term as Chair I had the role of coordinating MERGE's marketing and communications, where I learned the importance of nurturing professional relationships – past, present and potential. This is why the committee is now introducing a dedicated MERGE Relationship Manager. As immediate past point of contact, it makes sense for Elvin to take on this role in order to strengthen MERGE's relationships with sponsors and peer groups. It is not unusual for Chairs to remain on the committee after the end of their term. It is in fact extremely valuable, as Yen Nee was Finance Manager over the previous two years. In the coming two years, MERGE aims to build a dialogue between our architecture community

and the wider public (challenge accepted David Weir). 2015 has already brought us some victories: the 'Sandcastles Competition' established with YEWA in 2013 has made it onto this year's Town of Cambridge's official summer family calendar, the 'Site Tours' series established with YBA in 2014 continues to promote interaction between architects and builders, and 'Urban Screening' returns to the Perth Cultural Centre to showcase a second year of architecture on video. Work in progress: with the closure of 'The Bakery' (beloved home to '3 Over / 4 Under' from 2011 to 2014) we are planning for a new venue that is more public and capable of expanding our audience demographic. If you have ideas or comments for any of the above, please get in touch (contact details below). We are always interested in meeting inspiring architects – young and not so young.

Perth's architectural climate may now seem more competitive than when MERGE arrived on the scene (pre-GFC) but the profession is as enthusiastic as ever to welcome the next generation of movers and shakers. Key events such as our annual '3 Over / 4 Under' forum and 'Talks on a Practice' series that can take place at any time throughout the year, allow practices to "show off" their office and their work so that they might just snag the interest of a promising

young graduate or student. These events also stimulate professional discourse that may continue well beyond the event date, creating mutually beneficial opportunities for young and experienced architects to interact. On the cross-disciplinary front, MERGE has collaborated with a number of peer groups over the past decade. Some have disbanded while others have gained enthusiasm to collaborate, as reflected in MERGE's newer initiatives. In a competitive environment, these activities and connections within and around our profession are invaluable. ■

The MERGE committee meets every second Tuesday of the month. To attend, email merge@architecture.com.au. Can't make it to meetings? Email us to find out how else you can get involved. More information on events at wp.architecture.com.au/emagn/wa-merge/ and Facebook.



open house perth

Author **Carly Barrett**

Open House was a little idea that grew out of necessity. Founded during a period of heavy recession in the early 1990s a group of London architects found a way to promote their profession by providing access to high quality design projects. Some 20 years later Open House is represented in around 30 cities across the globe. Australia has the most Open House cities of any country, which illustrates that as a nation we have a strong appetite for design and a desire to bring it into our own homes.

Back in 2011, when we started the process of founding Open House Perth, there were more than a few sniggers and jeers. 'Why would anyone want to go into the city to look at architecture?' we were asked. Our response... 'people in Western Australia will travel around the world to celebrate the architecture and vibrancy of other cities; why would they not want to explore their own home town?'

As architects the desire to travel and visit great examples of the built environment is ingrained in our DNA. Seeing the architecture and urban environment of great cities is something that inspires us, engages us and educates us. It does so in a more technical way than the average traveller who might wonder why we photograph window mullions, door jams or shadowline details. But those travellers who traverse the globe are also in search of inspiration, engagement and education. So what would it be like to feel like a traveller in your own home town? One of the most repeated

comments we receive from people is that the Open House Perth event makes them feel like a tourist discovering places they never knew existed. This is the clearest sign Open House Perth has started to make a difference.

On more than one occasion whilst meeting architects from other States, I have noticed, when asked 'where are you from?' friends and colleagues and myself respond with 'Perth', uttered in a quiet, hesitant fashion. I believe Open House Perth encourages us as a profession to be collectively proud of our local design culture. The quality of design in WA is getting better and better, but it is not easy pushing the value of design in a state with a culture that encourages excessive sprawl, fast track d&c and building life spans at 20-25 years rather than 100+. As a profession we have an uphill battle ahead of us; still looking around at the quality of design projects in metropolitan and regional areas it is clear that WA has the talent to take this challenge head on.

Since 2012, Open House Perth has facilitated almost 105,000 visits to destinations across the CBD and its fringe suburbs from large venues with the capacity to hold 25,000 visits to high security sites with an allowance of 30 people. As an event our aim is to showcase local architecture to the general public, to encourage people to not only be proud of their built environment but also to celebrate it, and it's not just having an effect locally. Around 20% of visitors to the Open House Perth website are from

outside WA, 14% nationally (led by Victoria and Queensland) and 6% internationally (led by the USA and UK) – that's around 14,000 unique visitors (from outside WA) to our website annually who are discovering our city through its architecture.

The Open House Perth team is largely composed of volunteers who devote their time and energy to promote design in WA on a local, national and international stage. You would be surprised to know how few of them are architects. We would love the profession to be more actively engaged in helping to facilitate Open House Perth to ensure a continued presence on the WA annual event calendar. Whether it be through financial support or helping to facilitate high quality destinations for the annual event or pop-up Open Houses or volunteering on the day, we need your involvement.

As a profession I believe that architects need to strongly demonstrate our value to the built environment as an essential part of the design and construction process. We need to establish stronger lines of communication to the general public (and our future clients) and Open House Perth provides an extraordinary opportunity for this to occur. We thank all those who have sponsored, volunteered and participated in Open House Perth so far and ask for your continued support so we can help promote great local design for years to come. ■

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design advisory committees in perth

Author **Carmel Van Ruth**

Design review has become an increasingly common practice in metropolitan Local Government development approval processes over the last decade. Many local authorities are observing an increase in high density urban infill development proposals as developers respond to a growing market appetite for diverse housing choices in established areas. Most Local Governments are encouraging higher densities in response to infill targets set by 'Directions 2031'¹. These larger developments - typically mixed-use or multi-residential - have a significant impact on the public realm, adjacent development and the surrounding community.

It is important that these developments are well designed. Multi-residential developments must work well for longer than single houses as common ownership limits the ability to substantially alter or redevelop. The performance demands on apartment developments are therefore greater as they need to be able to accommodate a diverse range of changing occupants over this extended time.

Good residential design can deliver dwellings that are more liveable, flexible, adaptable in use, cost effective to operate and maintain, and suitable for a wider variety of occupants.

The State's *'Better Places and Spaces: A Policy for the Built Environment in Western Australia'*² establishes the Government's commitment to pursuing improved design quality in public works projects. The ambition to seek good design outcomes is an equally worthy pursuit in private sector development.

To provide a mechanism to consider the quality of infill development, a number of Local Governments have appointed multi-disciplinary Design Advisory Committees (DACs). These committees offer independent expert advice on the design quality of proposals to staff, Elected Members and applicants.

The former City of Vincent Mayor Alannah MacTiernan observed that the State Government's Residential Design Codes (R-Codes) and the Building Code of Australia 'allow some very poor outcomes.'³ Acknowledging the exemplar NSW State Environment Planning Policy 65 (SEPP65)⁴ mechanism - which has resulted in tangible improvements in the quality of multi-residential design⁵ - the City of Vincent appointed a DAC and embedded a design review process, including the SEPP65's 10 Design Principles, into their development approvals process.

DAC design review processes benefit developers, designers, Local Governments, and communities.

Developers enjoy the flexibility that design review offers. A well-managed design review process offers latitude to depart from (often prescriptive) Local Government policies in order to deliver improved project and site-specific outcomes. Where senior decision-makers are able to participate in design reviews, solutions can be brokered collaboratively, enabling a smoother approvals phase following endorsement.

In response to the offer of development incentives and bonuses for good design, some developers are seeking out architects who have previously earned support for ambitious and exemplary projects. These architects report that their clients often grant them greater latitude to develop quality proposals, sometimes with approaches that depart from the developer's usual practice. In some cases, once the positive aspects of the built outcomes from these new collaborations are realised, the clients encourage these approaches in other jurisdictions where the incentives don't apply. The commercial return and reputational benefits of good design are enough. ►



Railway 23, Railway Road, Subiaco, McDonald Jones Architects Image: BINYAN

¹ Government of Western Australia, *Directions 2031 and Beyond*, August 2010

² Government of Western Australia, *Better Places and Spaces: A Policy for the Built Environment in Western Australia*, 2013

³ Alannah MacTiernan, *Better Design Key to Healthy Urban Living*, *The West Australian*, May 7, 2013, p16

⁴ New South Wales Government, *State Environmental Planning Policy No 65: Design Quality of Residential Flat Development (SEPP65)*

⁵ NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure, *SEPP 65 o- Residential Flat Design Code Review*, November 2011

Skilled and experienced architects are needed for infill developments, which are always complex endeavours demanding a thoroughly considered design response, and to meet the heightened requirement to respond appropriately to the local context. Architects are educated, and then practice, in a culture of design review. Architects generally welcome and enjoy the iterative process. Design teams benefit by gaining independent advice from a range of design disciplines, early validation of design approaches and certainty during the development of detailed designs. Some architects refer to design review processes as 'collaborations'.

For Local Governments, implementing a design review process signals the importance placed on design quality by the Authority. Once familiar with the Local Government area, DAC members can bring comprehensive knowledge of context, community, history and future direction. DACs can recommend improvements to strategic policy based on best practice knowledge and common design issues which they have observed. DACs can support Elected Members as guardians of the community's aspirations and expectations. In some instances, DAC design review processes have helped ease community concern

regarding the perceived impacts of infill development. Elected Members and planning staff involved in these design review processes participate in discussions of design quality and some enthusiastic supporters emerge.

Professor Geoffrey London, former Western Australian Government Architect (2003 – 2008) and Victorian Government Architect (2008 - 2014) observes, in an article reflecting on his experience with the Victorian Design Review Panel process, that '[design review] allows clients, local authorities and other stakeholders to hear informed discussion about design. It gives design intelligence a public airing, allowing the complexity and rigour of designing to be openly discussed and, as a result, better understood by those outside the design disciplines'.⁶

It is evidently beneficial that DAC processes are well supported, not only by Elected Members and planning staff, but by statutory means. This ensures due regard is paid to DAC findings in Development Assessment Panel (DAP) and State Administrative Tribunal (SAT) processes, providing certainty for developers. The leading examples are the City of Fremantle's Local Planning Scheme which firmly enshrines the role and mandate of the DAC; and

LandCorp's Cockburn Central Town Centre Design Guidelines / Detailed Area Plan which supports the design review process.

Each Local Government DAC has formed independently, so naturally the approaches vary. Navigating the differences in the particular requirements of each jurisdiction is challenging and time-consuming for developers and many are seeking a greater consistency in the approvals process. The review process itself can vary. Some committees consider proposals privately and offer feedback only to planning staff whilst others offer a more generous approach, inviting design teams to present their work and participate in the consideration of design issues. Written advice generally follows. Some DACs utilise guiding principles of good design and these form the basis for design review. These may appear to differ between committees. The City of Fremantle and City of Subiaco DAC processes use design principles based on the UK Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) Seven Principles of Good Design.⁷ The City of Vincent, as outlined above, utilises the NSW SEPP65 10 Design Principles.⁸ If we were to scrutinise these provisions we would see they are seeking similar outcomes.

The Department of Planning's current Blueprint for Planning Reform⁹ proposes initiatives that have great potential to assist the work of DACs. The proposed new State Planning Policy could define and confirm the importance of design quality in the built environment, setting consistent parameters for all DAC processes and providing statutory support to align DAC, DAP and SAT evaluations of design quality. It could also offer a 'best practice' model for DAC processes.

As in the case of SEPP65, the process of design review would allow the proposed State Planning Policy to be performance-based and outcomes-focussed, to offer developers the flexibility they seek. For Local Governments and other approval authorities it would alleviate the need to generate detailed policies and provisions to guide general design quality. A net reduction in 'red tape' should result.

Evidence of the positive work of DACs is slowly emerging through better built outcomes; however the benefits are yet to be widely appreciated. In the interim, we only need to look at the tangible improvements in the quality of urban infill seen in NSW, since the implementation of SEPP65¹⁰ to see that design review is a worthwhile endeavour. ■

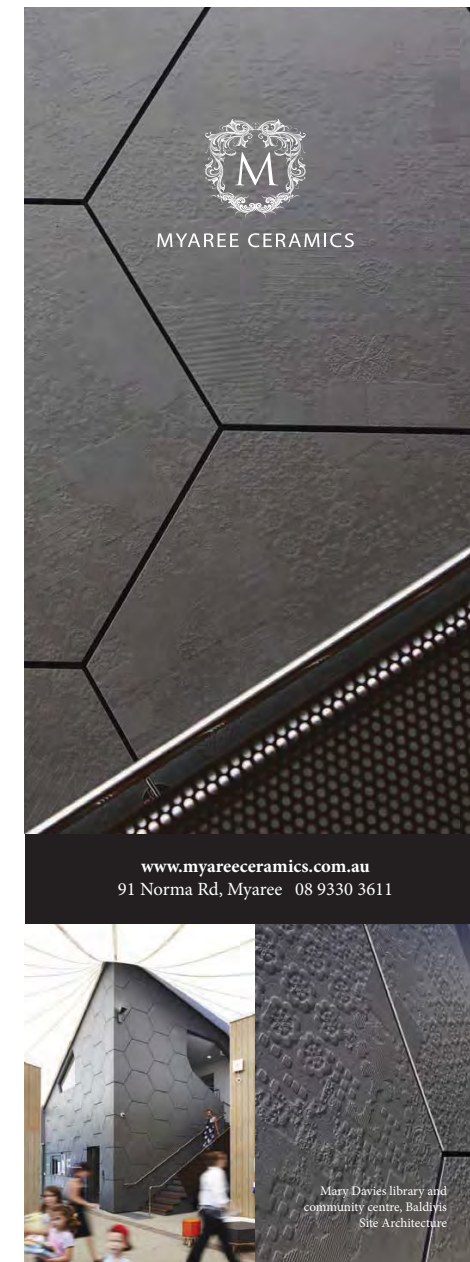
⁶ Geoffrey London, *Reviewing Design Review*, Architecture Australia, January 2014 (Volume 103 No 1)

⁷ <http://web.archive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/councillors/principles>

⁸ New South Wales Government, *State Environmental Planning Policy No 65: Design Quality of Residential Flat Development* (SEPP65)

⁹ Government of Western Australia, Department of Planning, *Planning Makes it Happen: Phase two - Blueprint for Planning Reform*, August 2014, p19

¹⁰ NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure, *SEPP 65 - Residential Flat Design Code Review*, November 2011



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perth cultural centre: urban life laboratory

Authors **Mimi Cho and Frazer Macfarlane**

When considering Perth over the last 10 years, the Perth Cultural Centre can be seen as a test bed for urban revitalisation strategies in Western Australia: a desolate place blighted by the over-scaled 'build it and they will come' strategies of the 80s and 90s mall culture. The James Street precinct had big institutional destinations and heritage buildings steeped in history, but nothing to connect them together. The Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority¹ (MRA), operating as a well resourced pair of garden shears for red tape, rendered the Cultural Centre a ground of architectural experimentation. Architects, landscape architects, artists, placemakers and events organisers were commissioned to 'revitalise' the space with temporary and short term projects, bringing to mind Rem Koolhaas'² project Exodus, or Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture by way of Cedric Price's Fun Palace - a space dedicated to pop culture and mass consumption; the strut that Robert Hughes found lacking in the Modern metropolis.³ Part of this revitalisation effort was the installation of a large public screen, and during Architecture Week 2014, films made by architects, artists and students from around the world were shown as part of the inaugural Urban Screening.

Mimi Cho and Frazer Macfarlane, curators of the Urban Screening, spoke with Phillip Griffiths from Griffiths Architects, who was engaged by the MRA in 2011 to provide architectural services for the LED Screen, and Rob Cameron, who had four works showcased in Urban Screening 2014, about changes in Perth over the last 10 years and their work.

Architect - Phillip Griffiths
Director Griffiths Architects

It has been an interesting period. The [Perth] Cultural Centre was the idea of the City of Perth and was included in the Metropolitan Region Scheme that flowed from the Stephenson and Hepburn Plan of 1955, implemented by the State Government. Early in its development stages there was a Cultural Centre committee, which was meant to operate as a bridging mechanism for the good of the institutions and their environment. Although the committee consisted of eminent people from the property industry, the arts, the City and statutory bodies, it didn't have any power or resources to implement its ideas. The last big push from that committee was to invite Denton Corker Marshall to come up with some ideas about how to improve the public domain. The basis of that was recreating James Street as a thoroughfare, and having much more interesting public spaces and better designed urban spaces. It died a death.

Then the MRA was given carriage of the Cultural Centre in 2004. The remit included properties on William Street, originally acquired for the Perth Cultural Centre. The MRA is in a unique position of not having to make a profit out of everything, to balance out investment in an overall sense. There

was a decision not to spend too much money on the buildings on William Street, just enough to get a different kind of tenant mix, something fresh. Liquor licensing refused a very big offering which has given impetus for smaller and more diverse venues. So once William Street was rolling along, there was an impetus to do something in the Cultural Centre itself. A whole lot of people got involved in landscape, children's play, brainstorming for some tiny things. Most of what we were doing was not meant to be permanent, rather transitional until there's money to do something major to fulfill an adopted vision. I think after the New Museum is done, it will be time to do the permanent fix and enhance the public domain.

The first thing to happen to enhance the public domain was painting colours on the steps. Then Jean-Mic Perrine was engaged, an architect and also a builder, who designed and manufactured the concrete pods [which provide minor services]. At the same time Josh Byrne did the Urban Orchard. All these spaces were empty and slightly derelict prior to the project. The Urban Orchard used to be a sculpture court [but] Northbridge was such a poor environment prior to the work that sculptures were being damaged and taken away. Then the idea of the screen came up. ►

¹ The precinct was initially under the purview of the East Perth Redevelopment Authority, which after restructuring became the MRA in 2011.

² with others

³ *The Shock of the New*, British Broadcasting Corporation, 1980

I think the MRA was approached to do it - they had one down the other end of James Street in the Northbridge Plaza. There was a lot of coordination, because no one had done one outside of sports stadia, and this screen was going to be seen from all sides. A number of people had been engaged to do the bits, so really our problem was, where do we put the screen, how do we service it, where can we have a control room, how do we shroud it? It's pretty functional; fans, the screen modules and so on - a bracket to hold them on. I couldn't say there was anyone in control of the whole idea. We [Griffiths Architects] were in control of the screen and the associated parts that went with it, but there were all these other minor projects happening around it. We would go there, see new things happening and think 'who organised that?' We were trying to make fist of it, 'here's all the bits, what can we make it look like?' Get some order in it.

Part of the reason we could do these things was that no one thought that the existing urban environment had much value as it was. No one thought the public spaces were precious. So that's what the opportunity was: something we can play around with, and it's not forever, so let's not over-invest in it. Some of what's been done [in the

Cultural Centre] is a bit tacky, and requires the ongoing commitment to curating it. The MRA was aware of that at the outset. They knew it would be a small amount of money invested in hardware and a lot of money in sustaining it, so there are no surprises there. It's just a step along the way. We'll see something completely different when there's money again, which isn't going to be for a long while now. The horizon for this was five to 10 years tops, but I can see it still being there in 20 years now.

Interactive Media Artist – Rob Cameron
creator // thedeadpixelproject

The Final Curtain was a piece of work I did with [WA artist] Jon Tarry as part of an Architectural Visualisation unit I was doing at UWA. He was running a project on the demolition of the Perth Entertainment Centre and we co-directed an animation I produced which explored the nature of the demolition, and of collective memory. It was an interesting thing for me, because I never went to the building - I only saw it from a distance as this abandoned space. In the animation there was his influence, a nostalgic view, and my view of an alien thing. Jon created a Facebook page for people to post images of their experiences, to reminisce about all

the good times there, while he posted videos of the demolition. I didn't feel bad about seeing it blow up [in the animation] - I was separated from it (even though I researched and wrote a piece on it). Seeing it being demolished is a brutal, violent act; these cranes, like dinosaurs biting chunks out of it. It is a strangely beautiful thing to watch it being demolished, almost sublime. [The middle of the animation where the piece shifts from nostalgia] relates to the violence of urban renewal, évenement.⁴ It's portrayed as healing the city.

It's always a loss to see a part of Perth's identity disappear especially after all the stories and images [on the Facebook group]. [It was interesting] for me as an outsider, being able to look at the Entertainment Centre without rose-tinted glasses, to see it for what it was and see it for how much value it had as a site of memory rather than as a piece of architecture. At the same time I was working at ARM [Ashton Raggatt McDougall] and actively involved in the design of the building which would replace it. It wasn't the most impressive building in the city but I had a very strong appreciation for it in the end.

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Dead Reckoning v2.0 was an opportunity to continue research that I had been doing as part of my studies at UWA. A part of that research was looking into computer vision, and how that can be used to feed into the design process of buildings. The Urban Screening gave me an opportunity to look at the more artistic and aesthetic outcomes of the work - I was learning as I was going. There were a lot of outcomes of the script [computer program] which I didn't get to explore in detail in my studies at UWA, and this additional work allowed me to fine tune a script I tested the previous year at the MANY 6160 Block Party [October 2013], and think about how I could make it an interactive experience in the urban space, rather than just an analytical tool.

That involved making more of the data visible. As people were moving, the script was drawing the contours of their motion so you could physically see silhouettes of them moving around, and at the same time you could see the centre point of each person drawing a trail. A network of paths would layer up over the course of 10 minutes like a spider's web, but then they would fade away and new information would get written over the top. So it was more of a temporal effect; being able to visually represent the form of spatial flows made the experience more interesting.

The project in the first place was a proof of concept for the idea of being able to track not only people within a space, but other information as well, and have the

environment be able to react, and then have people interact in a way that they hadn't been able to previously.

My biggest fear was that people wouldn't interact with or 'get' it. The most important question about the work is 'can you design a piece of architecture that has a sympathetic response with an individual?' You need that moment of realisation that this thing is communicating with you. Once that happens it is a beautiful moment when there is this conversation between the display and the viewer - people running around trying to draw things or happy watching themselves being watched. [During the Urban Screening, *Dead Reckoning v2.0*] had different life depending on the day of the week. ►

⁴ "Haussmann used the term *évenement* 'disemboweling' for his interventions, suggesting the treatment of a pathological disorder" - Michele Lamprakos, 'The Idea of the Historic City', in *Change Over Time: An International Journal of Conservation and the Built Environment*. 4.1 (Spring 2014): page 14.

If it was really quiet you'd get a solitary person walking along - they might wave their hands and keep going, or they start performing in the space and suddenly it's like a taboo's been broken and it's OK for everyone to start mucking around. [One day] there were school kids doing cartwheels, flips and jumps, going all over the place - it came alive! Buildings can have a 'personality' and communicate without the need for heavy technology but the possibilities for social and cultural change are difficult to ignore. Architecture as a profession has been slow to take on board technologies that are already having major impacts on our experience of urban spaces. My work is focused on experimenting with and interrogating this emerging techno-social environment.

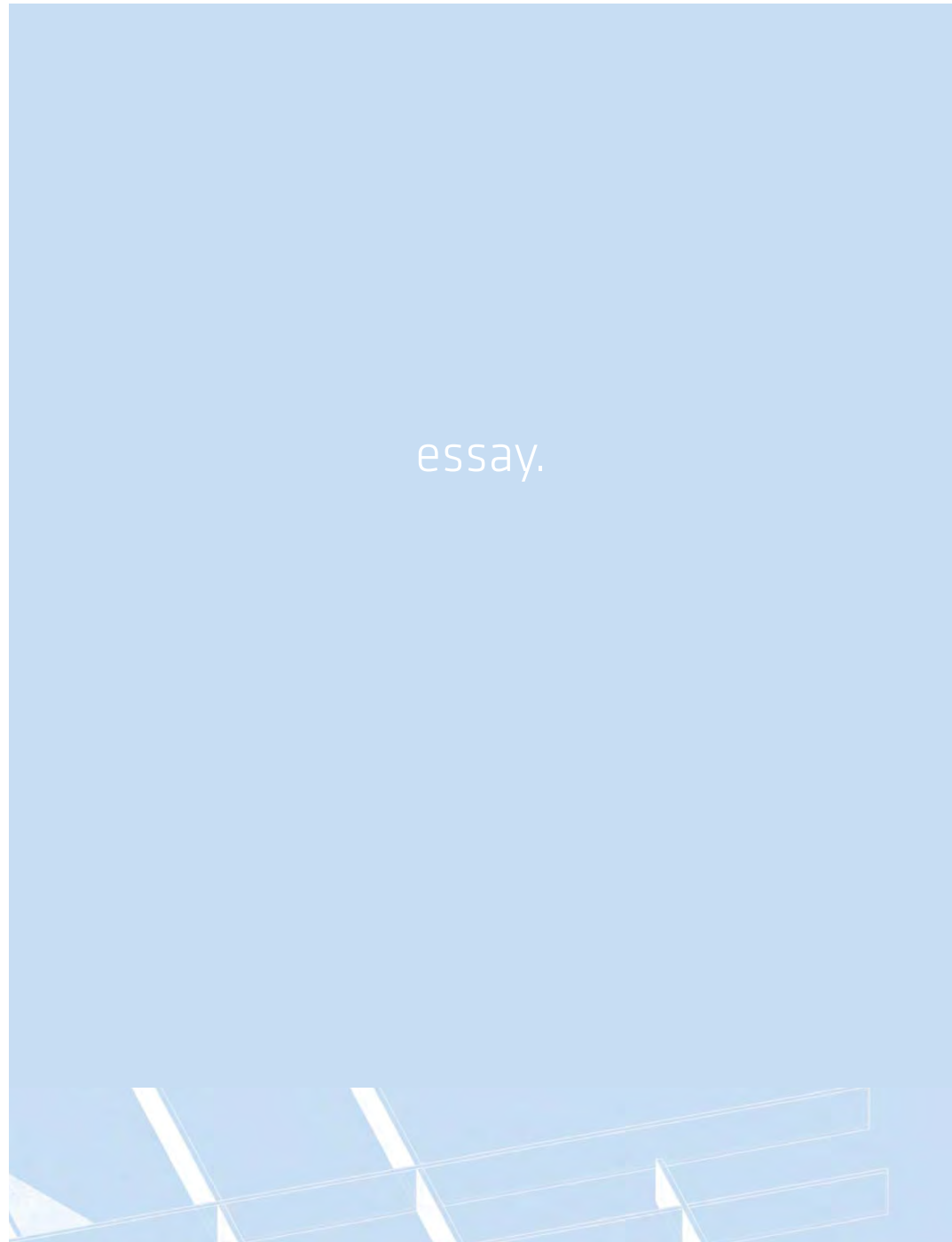
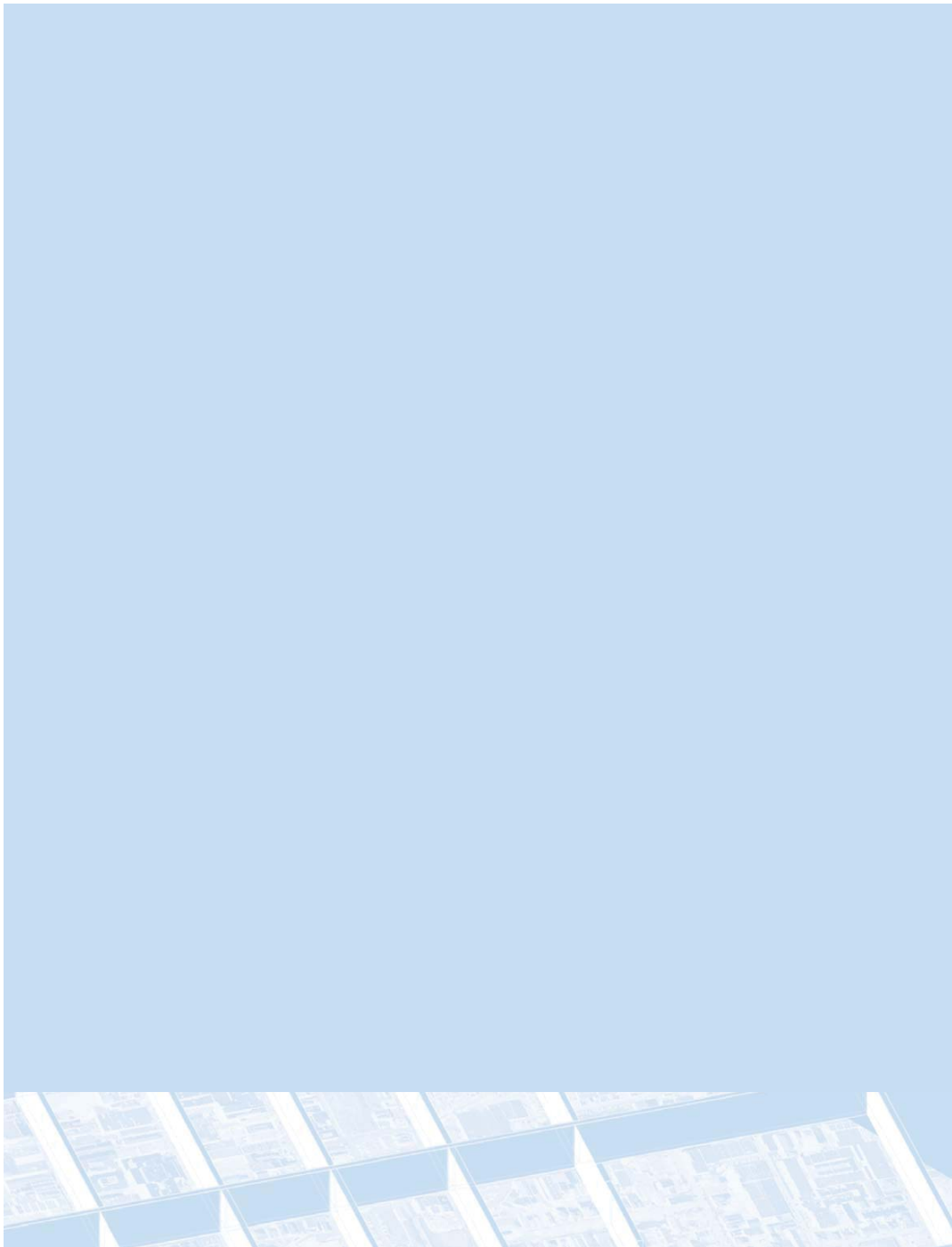
Urban Screening is an event that explores the possibilities of architectural thought and production from architects, students, artists and filmmakers in the medium of video. It is a public event which sees architectural ideas inhabiting the city, and being made available to the public in a manner which aims to be sophisticated and thought-provoking in its promotion and communication of the importance of architecture's achievements and possibilities. The curators of Urban Screening 2014 would like to thank all

the contributors who made their work available for inclusion, the Perth Cultural Centre Screen curatorial and technical team, the City of Perth, the MRA and the staff at the WA Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects. For the full list of works and contributors, please visit the project website at www.urbanscreening.org. The Architecture Week Urban Screening will return in 2015, email curator@urbanscreening.org to register your interest. ■



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office of the government architect

Geoff Warn was appointed Western Australian Government Architect in November 2013. He followed Steve Woodland who served in the role between 2009 and 2013 and Professor Geoffrey London, who was the inaugural appointee when the position was re-established by the Western Australian State Government in 2003. Geoffrey, Steve and Geoff share their reflections on their time 'in office', key achievements, and the architectural and political context of the day.

Geoffrey London

WA Government Architect 2003 - 2009

In 2003, after considerable lobbying from the local Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, the newly created position of Government Architect in Western Australia was advertised, having been modelled on the Queensland role created two years earlier. Advice was sought from Michael Keniger, the inaugural appointee in Queensland, and a well-worded ambition for the WA position was prepared, forming the key component of the national advertisement for the job:

The purpose of the Western Australian Government Architect is to provide leadership and strategic advice to Government to achieve the objective of improving the design of public buildings and spaces and enhancing the quality of the built environment.

It is intended that the Government Architect have a whole of Government focus and, where requested, provide advice to the highest levels of Government.

This description proved a useful and flexible framework for the work that was subsequently undertaken. The position was accommodated at the Department of Housing and Works, an uncomfortable amalgam of two previously independent departments. The former Department of Public Works, which was dissolved in 1985, had an exemplary tradition of 84 years, not only of designing and delivering all the public buildings in Western Australia during that period, but also as a crucible, a receptive training ground, for young architects.

After 1985, successive Governments relied on the private sector to deliver all their architectural work. This process was accompanied by the problematic issue of how the architectural services were to be procured. The local profession attempted to ensure that quality-based selection procedures were used, but the Government's need to demonstrate 'value for money' from the appointments became the focus for concern as, inevitably, the level of the fee proposed by architects in the competitive bidding process came to be perceived by the profession as the key determinant. As a result, fees were bid at very low levels, threatening a decreased level of professional service

and a resultant loss of design and build quality in many public buildings. This emerging outcome served to focus thinking on re-establishing a role in Government to provide advocacy and processes for seeking better quality architecture in public buildings.

As a result of early research and study trips, a number of processes were implemented by the WA Office of the Government Architect during the first five years:

- Select architects by design-based procedures
- Demand evidence of design ability in Expressions of Interest and Requests for Proposal
- Pay appropriate fees to architects
- Use design workshops and design reviews
- Recognise and commission emerging architects
- Research best-practice examples
- Facilitate conversations about architecture within the local profession
- Foreground lifetime costing
- Champion design across government agencies
- Explore policies that enable or demand good design.

I consider that the strategies listed above offer a useful starting point for establishing the conditions for producing design quality. Other key factors that will impinge on design quality, and to which a Government Architect can make a useful contribution, include the selected method of project procurement, the definition of the brief, and the establishment of appropriate budgets.

In the end, however, it's up to the commissioned architect to produce the high quality work, the piece of architecture that meets client expectations, that is sustainable, that contributes positively to the broader urban setting, and that expands the culture of a place by the appropriateness, strength and resolution of its informing idea.

The above is adapted from Geoffrey London's contribution to the book, Procuring Innovative Architecture (2010) by Leon van Schaik, Geoffrey London and Beth George, published by Routledge.

Steve Woodland

WA Government Architect 2009 - 2013

As architects and designers we generally act with the intuitive belief that creative thought has great value – that where we produce design excellence it carries positive worth for our society and wellbeing. For many of us it is this very belief in the broad value of design that drives us forward in our

work. At its simplest, it is this central issue – 'What is the real value of good design?' – that is the greatest challenge in the role of Government Architect. What we as designers feel intuitively needs to be articulated to Government objectively and compellingly. It is not a well or broadly understood notion in Government and requires constant and convincing argument (in the face of perceived financial negatives).

For this reason the very existence of the role of the Government Architect will always be inherently fragile. For many, the role was seen as elitist and adding unnecessary expense to a capital budget always under pressure. It was certainly something to which I was sensitive. On the back of the significant work of Geoffrey London in establishing the role, I was very conscious of not letting the role be devalued by Government. To this end, we (Office of the Government Architect, OGA) decided to focus on three streams of work – Policy, Projects and Advocacy.

Policy is the most enduring mechanism in Government for embedding the ideas and values of good design and in influencing the way decisions are made. The Built Environment Policy *Better Places and Spaces*⁴ was the headline piece of work in this regard, supported by the development of a raft of Design Standards and Design Value documents.

Projects is the central activity where the OGA provides hands-on guidance to a certain number of Government's projects (generally the larger, higher profile work) and is the practical opportunity to illustrate the outcomes of good design.

Advocacy is crucial: constant advocacy for the importance of good design and the ability to articulate the long term values (including value for money) that arrive out of sound creative thought. First and foremost it is advocacy to Government itself, but also more broadly to the community. Evidence-based design plays a big role here – the ability to quantify benefits and attributes of good design in a universal and meaningful way. In parallel with the sense of the fragility of the role, we were, and are, also faced with a crucial, defining period in the direction of our State and capital.

Western Australia is at a pivotal point on its journey into this century as we grapple with our identity as place set against our inevitable growth. We are at the precipice of great change and with that change we have a rare opportunity and responsibility to shape our growth in a way that is meaningful to us as Western Australians. And we do this under the gaze of the world – we have never been as visible on the global stage. Our built environment is central to this future. The built environment ►

¹ http://www.finance.wa.gov.au/cms/Building_Management_and_Works/Better_Places_and_Spaces.aspx

is fundamental to our quality of life. We spend the dominant proportion of our daily lives engaging with the buildings and places that surround us and they need to be safe, attractive, functional, productive, sustainable, efficient, and inspiring.

Our urban and regional centres are currently facing a number of challenges – international economic uncertainty, population growth, environmental pressures and social inequality. This means that achieving good design in our built environment is more important than ever to ensure that these challenges are addressed in a considered, strategic and holistic way and so as to maximise the long-term benefits that robust design can bring.

Our capital city is undergoing its biggest change in a century. Re-acquainting ourselves with the river, breaking down the great divides of roads and rail, and understanding Perth as a big picture capital whose extent is much more than just a CBD. At the fine grain, breathing daily life and richness into the streets and spaces of the city means reopening our capital to the community. Good design does not happen by accident, however. It needs to be articulated from the outset of a project as a key objective, and then embedded throughout the planning, design and procurement stages of project delivery.

This is where the OGA is at its most potent and crucial – ensuring that the process of design is not accidental

or peripheral. Political support and understanding is always fundamental in achieving these things and I was fortunate to have been listened to and acted upon at many levels. It was a great privilege for me to be in the role and I have fond memories of my four or so years. Most importantly I was surrounded by an OGA team of dedicated, passionate people for whom the high order importance of design was paramount and who worked constantly for its improvement.

Geoff Warn

WA Government Architect 2013 -

Over the past decade or more my predecessors have done much to position the OGA well in this State, and they remain enthusiastic advocates for the value of the Office. On accepting the appointment I was immediately invited onto the evaluation team of the new Perth Stadium, and the Office, through Strategic Projects, continues to be closely involved in this multifaceted undertaking. Elizabeth Quay is an equally significant commitment, working with MRA in helping shape the public realm and the commercial developments that are imminent. In addition, the OGA is active across the full spectrum of the Projects, Policy and Advocacy structure established during Steve Woodlands' tenure. We continue to guide government agencies in their implementation of the built

environment policy *Better Places and Spaces* which Steve and his team were so instrumental in bringing to fruition.

This is an important document. A Government-endorsed policy is a very useful tool, and the extent to which government agencies are willing to embrace *Better Places and Spaces* is encouraging. As this interest signals some appreciation of design's contribution to the development of the State, we are keen to assist government agencies to accomplish good results with their projects. A more informed appreciation of design quality and the means by which its benefits can be achieved are key preoccupations for the OGA.

As expected, much of our work is focused on the city. The relationship between architecture and urban life is globally topical as many of the world's cities are expanding rapidly and facing the pressures and pleasures of growth. So, understandably, urbanisation commands the attention and motivations of industry, academia and government, and Perth is no exception. But our condition differs somewhat from those of the great cities of Asia, Europe and the Americas. We seek to reconcile the values and expectations that underpin the comforts and convenience of suburban living with conditions synonymous with urban density and life in city neighbourhoods.

In this respect Melbourne is a popular benchmark for its architecture and active urban environment, and planners commonly look to Portland, Seattle, Denver and Vancouver for their integrated transport networks that function alongside relatively high levels of car ownership. If we are honest though, Los Angeles probably remains for Perth the model that is ingrained most firmly into the replete mechanisms woven into our matrix of city-making. While the detrimental effects of sprawl are widely acknowledged, the systemic change needed for a less car-dominated city is not so easy.

With cities as living and working places come apartments. Again, unlike most big cities, we are learning how to live in apartments, or near them. The quality of apartment design is therefore crucial to an appealing urban environment. Perth City and its suburbs are absorbing apartment buildings, many in the form commonly referred to as 'infill' projects. To curb sprawl - ahead of our State's steadily increasing population - the government has set 'infill' targets, but these are not being met. Greater variety and better standards of apartments with more attention given to urban amenity and the public realm can only help raise community acceptance of denser environments. Changes to rental conditions would also help, as will a focal shift away from the emphasis on sales marketing that commoditises housing to the authenticities of everyday life as the principal criterion

for investment in apartments. And of course, effective public transport is pivotal.

To these ends, the OGA is assisting the State government with planning reform. We have also been investigating the mechanics of NSW's residential planning provisions known as SEPP65. The results from a comprehensive review of the Policy's first decade of use are impressive and encouraging. We are also working with the City of Perth for more coordinated infrastructure delivery and better built outcomes.

Public art is another area of interest. Most of the projects involving the OGA have a significant public art component. The quantity and nature of public art are beginning to have a defining role in the image of Perth and consequently the role of art in the built environment is a topic of great interest. Looking for ways to solicit excellent urban art from this unprecedented opportunity is an ongoing investigation.

I am in the first quarter of my second year of a five-year term and looking forward there is much to do. Our team is small and in the current financial climate the OGA will remain constrained by funding so our efforts need to be prioritised. Ideally the OGA should be hosting events to stimulate design dialogues, with speakers from here and elsewhere, displays, exhibitions and exchanges to help promote a more creative

climate. The local design context is pretty thin, which tends to furnish the underwhelming and poorly conceived design proposals we too often see at the OGA. This diminishes our effectiveness in advocating the benefits of architects and design.

While commercial imperatives dominate this era, and the traditional status of architects has changed, many in our profession could do better. We should not lose sight of the fact that architects, planners and designers are at the forefront of astounding transformation and we are lucky to be able to contribute. It also seems to me that architecture is enjoying immense popular appeal. So, under these conditions, what type of place do we want to leave for future generations? What will be the legacy from our time in the sun? ■

perth city 2005-2015 (r)evolution

Author **Adrian Iredale**

By world standards ten years is a short time in the evolution of a city; however for a young and emerging city ten years can position the city into the long-term future. The people of Perth are known for their patience. We have waited over 100 years since the Principal State Architect at the time, George Temple-Poole, proposed relocating Perth Central Railway Station further north, creating a sequence of civic buildings and squares to link Perth and Northbridge. We have waited almost 25 years since the 1991 Perth Foreshore International Design Competition aimed to engage the city with the river. We are now at a point where some of the major government city projects will be completed, are under construction or about to commence.

The public spaces of Elizabeth Quay designed by Ashton Raggatt McDougall (ARM) and Taylor Cullity Lethlean are expected to open in November this year. After considerable public debate the project has evolved into a significant sequence of generous public spaces animated at the City edges by privately owned buildings, hotels and offices with restaurants and cafes. Interwoven into the public space will be a constellation of food and beverage kiosks and restaurants designed by ARM and local practices CODA, Matthews & Scavalli and iredale pedersen hook. These hospitality outlets will support a range of ongoing Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority (MRA) events including festivals, pop-ups and

an endless combination destined to intrigue and excite. Much debate has focused on the scale of private buildings, the necessary evil to financially subsidise the development and public spaces. While it is premature to assess the success of Elizabeth Quay it offers an entry and departure point to our City, a place of local and international significance, interest and association, a first place of impression filled with dynamic spaces scaled to the individual and the masses. We should place faith in the outcome of this public space and collectively maintain pressure on the processes that will guide the privately owned buildings into quality designs.

In 2007 the then Minister for Planning and Infrastructure Alannah MacTiernan announced an ambitious government project to sink the central railway lines linking Perth to Northbridge with the term 'Taking down our Berlin Wall and building Perth's own answer to the Potsdamer Platz'. Having lived in Berlin during the period of master planning competitions and construction of the new centre city with subsequent visits to assess the outcome, I know that this statement contains much truth and offers a few cautionary tales.

Following an international competition the Berlin Senate subdivided the land and sold it to major private companies at subsidised prices. At the time this was highly criticised by the public, concerned with the future of their city and the 'symbolic' linking of the

former East and West becoming the responsibility of a few commercial companies.

The private companies approached many of the world's best architects to produce designs. The architectural outcome from this process has been heavily debated, with the majority (including myself) unconvinced by all the major buildings. At the time of Alannah's statement I questioned what is better, the world's best architects producing some of their worst work or (hopefully) Perth's architects producing their best work? We believe in the investment and cultivation of our local design scene as evidenced in the post Franco Barcelona renaissance during the 1980s and Melbourne during the 1990s under the guidance of Professor Leon van Schaik (and others).

Whilst many consider Potsdamer Platz a poor architectural outcome it has been commercially successful at least at ground level with major department stores, restaurants, IMAX and a significant casino guaranteeing such success. The public spaces are generally insignificant, leftover private spaces massaged to accommodate alfresco eating. Inhabited mostly by tourists, the long-term viability is fragile with most locals angered by the commercialisation that has resulted in spaces unfamiliar and alienating to Berliners, compromising the original intention of re-unifying the former East and West. ►



George Temple-Poole: Perth as it should be

Developments of this scale necessitate a complex association of relationships between parties that are entrusted with achieving the delicate balance between the commercial desire for profitability and the public's desire for generous public open space. Vision-holders, Design Assessment Panels, State Government and Development Authorities share responsibility for the process and ongoing assessment to ensure high quality outcomes. As with Potsdamer Platz, the critical public open space for the new City Link will be formed between new buildings and existing public transport infrastructure. These spaces offer the freedom to re-think the role of 'city centre'. In Berlin it is a large grassed field (or void), in Perth it will be held in the arms of the horseshoe bridge. Yagan Square designed by Lyons Architecture with iredale pedersen hook and Aspect Studios intends a place of inclusivity, a public meeting place shared by the many cultures that inhabit this city, a place that optimistically engages with and interprets traditional owner culture (ancient culture) and the diversity of current cultures. It will be a vibrant

and animated setting created by a new typology that sits between architecture, landscape and art, and the intense program of events managed by the MRA. Perth will no longer be limited to the International Art Festival or Fringe Festival, it will become a non-stop place of cultural events. This space will challenge the concept that Perth's only democratic place is the beach.¹

The evolution towards these current projects began with investment by State and local authorities and the reinstatement of the State Government Architect position. It continued with the election of a progressive City of Perth Mayor, the subsequent engagement of the City Architect and the evolution of the East Perth Redevelopment Authority into the MRA. Collectively, these bodies have the skill base required to implement major projects and have been responsible for award-winning and highly revered public and government buildings. The ARM-designed Perth Arena completes the western end of the emerging City Link. 140 William Street, designed by Hassell Architects, carefully knits together once disparate

spaces with arcades and open spaces that will continue to improve as the City Link emerges. The Kerry Hill-designed State Theatre is perfectly positioned to figurehead the connection of Northbridge and the City centre and the MRA cultural centre events continue to excite pedestrians and visitors.

While these projects dominated the media, in the background has been the fight to evolve the small-scale projects, laneways and generally forgotten or overlooked spaces. With Melbourne laneways as a reference point, the battle and eventual transformation of our liquor licence laws has empowered small-scale operators to collectively re-invent our at-ground city and in-between spaces. This realm has been quick to capitalise on what is offered by these recent developments. Savvy operators have already invested in under-utilised, forgotten or abandoned spaces and are ready for the benefits that these remaining major projects promise. Hotel operators keen to locate in emerging areas and the City Link periphery follow closely. Hotel Alex by Spaceagency is one of many ▶



Yagan Square: Lyons Architects, iredale pedersen hook architects and Aspect Studios Image: design team

¹ Quoted by Prof. Martyn Hook, director iredale pedersen hook architects and Dean School of Media and Communication RMIT University.



Merry-Go-Round of Dreams and Ghosts Image: iph architects

boutique operations planned for the City, re-engaging with Northbridge and responding to a market that is currently under-represented.

Since 1968 the formidable and inspirational non-profit FORM and Linda Dorrington have encouraged private enterprise and empowered the individual to invest in public spaces, art, symposiums and the creative development of our City (and region). Developed with a sense of shared responsibility, Perth is now a network of spaces waiting to be discovered and enjoyed.

The Perth identity crisis seems to have been replaced with a new optimism. We no longer compare ourselves inappropriately to cities that are significantly larger, more central or much older. We are no longer toddlers finding our place in the world; we understand that the city is a collective and shared responsibility. With this confidence comes the realisation that this is a fragile moment in time. With a slowing economy and less public funding available, where and how do we progress into the next 10 years?

In 2008 the Perth International Arts Festival invited four architects and one artist to design their fantasy building for a site within Perth's city area (to be displayed on a billboard). Titled 'The Merry-Go-Round of Dreams and Ghosts' we created a circular public space, a democratic space that revealed the shared speculation for this city and stated, 'the city we inhabit is a product of the city we choose not to create and the city we choose to demolish, our fantasy city is the city imagined by Perth architects for almost 100 years that remains un-built and the collection of buildings that were built but should never have been demolished ... a collation of the most memorable projects that if built or retained would have resulted in a city very different to what we currently experience'.² iph architects' merry-go-round on the lawn reminds us of these past proposals and existences as an opportunity to reflect on our current environment and contemplate what was, what could have been and most importantly, what can still be. ■

² The definitive text for this project then quoted T.S.Elliot's *Burnt Norton*
 "time present and time past
 are both perhaps present in time future,
 and time future contained in time past.
 If all time is eternally present all time is
 unredeemable.
 What might have been is an abstraction
 remaining a perpetual possibility
 only in a world of speculation.
 What might have been and what has been
 point to one end, which is always present.
 Footfalls echo in the memory
 down the passage which we did not take
 towards the door we never opened
 into the rose-garden. My words echo
 thus, in your mind..."

realising the arena

Author **Tanya Trevisan**

The new Perth Arena, owned by the State Government of Western Australia, was officially opened to the Western Australian public on 10th November 2012 and has been featured in numerous articles and media reports since the 'Multipurpose Indoor Entertainment & Sports Stadium' Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued by the State Government in 2005.

Its seven year journey from RFP to construction completion was marred by significant public criticism, related primarily to the façade during construction, and to perceived construction cost and program over-runs. The completed building and subsequent loyal adoption by the Western Australian community bears witness to a polar transformation of public opinion, and the building has quickly become one of Perth's most recognisable and awarded public buildings. Numerous articles have critiqued the design of the Perth Arena - at planning, construction and completion. Here, Stephen Ashton (Director Ashton Raggatt McDougall Architecture), Dominic Snellgrove (Managing Director Cameron Chisholm Nicol) and Peter Keleman (Director Cameron Chisholm Nicol) collectively share their experiences of the realisation of this significant project; providing joint insights into the ideas, background and process that brought it into being.

Obviously Ashton Raggatt McDougall (ARM) and Cameron Chisholm Nicol (CCN) decided to jointly enter the competition for the Perth Arena. Can you tell us about the beginning of the process?

The selection process for the architect stipulated that if a firm was not resident in WA then it needed to provide a local component to its bid. Once ARM had confirmed its interest in bidding for the project, we looked for a local partner who was interested and capable of bidding jointly with us. We sought advice from industry colleagues on the best people in Perth, and we did talk to a couple of other firms, but once we met with CCN it became clear that it would be a very good partnership, and that both firms would have similar objectives, strategies and ethics in bidding for the project.

How was the partnership initiated, and subsequently structured, in terms of input and outcome?

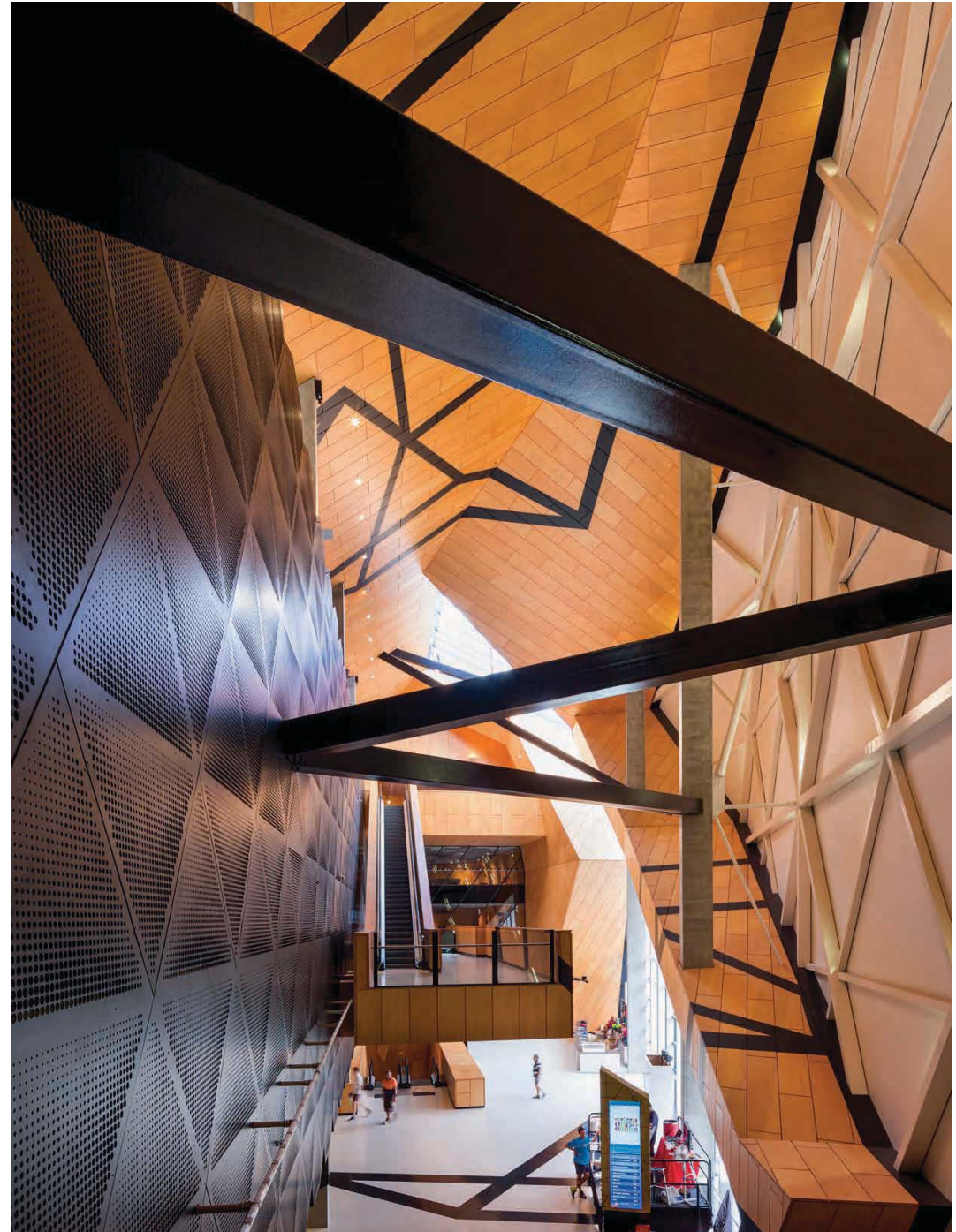
The partnership was initiated through discussions between directors of both firms, primarily Stephen Ashton and Dominic Snellgrove. It was an unincorporated joint venture with a simple management and financial structure - in essence a 50/50 partnership. As is normal in geographically split joint ventures, ARM input tended to be greater in the design phases and less in the construction phases, and vice versa for CCN, mainly for reasons of logistics and economics.

Stephen and Dominic were in effect the joint managing directors of the joint venture, an arrangement which worked extremely well for the duration of the project. Howard Raggatt was the Design Director, assisted by Andrew Lilleyman and Jeremy Stewart. Peter Keleman and Stephen Davies were the joint Project Architects up to the completion of documentation. As construction proceeded, Peter became the Project Architect, assisted by Steve Christie and a dedicated site team.

Did it work well for both parties? What were the unexpected pitfalls and bonuses?

Both firms are extremely proud of the outcome, and of the fact that we managed to stick with the project, and all its twists and turns, to be there at the end with the design integrity complete and with a facility which has more than met the Government's brief. By the time the project was complete, the architects were amongst the only core team members that had been there since the start some seven years prior, which we think shows a real persistence and an ability to work within the shifting political and contractual environment of the project.

Image: John Collings



Quite apart from the fact that the partnership made winning the commission possible, there were benefits both ways. From ARM's perspective, we gained a trusted local colleague who knew the Perth construction environment intimately, and who could guide us through the sometimes unusual and occasionally surprising local ways of doing things. And obviously the joint resourcing of the project made dealing with the vicissitudes of the project program more flexible and therefore put less pressure on us than may have otherwise been the case.

The fact that there was a very good working and trust relationship at Director level meant that we were very happy to be represented by CCN at important meetings when it was logistically difficult for an ARM person to be there (eg short notice). And there are always things to be learned from working with a fresh group of fellow professionals, from different approaches and different experience.

Likewise from a Cameron Chisholm Nicol perspective we not only learnt from ARM's renowned design approach and systems, but were also exposed to new technology such as Rhino 3D modeling and Navisworks 3D viewing.

The design was initially so controversial with the Perth public, and now I think it's fair to say locals have completely embraced it. Where did the initial idea

come from, ie what inspired you and was there a 'light bulb' moment'?

There wasn't really a Eureka moment, rather a drawing together of a number of different strands of thought which seemed to show promise for delivering the design aspirations of the brief. These included a desire to investigate a new way to design an urban stadium that reflected its inner city location. This led to design research which showed that most arenas and stadiums were treated as singular objects, which was often quite anti-urban. We resolved to look for a set of ideas which had more urban qualities. We were also keen to find a symbolic connection with WA's rich history of public architecture, while remaining as contemporary as the brief required. Our inspiration for this new Arena began at the Round House in Fremantle (1831). A one-time prison but now iconic attraction, the twelve sided Round House reminded the design team of historic Ideal City diagrams from the walled gardens of the early Middle Ages to the high point in the Renaissance. And then for us the Eternity Puzzle as another amazing 12 sided icon, as though also suggesting a city. Almost impossible to solve, this puzzle has an estimated 2¹⁰⁹⁵ configurations.

Critiques talk about the Eternity Puzzle, what is that and why is it relevant?

The particular conceptual solution grew out of ARM's long standing interest in puzzles (there is a whole chapter of the new ARM book to be released in April Mongrel Rapture on puzzling).

We found this very nice confluence between the 12 sided plan of Fremantle's Round House and the 12 sided shape of Christopher Monckton's Eternity Puzzle. By carefully studying the component parts of the puzzle, we were able to derive some shapes which went to make up the main components of the Arena's exterior. This idea of assembling the Arena from components rather than a singular gesture gave it the urbanity and richness that the brief was seeking. The main shapes of the facade could be reinterpreted as swans, earthmovers, and other local references. The next layer of design came after that as the detail increased.

Can you give us some background to the 2005 competition?

It was not really a competition, but a modified qualification-based selection process, with an esquisse component included. A shortlist was established, based on capability through an RFP process, and these respondents were then asked to provide an initial response to the project brief; not a design, but a submission which illustrated the team's approach to the key issues of the project.

The project was awarded to ARM and CCN in October 2005.

What in essence was the brief, and do you believe that the constructed Perth Arena resembles the competition entry in spirit? Or did it evolve to become something different?



Image: Greg Hocking

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Image: Greg Hocking



Image: Greg Hocking

The RFP included some key principles which the design needed to satisfy; that the design concept is intellectually rich and fully realised; that through design decisions, costs over the life of the building are reduced; that the users' needs are fully met; and that the Arena contributes positively to its place in the public realm.

The key deliverable for the response was to demonstrate an approach rather than a conceptual design. We believe that our response best demonstrated an approach that did not pre-conceive a solution. We demonstrated a range of conceptual approaches that could be pursued pending more detailed investigations. None of these conceptual approaches actually resembled the final design concept literally, however in principle, yes the final outcome was true to that conceptual approach.

We are completely confident that the finished Arena represents very much what the State wanted. The feedback

we now get on all the functional performance criteria and the financial operating performance meet or, in the case of the financial return, significantly exceed the State's original business case. From the strategic viewpoint, the State was determined to build an arena of this size and flexibility to meet what was perceived to be a large gap in Western Australia's ability to attract the kind of international and national acts that were bypassing Perth due to its lack of facilities. This strategic aim has also been completely fulfilled. From an architectural design viewpoint, the design concept came quite early in the design process proper, and really has simply developed from there.

The design team went on a national and international study trip to look at other venues, was this worthwhile?

The national and international benchmarking exercise was crucial to better understanding arena building typologies. Also critical during the initial investigative period was the

input from Ron Turner from RTKL in Los Angeles, (now at Gensler). His experience designing stadia and arenas, mostly in the USA, was a great asset to the team although we quickly discovered that the American arena model was not entirely appropriate to Australia. The design of American arenas is heavily influenced by their strong sports franchises given the popularity of basketball and ice hockey, so the entertainment component must coexist with sport. Australian arenas however are much more weighted towards entertainment and this informed several key design features that has put Perth Arena at the forefront of arena design globally. These include the horse-shoe shaped seating bowl with retractable end stage seating, the location of the corporate suites double stacked mid-tier at the rear of the bowl to optimise their commercial value without compromising general admission amenity, and also various back-of-house loading dock and rigging features to achieve high bump-in and

bump-out efficiencies, critical to the entertainment industry.

Did you visit any particularly notable venues that you believe assisted your approach with the functionality, design or other aspects good and bad?

Three Australian venues were probably most informative regarding the Perth Arena design; they each informed key aspects of the functional design of Perth Arena. Firstly Rod Laver Arena for its retractable roof, given the brief requirement for the Perth Arena to host the Hopman Cup tennis tournament and to emulate conditions at the Australian Open. Secondly the just-completed Members Stand at the MCG which featured the highest level of finishes yet seen at a sporting venue in Australia. Lastly Adelaide Entertainment Centre for its highly efficient roof rigging system with a trafficable mesh ceiling giving concert riggers maximum flexibility to rig lighting and other effects that seem to grow in complexity year on year.

I witnessed public opinion being strongly critical of the design prior to the Arena's completion; it was for a period there reasonably unrelenting and also covered in the media. That must have been challenging for the team. I'm really keen to hear about that experience and how it manifested itself, how it affected the process or you personally. What are your views on this and the critics?

The public comments were at times amusing and at times disheartening to the team. In the end we just got on with the job confident that similar to other controversial architectural projects from the Eiffel Tower to the Sydney Opera House and Federation Square, the project would be embraced by the public once complete. The first time this was demonstrated to us was at the Open House event just prior to the building being completed, when some 25,000 people visited the venue. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. We were really never personally concerned by the criticism, except where it was simply wrong. Our main

fear was that public criticism might unnerve the State and cause it to react politically to a design matter, which never ends well. However, this was not the case - the State remained quite resolute on design matters once the contract had been signed, and the design was really very well protected throughout the process, something of which the senior managers and the key politicians should now be very proud. Of course, the whole question of the design became publicly conflated with the question of cost and time increases. We were confident that once the design fully emerged it would be accepted if not by all, then hopefully a majority.

However we would have to say that even we have been surprised by the strength of the acceptance since completion, and how well the facility has worked in every respect. The early successes of the Wildcats home games generated huge momentum. Performers and audiences loved the acoustics and the experience, and the whole project seems to have

instilled a sense of pride in Western Australians that they can host such world class events.

One of the talking points related to the late inclusion of the underground carpark (which added considerable cost to the construction). What was the argument to justify not providing any parking? If you revisited this aspect would you do things differently, presumably having seen how the venue is used and accessed?

One of the initial drivers for the government to locate the Perth Arena back into the heart of the CBD was its proximity to Perth's major train station and bus hubs. The government was very keen to promote public transport as the preferred means of accessing the Arena both from the perspective of broad sustainability principles and practically to reduce CBD congestion. This was backed up by car parking analysis, undertaken by the traffic consultants, which demonstrated that Perth has adequate CBD car parking capacity within a 10 minute walking radius of the Arena which was generally going to be available at times of events, being counter-cyclical to the CBD working hours.

However, lobbying by potential key users of the facility in the sports and entertainment industry pointed out that the value of the corporate suite product would be greatly enhanced by incorporating parking within or adjacent to the Arena. Initial studies included various options and, whilst the government initially settled on a

multi-level carpark over the rail lines adjacent to the Arena, during the tender negotiations the preferred contractor's offer to construct a carpark under the Arena was agreed. This required a significant re-design of the arena structure and had quite an impact on the construction program and the just-completed forward works remediation. However this was potentially offset by avoiding the risks of construction over live, operational rail lines.

In the end I think the underground car park was the right decision. Although more costly to construct than anticipated due to the high groundwater conditions (effectively requiring the basement to be constructed as a waterproof inverse swimming pool), it offers the highest level of amenity to patrons including those with universal access needs, who can utilise the main lift core to directly access all concourse levels from the basement.

Considering the facade, initially when only the skin of sheets of randomly multi coloured metal were visible and this was often featured amidst controversy in the media, the Perth public was outraged with the Arena's 'crushed beer can' appearance. We all now know that wasn't the final cladding, but what was that?
To use a metaphor, what the public were reacting to was seeing the building in its underwear prior to being clothed. The multi coloured Kalzip metal sheets were a waterproofing skin that was always going to be covered up by the final facade. We never worried about

it too much at that stage because we knew it would all change. As a broader point, most architects know not to comment on buildings until they are finished; it is simply pointless to have a running commentary on things under construction.

The sustainability story is one which isn't generally publicised, yet I believe that the Perth Arena design incorporates several ESD initiatives. Can you highlight these and tell us about your intentions and approach?

Our approach to achieving global best practice sustainable design solutions for the Arena commenced with the engagement of one of Australia's pioneers of sustainable design in Australia, engineer Che Wall. We commenced a process of engaging with all key stakeholders involved in the Arena project by initiating a sustainability workshop attended by everyone from Government Ministers, the Government Architect Professor Geoffrey London, and Project Director Steven Luce to various event industry representatives and the entire consultant team.

At this workshop a broad range of potential initiatives were assessed and a strategy was agreed by consensus. Obtaining the 'buy-in' of key decision-makers was crucial because it meant that the sustainability initiatives and their benefits were well understood and became committed design objectives. Key initiatives that, if not unique to arena design were certainly never before ►



Image: John Collings



DISPLACEMENT VENTILATION



DISPLACEMENT VENTILATION



Image: John Collins

included in the one venue, included displacement air-conditioning to the bowl seating which delivers conditioned air directly to the patron seating positions from under the seats, mixed mode conditioning to the concourses (ie partly naturally ventilated), T5 dimmable fluorescent house lighting to the bowl, waterless urinals, cold water hand washing to general admission amenities, a 109kw photovoltaic roof-mounted array providing most base-load power for the car park lighting, and sustainable material and finishes selections. All the initiatives that were incorporated had reasonable pay back periods, meaning any cost imposts were balanced against recurrent cost savings in a short period of time.

Modelling demonstrated that the displacement air conditioning system should reduce greenhouse gas emission by 60% compared to conventional top-down, ducted systems; whilst the photovoltaic array would save approximately 150 tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum. Ambitious sustainability objectives for the Perth

Arena have resulted in one of the most energy efficient, sustainable buildings of its genre.

Functionally, having experienced the rapid post-concert exit from the Arena, I am interested to know how this came about.

You are correct that patrons are able to exit very quickly after events. The Building Code of Australia does not really specifically address egress from venues such as Perth Arena so the UK Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (known as the Green Guide) was utilised as the basis for safety and egress standards, given it guides stadia and arena designs in many countries. Detailed predictive egress modelling software known as 'Steps', was used to refine the design of the arena for safe and efficient egress that exceeded the guidance standards.

Last of all, what I call the 'magic spot', not widely known and personally I love it. Can you tell us what this is about and why? How hard was it to achieve in built form? Why is it kept quiet? (I like to tell everyone!)

We call it the 'sweet spot' where you can see that the framework of the main entry canopy is actually directly derived from the facade shapes behind it. It makes sense of the seemingly jumbled canopy steelwork by aligning the steelwork with the building geometry behind. We marked the spot in the paving, however it's not widely publicised and so it is relatively unknown. It's nice to leave a building with a few secrets.

The Perth Arena received the 2013 AIA Sir Zelman Cowan National Award for Public Architecture, the 2013 AIA Emil Soderstrom National Award for Interior Architecture, the 2013 AIA (WA) George Temple Poole Award, the 2013 AIA (WA) Jeffrey Howlett Award for Public Architecture, the 2013 AIA (WA) Colorbond Award for Steel Architecture, and the 2013 AIA (WA) Architecture Award for Interior Architecture.

The interviewer declares her interest, having lived through the Arena story in real time as the patient wife of one of the interviewees. ■



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ten from ten

We asked ten public figures and architects involved in Perth's development and public discourse surrounding issues of architecture, urban design and planning to share their responses to ten questions on PERTH 2005 – 2015.

LISA SCAFFIDI

Right Honourable Lord Mayor, Perth

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest success in the past decade?

A collective and growing appreciation and commitment to realising Perth's full potential, along with more appreciation of the benefits strong engagement with the cultural, arts and other creative sectors can bring to our city.

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest missed opportunity in the past decade?

I worry the most about how we best sell 'brand Perth' to the world. It is a competitive global marketplace, and while we rank in the top ten of the world's most liveable cities, and while we lack an 'icon' recognition factor like the Sydney Harbour Bridge or Opera House, it is a little harder to create awareness and sell Perth to many who don't have the appreciation of just how amazing this city is without the right initial attractor.

In what way do you think Perth has changed the most significantly over the last 10 years?

In my observations, the changes we have brought upon the central city area have delivered a greater sophistication to our city's urban fabric. There was some scepticism at first but as our Vision 2029 unfolded and people started appreciating the new

streetscapes, venues, retail attractions and other offerings I started to observe a commensurate positive change in attitude and the mindset of many citizens and stakeholders.

Which urban, architectural or technological trend do you believe has influenced the most change in Perth 2005 - 2015?

I would say internet technology given people are so 'attached' to their smartphones. The provision of city wide wifi has been nation leading and has kept us current and makes life easier for all who visit our city. Additionally the move by more people to inner city living is bringing greater vitality to our city and this is enhancing viability for the small businesses choosing to once again have a presence in our city.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?

Every day is different in my role and I enjoy that diversity and the connection to so many people across so many industry sectors and walks of life.

What is the biggest lesson you have learnt in the last 10 years?

I am an advocate for our city but the greatest lesson is appreciating the value and strength of timely, clear and well articulated communication.

Does regulation aid or impede growth?

Absolutely not. Regulation is an appropriate measure and process that aids smart growth.

Elizabeth Quay, how will you measure its success?

The overall success of this major precinct will initially be seen in the take up of retail and residential/office space. The longer term success will be seen via people truly engaging with the space and enjoying it so much they will return again and again as it will provide them with the connection to the river and the city they have sought.

What should Perth's architecture and urban design aim for over the next 10 years?

Ideally design excellence and good sustainability principles should be the priority. Good municipal management should continually aim to keep a good eye on changing patterns and flows.

Perth 2005 - 2015 - delighted or outraged?

I think we don't even need to guess that answer! Let me correct the answer – 'Totally delighted' and add even more importantly we are very proud. Look how far we have come and yet how much more we can still achieve.

ALANNAH MACTIERNAN

Federal Member for Perth, Former State Minister for Planning and Infrastructure

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest success in the past decade?

The mining boom brought new energy, money and people into the city. It gave us the impetus to get serious about intensifying development to create a city with more life. As mobility is the life blood of a city, the thing that enables us to take advantage of the agglomeration of different skill sets, I think doubling the size of the urban rail network would be up there.

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest missed opportunity in the past decade?

In recent times the focus is almost exclusively on the CBD. Much more planning and development focus needs to be on building the urbanity of non-CBD town centres. We need a networked city. We also have to keep expanding public transport to keep the city moving.

In what way do you think Perth has changed the most significantly over the last 10 years?

Urban or street culture has grown enormously, not just in the inner suburbs. There is a much greater move to eating out, doing the café strip thing, going to festivals. We are more enthusiastic about city life.

Which urban, architectural or technological trend do you believe has influenced the most change in Perth 2005 - 2015?

The quality of built form is very uneven – some beauties, but a lot that is very average. One of my favourites is Kerry

Hill's State Theatre – I love the subtle, classical, Asian aesthetic that is a perfect statement for Perth in the 21st century.

Does regulation aid or impede growth?

We need regulation: the market unregulated leads to a race to the bottom.

Elizabeth Quay, how will you measure its success?

Certainly not by its name. The concept of the Perth Waterfront was to have a high energy space with a truly big city feel. It should be judged on whether it has been able to create a new dimension rather than just being more of the same.

What should Perth's architecture and urban design aim for over the next 10 years?

My biggest concern is that we paying only lip service to sustainability, both for individual structures and the city as a whole. We really need to regulate higher standards of energy efficiency, cross-ventilation and greening. We are blithely ignoring the destruction of canopy as we are intensifying the growth of the city with little regard for the impact on the heat island effect, which will compound the warming problem Perth is experiencing from global climate change. While we have some improvements with greening the public realm, the rapid loss of green, growing things in private space will make our city much less liveable. We need to better understand biophilia.

Perth 2005 - 2015 - delighted or outraged?

Perth – I love this city. Of course we can do better – that's life. ▶



BRAD PETTITT
Mayor, Fremantle

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest success in the past decade?
Re-enlivening the Perth CBD as a funky and interesting day and night economy.

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest missed opportunity in the past decade?
To deal with its out of control urban sprawl and its lack of housing affordability. Less than 30% of new dwellings are built within the current metropolitan footprint and too few are affordable to people on average salaries.

In what way do you think Perth has changed the most significantly over the last 10 years?
Rapid population growth has taken Perth from a place that felt like big country town to a proper grown up city of 2 million people.

Which urban, architectural or technological trend do you believe has influenced the most change in Perth 2005 - 2015?
The rediscovery of the importance of authenticity and grit – be it industrial design, graffiti covered laneways, or brownfield redevelopments that celebrate their working heritage.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?
The diverse challenge of breathing life into a city centre that was in steady decline and creating a liveable, sustainable, vibrant city which somehow still keeps its quirks and uniqueness.

MARION FULKER
CEO Committee for Perth

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest success in the past decade?
That there is more focus on the future and with that has brought more coordinated effort by all who have a role in that future.

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest missed opportunity in the past decade?
If I have the liberty of going back just slightly more than a decade, I would say the Bell Tower. It should have been bigger and more iconic. Shame on the naysayers at the time for compromising what was an ambitious vision.

In what way do you think Perth has changed the most significantly over the last 10 years?
We are more confident as a region, more sure of our place in the nation and the globe.

Which urban, architectural or technological trend do you believe has influenced the most change in Perth 2005 - 2015?
Smart Growth drove the notion that cities could keep sprawling in a 'sensible way', I am not sure that has served Perth well.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?
I have the best job in Perth! Researching, thinking and advocating for a vibrant, sustainable and prosperous future – what better job could there be.

LINLEY LUTTON
City Gatekeepers

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest success in the past decade?
The decade's best, for me, is the Perth Arena whose dominating yet unpredictable and complex form successfully provides an engaging landmark defining the western entry to the city.

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest missed opportunity in the past decade?
The City Link project missed the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to introduce a colourful and lively residential quarter right in the heart of a rather monotonous city.

In what way do you think Perth has changed the most significantly over the last 10 years?
I will remember the decade mostly as a period when high land values coupled with the relaxation of density limits drove a massive increase in apartment living.

Which urban, architectural or technological trend do you believe has influenced the most change in Perth 2005 - 2015?
The state government's ideological pursuit of random densification has clearly changed the city's morphology – approving a sixteen storey tower in central Subiaco is a prime example.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?
My greatest professional joy comes from teaching my young UWA planning students as we explore ways to satisfy human needs through good urban planning. ▶



JOERG BAUMEISTER

Director Australian Urban Design Research Centre

What is the biggest lesson you have learnt in the last 10 years?

A big eye-opener for me, learnt during our fight for a better Perth Waterfront plan, is how wilfully the broad community is disempowered by Government in important planning matters.

Does regulation aid or impede growth?

Ancient Rome, with few planning regulations, grew into a dysfunctional city while most late medieval and colonial cities grew effectively using locally-focused regulatory planning frameworks.

Elizabeth Quay, how will you measure its success?

The Esplanade Reserve, constructed in the 1890s, was a place for community recreation and assembly so Elizabeth Quay's success, to me, will be measured by its continued community use.

What should Perth's architecture and urban design aim for over the next 10 years?

Perth is on a self-induced unsustainable trajectory so for the next 10 years we all need to start the big conversations, together, and devise the best ways forward.

Perth 2005 - 2015 - delighted or outraged?

Two new large blank canvases emerged in the CBD in the last decade and sadly each production has been shamefully mediocre.

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest success in the past decade?

The public train system as an opportunity for a more diverse and therefore safer future for Perth.

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest missed opportunity in the past decade?

To lobby harder for public transport – the more participants, the better it works.

In what way do you think Perth has changed the most significantly over the last 10 years?

The transformation of urban quarters like Northbridge or Fremantle which demonstrate the advantages of an urban lifestyle.

Which urban, architectural or technological trend do you believe has influenced the most change in Perth 2005 - 2015?

Thanks for the fantastic Fringe and Arts festivals, thanks for outstanding concerts (ACO!), for excellent exhibitions and thanks for an increasing nightlife! Thanks Perth for these changes that will hopefully continue in the future and won't be just a trend!

What do you enjoy most about what you do?

Working as researcher, educator, and explorer in an excellent, multidisciplinary team on driving problems of the world: the evolution of cities which are connecting both human interests and natural environments.

What is the biggest lesson you have learnt in the last 10 years?

Only thinking in systems can manage urban future and its complexity.

Does regulation aid or impede growth?

Regulation is needed to balance public and individual interests including their different definitions of growth.

Elizabeth Quay, how will you measure its success?

It will be successful if it creates a benefit for the public, for Perth and the riverside.

What should Perth's architecture and urban design aim for over the next 10 years?

A follow-up model with diverse infill developments for a highly attractive urban and ecological lifestyle.

Perth 2005 - 2015 - delighted or outraged?

Living in Perth – delighted; knowing some of Perth's vulnerabilities in upcoming crises – outraged.

GEOFF WARN

WA Government Architect

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest success in the past decade?

The commitment to developing Elizabeth Quay and reuniting the city and the river is an important achievement. Also the City of Perth's urban infrastructure improvements and its new Library, the City's first commissioned project in nearly 40 years is notable. The Library and Cathedral Square promise to be a catalyst for overdue regeneration of the eastern end of the CBD. In architectural terms, the State Theatre Centre and the Perth Arena are significant successes in setting a new benchmark for civic buildings in Perth. Are these isolated cases or are we reaching a condition where we expect a better standard of architecture and design, a better environment? As a capital City in a globally significant region we should aim for this.

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest missed opportunity in the past decade?

Despite the large quantity of new construction across the greater City region over this period, we've so far missed the opportunity to consolidate a strong local design culture. Housing variety and affordability still remain unresolved issues.

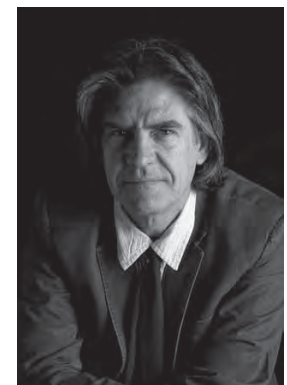
In what way do you think Perth has changed the most significantly over the last 10 years?

The increased level of interest and investment in the City, transforming it to be more than a central business district, and a willingness to

contemplate density and apartment living. These are significant changes for Perth, which is essentially a suburban environment. Our challenge is how to become positively and uniquely urban and metropolitan.

Which urban, architectural or technological trend do you believe has influenced the most change in Perth 2005 - 2015?

There are many. The biggest agent of change has been the money and the migration that has come from the resources boom. The population increase (and the variety of people) and the heightened economic activity have required more buildings and infrastructure. The expanded role and jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority has wrought significant change on the fabric of the city and widened its appeal to people. The City of Perth and several other local authorities have also responded well. Liquor licensing reforms have led to an increase in the number of small bars. This has brought a welcome change in character and activity across the city. Our food culture has also improved (as has the service!). The resources boom has introduced a more diverse cross section of tourists, visitors and working professionals to Perth, which has inspired a new level of confidence and perhaps brought with it a tinge of cosmopolitanism. We must also recognise the other side of the coin; the commodification of almost everything, including the public realm; inflation and its associated costs of living; high expectations; and a sense of anxiety ►



towards an uncertain and unstable future. And we must be diligent in monitoring our everyday practices to ensure they concur with sustainability objectives and targets. These are very complex issues that creativity and design can help to ameliorate, if allowed.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?

It is reassuring to witness the impact that the OGA is having within Government. The receptiveness and enthusiasm that government agencies have shown to my role as Government Architect has been far greater than I anticipated. In advocating design and helping shape current thinking about the City and its suburbs, the OGA has an important role. But despite good intentions, ingrained processes are difficult to change quickly, so patience is necessary. In this context our built environment policy 'Better Places and Spaces' is very helpful in keeping agencies and individuals focused.

What is the biggest lesson you have learnt in the last 10 years?

Conservative forces are very powerful. Architecture is not at all well understood in WA - in fact, I think, relatively speaking this is probably the most difficult major city in the developed world to be an architect. And I am sure, from a broad perspective, we can all benefit from better architecture and design.

Does regulation aid or impede growth?

It can do both. Regulation can be helpful, depending on how you use

it. Policy can be rigid or flexible; approached proactively or defensively. It's always better to incentivise good outcomes than simply to limit the worst ones through regulation.

Elizabeth Quay, how will you measure its success?

The EQ project in its totality will be the result of considerable focused effort from government, the private sector and the community, operating at many levels. The completed project will, therefore, represent the sum of our capabilities at a point in time. It will reflect our cultural maturity....and that could be telling!

I'm looking forward to 'the opening' and the initial responses, although EQ will take quite a few years more to complete and settle into our collective consciousness. Reconnecting the city to its water has been a very big step for us.

What should Perth's architecture and urban design aim for over the next 10 years?

To improve, to achieve higher standards. We should aim for a distinctive design language and character that promotes good design that is unique to WA and appealing beyond our shores. A distinct local style will only come from a local base of committed design-focused practitioners. Although it has waned, Perth architecture has on a few occasions achieved this. A healthy design culture needs an enabling context and this is what is missing. The context needs design-based values and aspirations to be loosely shared by developers, regulators, construction

industry, financiers, media and government. The educating institutions are essential players in setting agendas for research and design. And the OGA and the Institute of Architects can assist in aligning government, industry and the academies, helping to link practice and theory to policy.

Although this view sounds idealistic and somewhat utopian many other places achieve it. Improvement will come from setting a higher bar and fostering the determination to jump it.

Perth 2005 - 2015 - delighted or outraged?
Neither. But I'm optimistic about the future.

EMMA WILLIAMSON

Practice Director CODA

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest success in the past decade?
I love that we now have pockets of activity and intensity around the high streets of inner ring suburbs. These pockets have benefits that we can all enjoy and have helped to create strong and connected communities.

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest missed opportunity in the past decade?
Failing to address the need for better public transport. By missing this opportunity our city continues to sprawl along the coastline leaving people isolated and disconnected. This lack of intensity comes at a high price to the environment and people's mental health!

In what way do you think Perth has changed the most significantly over the last 10 years?
I think there has been a gradual shift toward thinking of ourselves as a city rather than a town. Long-term plans for areas around railway infrastructure mean we will continue to see these pockets develop their own identity, creating a diverse city. Sinking the railway in the city and investing in some large public projects that value culture are public signals that we are on the move.

Which urban, architectural or technological trend do you believe has influenced the most change in Perth 2005 - 2015?
The focus on Transit Oriented Developments means we now have diverse suburbs that are creating

their own identity, afforded by small businesses that can be supported by the increased resident population.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?
Taking on new projects and through our conversations with clients and stakeholders learning the complex variables that create the need for our services. I love the challenge of finding ways problems can be turned around to become opportunities.

What is the biggest lesson you have learnt in the last 10 years?
Architects need to listen and ask questions. It's only when we have a full understanding of the complex layers of issues that come to each project that we can start to offer solutions that will support our clients well into the future.

Does regulation aid or impede growth?
Yikes – I'm torn! In some respects I feel it impedes growth. The more bureaucracy the more barriers seem to come between a good idea and its execution. That said I would advocate for higher standards of design, increasing the role and power of Design Review Panels and the Office of the Government Architect in projects, and that would increase regulation in that area.

Elizabeth Quay, how will you measure its success?

I think Elizabeth Quay will be like all new projects – it will need time to grow into itself and create an identity. Ultimately the success needs to be measured by the government's own ►



criteria: connecting people to the river. In my view, to be successful it needs to engage with the local population and not the transient tourist population. If I come to work on a Monday and three people I interact with have been to EQ on the weekend for different reasons I will think it has been a success.

What should Perth's architecture and urban design aim for over the next 10 years?
We should continue to focus on density and public transport in the urban realm. Perth's architecture needs to continue to develop a dialogue with the profession and the public that talks about the value of good design.

Perth 2005 - 2015 - delighted or outraged?
I am neither delighted nor outraged when I think broadly about this topic. I am outraged by specific instances where we see poor design outcomes (especially when they are done by architects) or missed opportunities. At other times I am delighted by small and delicate moments that you more often stumble upon than seek out. I maintain an optimism that these small moments of delight will build up a critical mass and in ten years time I won't be able to wipe the smile off my face.

PHIL GRESLEY
Director Gresley Abas

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest success in the past decade?
To have grown up! Perth has definitely come of age over the last 10 years. We have absolutely given our leaders permission to make some big decisions about the future of our city, and they have finally done so.

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest missed opportunity in the past decade?
Not taking advantage of our unused and vacant upper level spaces in historical inner city buildings. It's a great shame that as a city we have not managed a find way to promote innovation, create incentives for owners, and find common sense solutions to regulation that would enable these spaces to be inhabited.

In what way do you think Perth has changed the most significantly over the last 10 years?
It's now filled with people! 10 years ago on a Friday evening Perth CBD had little to offer. Now there are people inhabiting all sorts of spaces and places - permanent and temporary, shiny and gritty, formal and casual – it's all there. Thousands of people inhabiting small bars, cafés, hawkers markets, active public spaces, and a revitalised cultural centre absolutely filled with life.

Which urban, architectural or technological trend do you believe has influenced the most change in Perth 2005 - 2015?
The New Urbanism movement has had a significant impact on the planning, urban design, and architecture of

Perth. Stopping short of supporting the implementation of faux historical architectural styles, WAPC's Directions 2031 seeks to bring many of the more successful, people-oriented principles of New Urbanism to life. This is increasingly manifest in mixed-use activity corridors and public transport oriented developments.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?
Working with great people to realise their hopes and dreams.

What is the biggest lesson you have learnt in the last 10 years?
Change for the better can actually happen. It demands working hard and consistently on what you believe and finding likeminded collaborators.

Does regulation aid or impede growth?
To me, it's the quality of any 'growth' that counts. If de-regulation turns on the growth tap, what happens if only rubbish comes out?

Elizabeth Quay, how will you measure its success?
It's a success if it's a vibrant place filled with a diverse range of people doing a diverse range of activities. It's a success if it's a genuine destination and a place city dwellers will touch weekly or even daily. I believe the public realm will be of the highest quality but success will also be measured by the design quality of the private developments and how they contribute to this public realm. Conversely, with the current local economic slowdown a key consideration

in measuring success might be how the government manages empty development sites over the coming years.

What should Perth's architecture and urban design aim for over the next 10 years?
In the ongoing effort to reduce suburban sprawl, we need to provide better amenity for residents of medium density (~ R40) suburban development. Through more innovative housing typologies, architects can effect positive change in this rapidly growing style of housing, which is currently the remit of building technicians who mostly lack a design education and sophistication. Also – getting Activity Centres right!

Perth 2005 - 2015 - delighted or outraged?
Absolutely delighted!

NIC BRUNSDON
Director Post- Architecture

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest success in the past decade?
Brave, good people in positions of influence sensing the moment and crafting a long-view, most often to the detriment of their own immediate personal popularity (Brad Pettitt, Scott Ludlam, Lisa Scaffidi, John Carey, Marion Fulker, + more, + more, + more.)

What do you believe has been Perth's greatest missed opportunity in the past decade?
Not a question for me, I'm terrible at looking back.

In what way do you think Perth has changed the most significantly over the last 10 years?
Generational change, so, time passing principally.

Which urban, architectural or technological trend do you believe has influenced the most change in Perth 2005 - 2015?
A move towards a 7-day diurnal city. When was the last time you heard the tedious slogans 'brain-drain', 'Wait Awhile' or 'dullsville'? ... A victory.

What do you enjoy most about what you do?
All of it. I love being an Architect. In Perth. Now.

What is the biggest lesson you have learnt in the last 10 years?
Take risks and make big mistakes in your 20s.

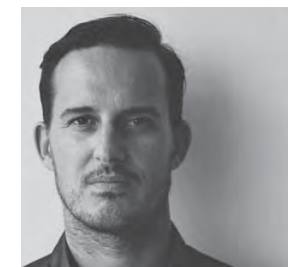
Does regulation aid or impede growth?
Both. An aid in protecting design

quality, amenity and procurement hygiene; and an impediment by its very definition.

Elizabeth Quay, how will you measure its success? If I want to go.

What should Perth's architecture and urban design aim for over the next 10 years? For global renown.

Perth 2005 - 2015 - delighted or outraged?
Yesterday. ■



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scouring the thin city

Author **Beth George**

For her Doctoral Thesis (RMIT 2009), Beth George undertook an investigation into Perth through the medium of mapping. An excerpt from this work is presented.

Abstract

Perth, Western Australia – a city become region one hundred kilometres in length and expanding yet – is a place variously adored and scorned; one noted widely for its landscape and its horizon, and relatively rarely for its architecture. Young, low lying, and sparsely lined with built form, Perth might be described as a thin city.

The intent of this research is to entreat an optimistic and inquisitive reading of the city of Perth through the conceptualisation of a set of narrative threads. Six fictive interpretations of Perth, each denoting qualities of thinness, are cast toward the factual city, inviting both confirmation and opposition to their themes. They are: private city, wide city, even city, city of the immediate future, reserve city and city of form fixation. The process of elucidating and questioning the presence of these narratives allows for thicknesses to emerge from the city region; latencies with which the city can be redressed.

The mechanism for directing this interpretive view of the city is the process of mapping. Each narrative thread has been explored through the formulation of a set of maps as a visual text. Through the paired workings of the narratives and the mappings, opportune conditions and operations are uncovered within the thin city, complexities that belie the ubiquity of the city's surface.

Mappings shift in scope from the scale of the region to a site of richness at its core, sampling out entities, structures and performative processes at work in the city's plan, distilling opportune sites that are then explored via the architectural project. At once analytical and synthetic, mappings identify existing points of intrigue in the city's plan and simultaneously invite their extrapolation. With the thin city narratives driving the content of the maps and forming the basis for their projectual exploration, this research seeks to engage with the nascent city and offer to it an armature for its amplification that operates within

the city's delirium, its peculiarity, its distinctiveness.

Private city

The private city concerns an idea that public space is not a quintessential aspect of habitation in Perth. The vast majority of Perth's development has taken place since the introduction of private transportation. As in many modern cities, the car has been held responsible for dispersing the city's development pattern and dissolving with it notions of propinquity and collective space. Occupying an expansive plain, the footprint of the city is large and sparse; made for the most part of private houses on comparatively large blocks of land, its expansiveness permitted by the private vehicle. Strung out along the edges of the ocean and the river, the urban footprint is a linear one that attaches to geographical edges rather than gathering itself around the city's core. The parks that line these water frontages might be a better approximation of public space than any town square in the central business district. ▶



Wide city

The wide city is about the spatial openness of Perth and the visual constancy of its horizon and sky. The wide city is found in the gaps between the city's low, sparsely built fabric, and in the vast green breaks that perforate its plan and line its riverine and coastal shores. These gaps in the city's fabric trade the vertices and channelled views of dense development for pervasive openness, both spatial and visual. The concern for the wide city is the question of its permeability: the space between its thinly spread forms is generally negative space: setback, asphalt, lawn; and the green tracts that line its water bodies are usually made up of stretches of grass broken by parking lots. The wide city may offer a relationship to the sky, the wind and the horizon, but its opportunity for engagement is limited. Its role is more residual than opportunistic, more visual than performative. The open spaces that make up the wide city are not currently likely sites for encounter.

Even city

In the context of the thin development pattern of the wide and private cities, the even city presumes the region's plan to be regularly meted with civic, recreational and commercial programs. Being a vastly suburban city, tenuously spread and heavily codified, the even city also concerns a level of monotony in Perth's built form, a pattern of similarly scaled buildings on independent sites. The even city presumes uniformity and spaciousness

to govern the city's built scape, generated by a lack of differentiation in scale, density and hierarchy in its urban composition, with rare instances of verticality and compactness.

City of the immediate future

The city of the immediate future has two separate but interrelated concerns, one spatial and one temporal. Its spatial dimension lies with the outward extension of the region's limits in accordance with the demands of the private city through the release of new land and the proliferation of generic suburban townscapes.

The city of the immediate future describes the expediency with which parcels of housing emerge out of the sand at the outskirts of the city, and the usurpation of rural land that occurs there.

Its temporal facet concerns the rewriting of the core, in which modifications to the inner city are sometimes hasty, sometimes expansive, and often totalising in their effects. A readiness for erasure, coupled with a reluctance for staging, brings the immediacy of the periphery's development to operations on the core of the city. In both contexts, the city of the immediate future relies on the clean slate, dispensing with the past in the service of current ideals.

Reserve city

Reserve city grew naturally out of the activity of mapping, and the

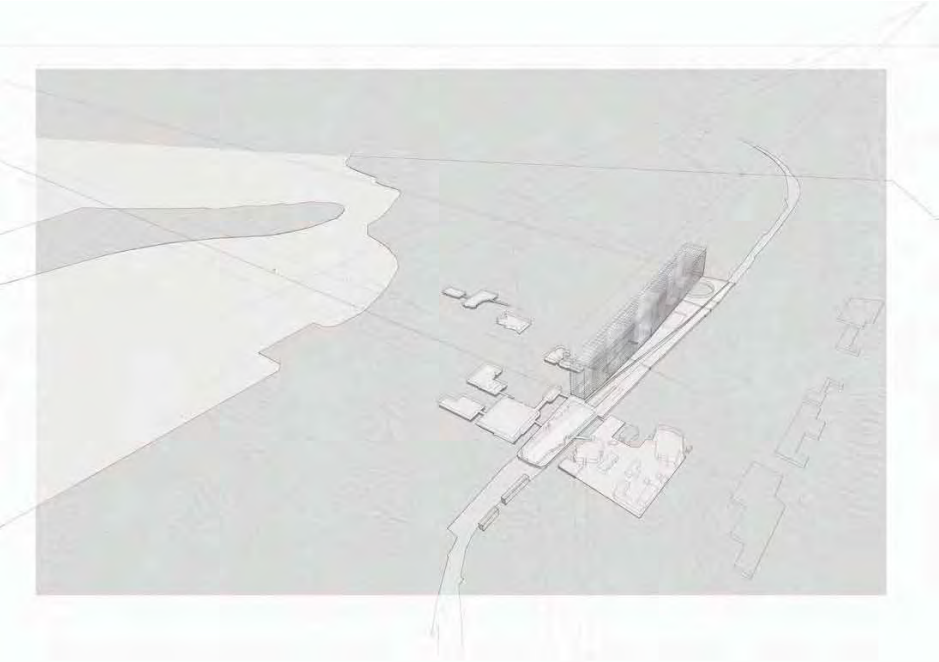
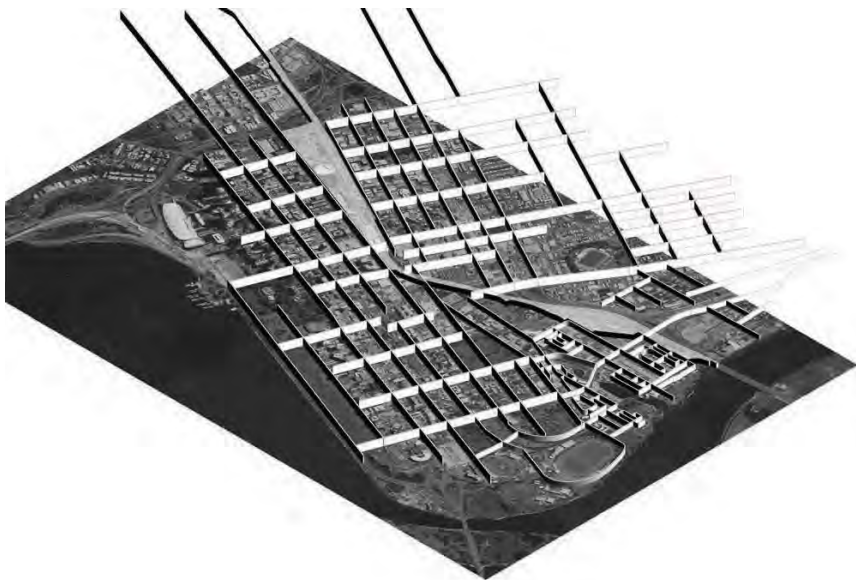
overturning of multiple unbuilt sites of varying roles, all called reserves. Parks, sporting fields, green setbacks of ocean and river, verges, adjacencies of road and railways – all referred to as reserves. Regardless of their type, reserves are spaces that are set aside for future development or precluded from development entirely: they are in fact preserved spaces. So reserve city moves beyond the plotting of sites of openness to identifying a mindset that surrounds them – an attitude of deferral, a reluctance to construct. In this sense, and particularly with regard to the substantial green frontages of the ocean and river, the reserve acquires not just a spatial significance but a cognitive one: a delirium for the unbuilt.

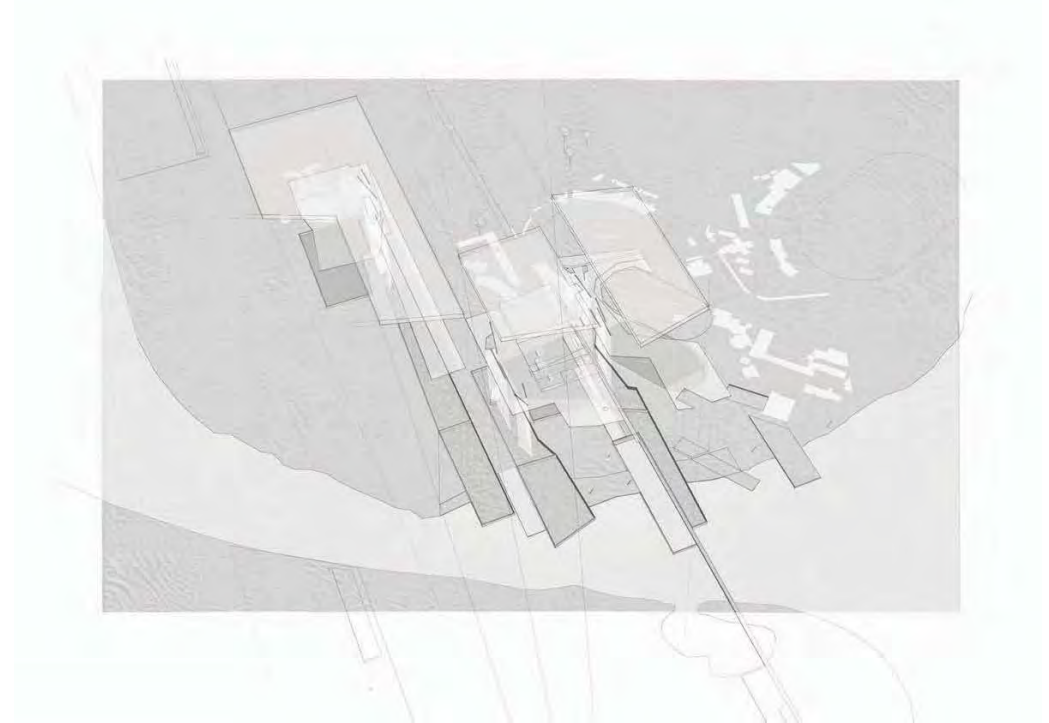
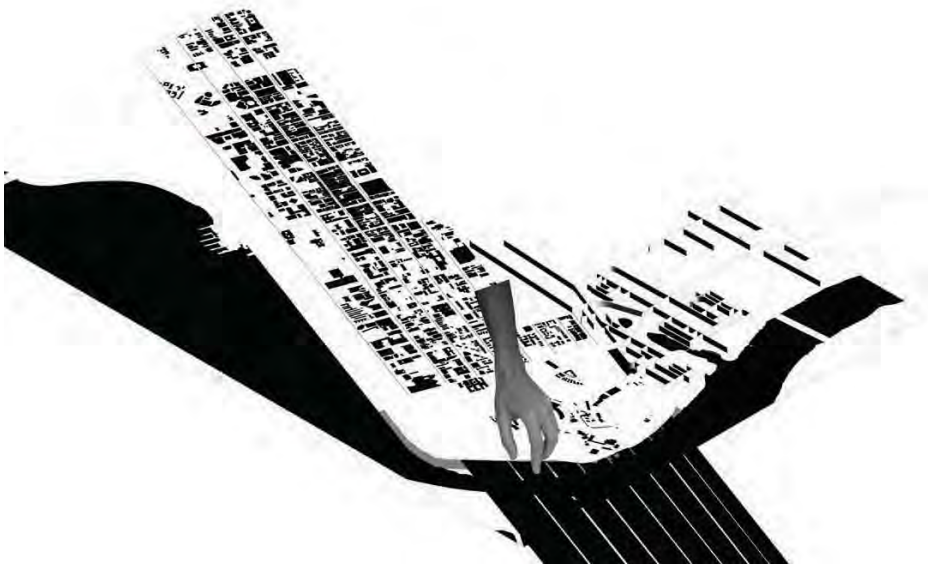
City of form fixation

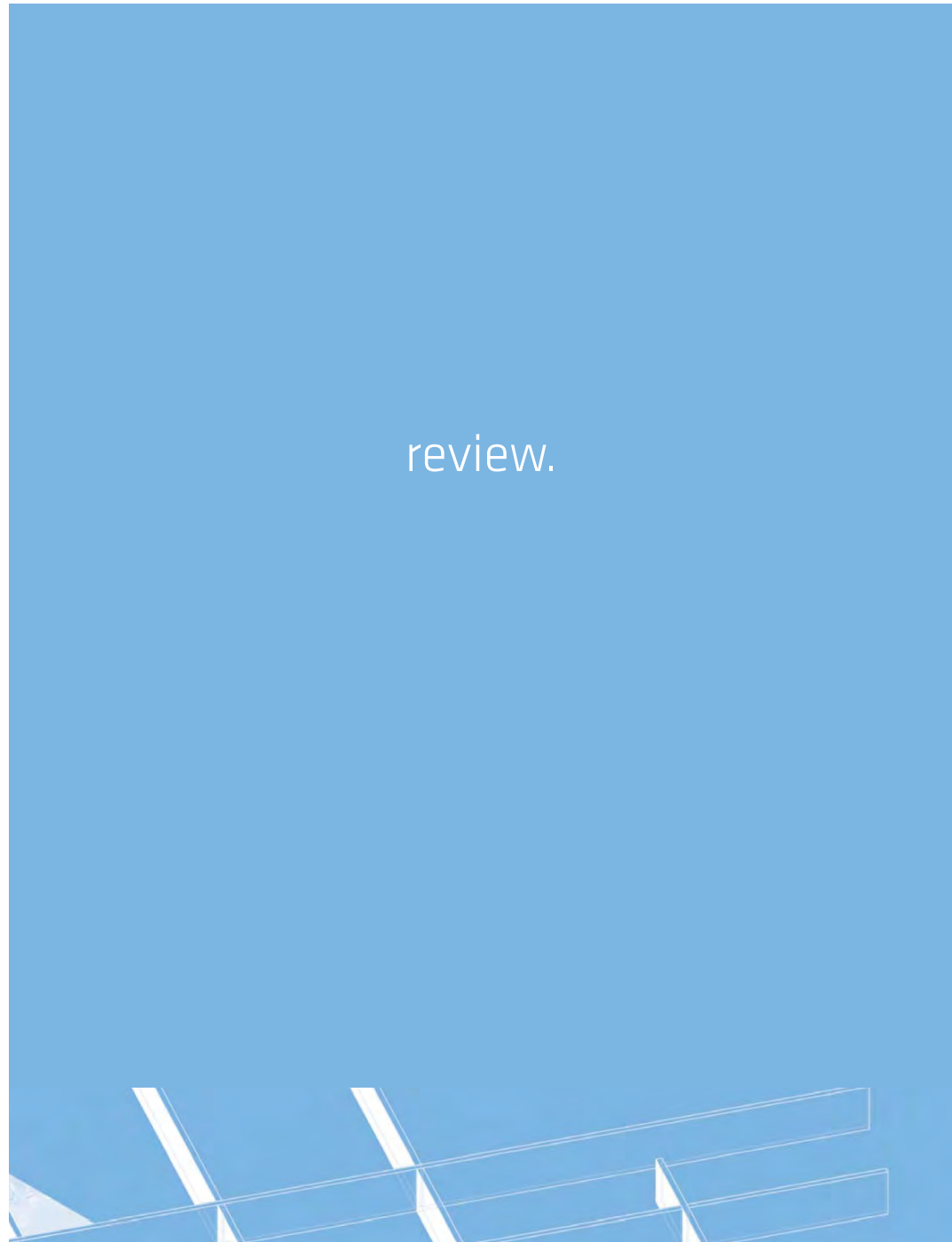
City of form fixation is a condition that derives from the wide, even spread of built form. It is about the architectural consequence of singularity that results from the division of plots of land and the regulated placement of buildings upon them. If each cadastral plot receives a building on its centreline, and each building is limited in height and distanced from each of its boundaries, then the building is objectified, the site is its plinth. If architectural fabric is generated through spatial continuity, then in the city of form fixation instances of urban fabric are few. ■

For the full PhD, please visit
<http://researchbank.rmit.edu.au/view/rmit:7877>

These narratives were delved into, mapped, critiqued and amounted finally to the development of propositions for peripheral sites around the city proper, where the greatest morphological forces are present. The following are key mappings and the speculative projects that sprung from them







northbridge evolution 2004 - 2015

Author **David McLoughlin**

The investment in the public realm in Northbridge, particularly at the corner of James and Lake Streets (now the Northbridge Piazza), over the past decade has seen significant change in the built environment.

Prior to the Piazza, this corner was occupied by the run down and dominant food court.

With the bustling Piazza and neighbouring developments now well established, it can be difficult to reimagine this space just ten years ago. Here, David McLoughlin presents a series of photographs taken in April 2004 and then again in April 2015, highlighting this dramatic transformation.





a new village in town

Author **Sarah McGann**

The Claremont Quarter, a joint venture between Christou and Hassell Architects, is one of the most significant developments in Perth's Western suburbs in the last decade. Its guiding urban design concept and impact on the established Claremont precinct is examined.

The project comprises a retail podium, popular in many Asian cities, with a four-storey apartment building set back on the podium, overlooking a landscaped swimming pool deck. The development is bounded by St Quentin Avenue, Bayview Terrace and by the railway to the north and consists of 30,000 sqm of commercial space, 700 sqm of office space, 79 apartments and 1450 car bays. According to Christou Architects the project engages a 'shopping village' concept in response to the existing streetscapes and creates new streets, malls and lanes to produce 'a village within a village'. It received a commendation in the Urban Design category in the 2012 AIA WA awards. The mixed-use development brings new businesses, workers and residents to this established area. Such densification, with apartment buildings along a primary rail transit route, is a strong investment into the suburb and into public transport in line with transit-orientated design principles. It provides a new population to support the local enterprises of retail, business and lifestyle.

Focusing here on the retail aspect, the architectural detail and quality is clearly evident. Inside the main street

of the mall the designers have used an intelligent articulation of scale, light and materials to create a contemporary and ultimately affluent feel. The scale of the building interior is generous and carefully controls the mix of single and double height spaces to bring natural light to the highly trafficked ground floor. A filtered roof light running the length of the mall provides natural light to the interior which assists in counteracting the negative impact associated with internalised space. This is contrasted with areas of 'shade' that lie under the mezzanine areas. The materials underfoot are street-like but soft. The decision to use an outdoor floor surface, striped in opposition to the mall length, is one that seems to work well architecturally, increasing the perceived depth and counteracting the linear voids made by the car park travelers.

In most malls found in and around Perth there is little access or integration with streetscapes, or views connecting to the context in which they sit. Shopping centres, such as Karrinyup or Morley, consist of large, mainly blank, volumes surrounded by a sea of parked cars and can feel impenetrable to the local or pedestrian. According

to Dovey (1999), these sorts of centres are 'inversions' of the city. The liminal space of these shopping centres distorts time, climate and any sense of place through this disconnection with any local context.

Unlike such shopping centres the Claremont Quarter nobly forgoes commercially-proven disconnection to create a new 'Square' and 'Lane' that lead off the inside mall to engage with the locale. The Square addresses the St Quentin streetscape, provides a visual break in the podium volume and creates an outdoor pause or gathering place. This space is overlooked by the upper level mall and by a café that opens to it, providing visual activity and passive surveillance. The Square is effectively the pedestrian 'streetfront' of the centre. The Lane connects to the Square through the mall and is the 'back lane' access to the railway station via the back-of-house, car-focused elevation of Gugerri Street. The Lane comprises a collection of restaurants with outdoor settings that line an articulated and furnished laneway. Arguably, it could be seen as an open-air mall that provides a curated high-end alternative to the jaded food court concept. Described as 'lifestyle' malls these sorts of spaces

replicate authentic public streets in a privatised zone. The sense of place is orchestrated to provide cohesion and the right commercial mix that suits the target consumer.

However, the positioning of the Lane, and its connection to the Square, provides a 'shortcut' that increases the level of permeability and accessibility for the pedestrian and railway traveller. According to Jacobs (1965), urban vitality is dependent on this sort of urban permeability and shortcutting through cities. In contrast, though, the main mall seems more like a huge cul-de-sac running lengthways from Bayview Terrace and ending at the market-style fruit and vegetable shop at the far end. Similarly the underground car park creates another type of vertical cul-de-sac by directing shoppers to emerge directly into the centre of the mall from below and retreat back down to their car through the travelator without entering the 'real' streets of Claremont.

In the case of the Claremont Quarter, the impact of the city 'inversion' with its integrated parking is most evident in the now outlying parts of Claremont. During my recent Sunday lunchtime

visit I noticed that there was a marked difference between the ghost town of the once-bustling Bayview Terrace and the throngs of people walking, shopping and eating in the internal mall and along the Lane. Despite the beautiful day, Bayview Terrace was empty. From an urban perspective the semi-pedestrianising of this streetscape has had a strange deserted effect on the place. Street-art sculptures are used as traffic-stoppers and contribute to the highly-directed one-way car signage that feels unnatural and over-controlled. Bayview Terrace has become a strange sort of dead end that lacks the urban vitality it once had. As a result of this, and the obvious competition of the mall and its car park, many of the shops on Bayview show considerable signs of commercial stress; closed, closing-down, for lease, or popping up. In contrast, and drawing on Dovey's analysis, there are no signs of failure in the mall. Made up of largely the same collection of (successful) chain shops as every other mall, the aesthetic is of upbeat messaging that is highly controlled, mostly of sales and success.

It is worth considering that while Bayview Terrace is feeling the pressure of losing its village-centre status and is

undergoing change; new opportunities for innovation and diversity become available. The wave of pop-up shops, quirky (non-franchise) cafes and small bars that have grown popular around Perth could conceivably reignite the area in a more organic, less controlled, perhaps more authentic way. The aspiration of creating 'a village in a village' is a worthy one, but one that needs innovative enterprise, and reasonable rents to sustain both the inner and outer village in a complementary way. ■



Image: Bo Wong

bellevue terrace / philip stejskal architecture

Author **Brad Ladyman**

There is a wonderful simplicity at play in this national award-winning alterations and additions project by Philip Stejskal. Yet the discipline and sophistication behind its particular architectural simplicity is astonishing. The formal structure and materials used are economical with regard to the small budget; however the project is crafted in a manner and methodology that combines pragmatism, intuition and artistic mastery. The project won the prestigious Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) national award for the Residential Architecture – Alterations and Additions category amidst a strong line up of architects.

I met Philip and the client at the project, who were kind enough to talk me through it and the strong connection and collaborative spirit between the two parties was immediately clear. Philip's design for this small extension adds a new 'enclosed verandah' and sunken bathroom to an existing 1890's narrow lot townhouse. The volumes are designed in a way that deals with

multiple architectonics such as inside-out transition/level transition, framing the views to the garden, privacy and ventilation. The journey to the rear yard is via an arrangement of gradating steps blurring the interiority/exteriority with habitable thresholds.

The spaces are flexible, with operable openings that can be adjusted as desired. The building envelope extends the visual experience and folds around the narrow site, defining space and unravelling the journey. A room cantilevers and projects itself towards the rear yard, providing a delightful corner window seat, and a moment for contemplation.

Interestingly the project was entered and awarded under the 'Small Project' category for the WA Awards, but for the national awards it came under the 'Alterations and Additions' category.

Overall there is a direct, clear and effective diagram that responds to the levels, climate and history of the

site. A minimal palette of materials defines the spaces utilising steel-framed timber cladding and veneer, FRC and tiled elements, timber decking and brick paved plinths to resolve form and function and show evidence of astonishing architectural proficiency. In a way, the three-barrel planning diagram in this instance makes the space feel larger, rather than condensing it.

This delightful project embodies and expresses a regional pragmatic neo-modern approach to contemporary Australian design with an emphasis on palpable experience. Philip Stejskal represents a new generation of practitioners who demonstrate strong capability and ambition for creative and innovative architectural design in WA.

This project won the 2014 AIA (WA Chapter) Small Project Architecture Award and the AIA National Award for Residential Architecture – Houses (Alterations and Additions). ■



Images: Robert Frith - Acorn Photo

bread in common / spaceagency

Author **Hayley Curnow**

This state and national award-winning refurbishment and re-occupation of a historic building in the heart of Fremantle initiates a dual use as artisan bakery and restaurant, compatible with and sympathetic to the existing built fabric. The thoughtful approach to the site and program was influenced by 'slow food' and the simplicity and hand-made quality of artisan bread-making. Spaceagency assumed the role of custodians, gently re-appropriating the building whilst allowing its narrative to continue.

Located on Pakenham Street, the building was originally constructed as a pharmaceutical warehouse at the turn of the century and later functioned as a marine services workshop. The building is included on the Fremantle Municipal Heritage Inventory; however only the front façade was deemed worthy of conservation. Numerous interior alterations and additions had resulted in a grimy, makeshift labyrinth, yet Spaceagency recognised its potential, engaging a team of local tradespeople to re-awaken the space.

The artisan bakery occupies the back section of the open warehouse and is semi-enclosed, subtly divided from the remaining warehouse by a series of custom-made bread trolleys and a chain-link curtain. The bakery underpins the operation and conceptual narrative of the restaurant, acting as a touchstone for the simplicity and craftsmanship exemplified throughout the space.

The open timber-trussed dining hall epitomises the dim, lofty qualities of the converted warehouse. Filled with communal dining tables, the hall creates a warm and welcoming interior that facilitates the sharing of simple, well-cooked food. In a subtle nod to the 1900s, a collection of Edison bulb pendants hangs dramatically from the exposed rafters, imparting a warm, candle-lit quality throughout the dining space, and loosely defining secondary seating areas that provide moments of intimacy in this communal setting.

The dining hall celebrates the industrial warehouse typology, whilst softening its character through a number of transformative, bespoke elements. Customised steel shelving references the manufacturing language of the former marine services workshop, bespoke French oak dining tables by Paul Morris of Join are crafted from disused brandy distilling vats, whilst carpets silk-screened onto the exposed aggregate floor by artist Angela Ferolla soften the space and are intended to wear over time. The original wall dividing the bustling, open kitchen from the dining room is maintained, including five high level window openings. The kitchen is lit by the building's original steel light fittings that emit a bright, industrial glow over the workbenches.

The 'back of house' facilities extend under a mezzanine level and are articulated by a series of rammed-concrete walls using recycled concrete from demolition work on site. Above,

the mezzanine provides an informal lounge and an intimate dining room with a circular 'chef's table' offering views to the kitchen below. An urban garden occupies the former loading bays in front of the warehouse, supplying produce for the kitchen. The garden activates the street as a beacon for the contained warehouse, whilst offering an alternative to the ubiquitous alfresco experience.

Spaceagency reflect simplicity and craftsmanship in this thoughtful warehouse conversion. The restrained material palette, rigorous attention to detail and collaboration with allied disciplines to create bespoke design elements enhance the richness of the existing built fabric without overwhelming it. The resulting aesthetic is refined and understated, contributing to the evolving identity of Fremantle.

This project won the 2014 AIA (WA Chapter) Margaret Pitt Morison Award for Heritage, the AIA (WA Chapter) Julius Elischer Award for Interior Architecture, the AIA (WA Chapter) Architecture Award for Commercial, the AIA (WA Chapter) Monduluce Lighting Award, and the AIA National Award for Interior Architecture. ■



Image: Stephen Nicholas

sussex street / mountford architects

Author **Carly Barrett**

Mountford Architects have been quietly working away since their inception in 2006, but a recent slate of extraordinary residential projects is changing that.

The practice was founded by Ben Mountford who, being locally trained cut his teeth on large projects on the east coast of Australia before returning to Perth to set up his practice. Ben also gained early construction experience working with his father, a residential builder. This formative knowledge of construction and craftsmanship has helped Ben distinguish his practice locally, establishing a distinctive architectural style that is warm and livable, embracing light and dynamic form.

I was privileged to visit two of Mountford Architects' recent projects as part of last year's Open House Perth event. Both locations were inundated with hundreds of visitors, a testament to quality of the designs. Paddington Street, completed a couple of years ago is the renovation of a 100 year old cottage in North Perth that introduces light and sculptural space into a small site. Sussex Street was completed just in time for the event, and is perhaps one of the most intelligent projects I have seen in its subtle incorporation of ESD principles which drove the design process. Visibly, the architectural form and materiality dominate one's

initial perception but behind this there are a number of sophisticated environmentally sound practices.

Located on a small (295 sqm) block, the home was designed for a single semi-retiree who placed importance on comfort, sustainability and long-term affordability. The client was well versed in ESD principles and sought an architectural solution that responded to existing site vegetation and orientation. The result is a 160 sqm two storey, two bedroom home elegantly situated amongst existing trees which provide shade and protection for the home's exterior, whilst exceptional views from well placed windows internally provide a verdant outlook for the occupant. The home incorporates thermal massing, sun-shading, low energy fittings, rainwater and greywater harvesting, permaculture gardening, plantation timbers, micro-climate enhancing vegetation, and the list goes on.

Mountford Architects sought to embed low-tech sustainable initiatives within the design to enhance both the spatial and the environmental quality of the project. The result is not overt but rather an example of how clever use of orientation, construction techniques and material selection can come together with spatial dynamism and poetry.

Steel and timber-framed construction allowed for an efficient open plan living area with a raked double height ceiling that subtly references the home's industrial context. The emphasis that was placed on sustainable materials inspired the use of exposed beams, charcoal burnished slab and white walls that provide the new home with textural patina the belies its age, whilst minimising material usage and heat gains. Its also within this main space that we see Mountford Architects employ light as an additional material, taking the project into the realm of the exceptional.

This project also exemplifies a change in mentality. While around 95% of new homes in WA are by project home builders, and the average size per new dwelling over 245 sqm, Sussex Street bravely opposes this status quo in a way that is both inspiring and edifying.

Mountford Architects predominantly engage in single residential projects but have recently taken on apartment building and commercial fit-outs, showcasing their capacity to undertake a variety of project types. With a number of new homes on the drawing board it is clear that an ever-growing portfolio of high quality projects is set to raise the profile of Mountford Architects even further and distinguish the practice as a key contributor to WA's residential market. ■



is perth fixed?

Author **Andrew McDonald**

In the more than seven years I have been running the blog *The Worst of Perth*, the city has completely transformed. It's one of the most amazing few years in the development of Perth since the gold rush era. Historians many years in the future will study this period intently, perhaps from the comfort of a driverless Hover-Commodore.

These few years have changed the place from a bit of a joke to a real city. What those future historians will make of *The Worst of Perth* blog, now quietly being archived by the State library is anyone's guess. Thousands of original photographs of blighted cocos palms, blue skies, yellow sand, outrage and poor spelling. The comprehensive collection of the city's ephemera should be the basis for a remarkable thesis.

And what has really been the essence of the change? Was it that Perth finally reached a critical size where different areas of the city can grow with unique characteristics? Was it enlightened Government policy? Or was it just the small bars?

It really does seem to have been the bars! And the culture that went with them, including things like the Fringe Festival. Although, with a ratio of one small bar to 5 drinkers, can our livers take any more vibrancy?

Crude graffiti tags are giving way to murals. We have the traffic problems of other stylish cities. The bike racks are almost as designed as Barcelona's. But will we miss the times when spray painted genitals covered every surface? Will Commodores crashing into houses be our nostalgia? Or will Hover-Commodores still crash into virtual bedrooms a hundred years from now? Although the character of the city has changed, the built environment remains a bit of a disappointment. Eaveless west-facing mansions still roast in the sun, pumping out hot air. Important heritage buildings are still falling. I'm astonished that there was not enough imagination to transform the wonderful FESA building into a boutique hotel. The few heritage wins still have to pay for their preservation with glass boxes jammed in behind them.

The city still lacks the stunning architecture to match Perth's resurgence. The dumping of the indigenous cultural centre at Elizabeth Quay was a real loss. A magnificent landmark building could have been the making of Perth. Instead, we are going to get glass towers for accounting firms. It's time for the architecture to match the life of our new city at domestic and corporate level.

When I started *The Worst of Perth* blog, we didn't know what vibrancy was, but we knew we didn't have it. Now, we still don't know what vibrancy is, but we think we might have some. Possibly a lot. More than Dunedin maybe.

It's time for our architects to take Perth into a glorious 'Post Vibrancy' future.

The Worst of Perth is an arts, culture and satire blog that has been documenting the City since 2007. The architecture and built environment of Perth is a frequent and popular topic. *The Worst of Perth* is run by comedian Andrew McDonald and journalist David Cohen. ■

