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(Un)loved Modern 2

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Cover photo: Original entrance passage to one of the Farfor Flats, 1968 by Robin Boyd
(Source: Boyd and Strizic, 1970, *Living in Australia*)



Editorial (Un)loved Modern 2

Scott Robertson, Guest Editor

This is the second issue of Historic Environment devoted to the papers delivered at the 2009 Australia ICOMOS (Un)loved Modern Sydney conference. The themes of the papers in this issue deal with the problems of conserving, adapting, and updating housing.

Theo Prudon gives an historical background to the development of public housing in the US commencing in the interwar period, the legislative underpinnings of that housing and the eventual withdrawal of government from the provision of public housing. Prudon's case studies of public housing estates and buildings examine the Modernist manifesto of the influence of the built environment on improving, not only the standard of living, but the behaviour of those living in those buildings. He examines the fate of Alison and Peter Smithson's Robin Hood Gardens in London where the Modernist argument was turned against the preservation of the building by the UK government in stating that the neglect and vandalism of Robin Hood Gardens was symptomatic of how the building had failed to provide a quality environment for its inhabitants.

Rebecca Hawcroft examines the work of émigré architects working in Sydney in the two decades following World War 2. Architects, Hugh Buhrich, Henry Epstein, and Hans Peter Oser had arrived in Australia prior to the war, fleeing the Nazi anti-Jewish persecutions in Germany and Austria. Hawcroft discusses how the three established their practices initially within an émigré community, how their efforts to practice were sometimes thwarted by the architectural establishment and how their works are emerging from obscurity through current investigations and re-evaluations of the "(un)known" architects who, for various reasons, had not been included in past histories of the development of Modernism in Australia.

David Jones' paper on Moral Rights under the Copyright Act exposes a larger question with respect to Modern architecture. In discussion with Peter Muller, Jones reveals the argument that heritage and Modernism are not comfortable bedfellows. Muller contends that, once the original client moves on and, therefore, the circumstances that informed the brief for the building have changed, the preservation of the building is not justified. This reflects the Modernist ethos of designing to satisfy a brief with a building closely following the programmatic function. Neither this ideology nor the Moral Rights legislation examine the rights of the community to preserve what is important to it and what has influenced that community's existence and development. In other words, how much does a designer "own" the designed building and how much does the community "own" it and have the right to preserve it into the future, even against the wishes of the original designer?

Hannah Lewi presents the results of her research into the preservation of Modern iconic houses as house museums. She examines the status of Modern heritage houses as 'historical documents' and the role they play in the ongoing formation of architectural histories of Modernism and

her research investigates how conservation, interpretation and display strategies have been modified to the particular circumstances of Modern houses, in contrast to older and more 'traditional' heritage properties. Curators try to balance the architectural and design integrity of the building with the need to engage the public through a "humanisation" of the building and the telling of stories.

Peter Lovell examines the problem of preserving the significance and design intent the modest, single family modern house when faced with the pressures of upgrading the house to modern standards of services, finishes and space. The very elements of Modern design are those that militate against listing under conventional heritage criteria (such as context within the street where Modern houses often were designed to turn their back to the street to create private, sunny living areas facing North or the rear of the site). Lovell presents a case study where his practice transformed two of Robin Boyd's Farfor Flats from holiday units to full-time residences; retaining the "essence" of Boyd's design where the "substance" could not be preserved.

The preservation of buildings often requires compromise and alteration to meet present-day standards and requirements. Modern buildings present a greater challenge, not just because of their tight programmatic functionalism, or transitory materiality but because they are still considered to be recent and, therefore not heritage, and not loved.

Editorial photo: The early Modern heritage house as a tourist commodity. Robie House by Frank Lloyd Wright, 1908-10, University of Chicago, Illinois, USA.
(Photo: Scott Robertson, 2011).



Contributors

Rebecca Hawcroft

Rebecca Hawcroft has been a Sydney based heritage consultant for the last ten years, most recently with Godden Mackay Logan Pty Ltd. She holds a Bachelor of Arts and a Masters of Heritage Conservation from the University of Sydney. She has extensive experience in the assessment and management of heritage sites. Rebecca began her study of Modernism and the European émigré community during her Masters degree and has developed it in conjunction with her consulting work and during time spent on the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) NSW Heritage Committee.

David Jones

Dr David Jones is a Professor of Planning & Landscape Architecture in the School of Architecture and the Built Environment at Deakin University and foundation director of their planning and landscape architecture programs. A former Honorary Secretary of Australia ICOMOS, and chair of the Australia ICOMOS's *20th Century: Our Recent Cultural Heritage Conference* (2001), he is active in tangible and intangible cultural landscape research about South Australian and Victorian place and designer/originator, whether Indigenous or Post-Contact European, he has co/authored numerous conservation studies including the *Adelaide Park Lands & Squares Cultural Landscape Assessment Study* (2007) that provided much of the evidence for the recent National Heritage listing of the Adelaide Park Lands.

Hannah Lewi

Dr Hannah Lewi is an Associate Professor at the University of Melbourne where she is the Associate Dean research, a lecturer and researcher in architecture history, heritage issues and new media and design. She is currently a vice-chair of Docomomo Australia, and co-edited the book *Community: Building Modern Australia*, UNSW Press in 2010. Other recent publications have included guest editor and co-author of a special issue of *The Journal of Architecture*, Routledge, UK devoted to 'Keeping the Past Public'; and Lewi and Smith, 'Hand-held Histories: using digital archival documents on architectural tours', in *Architecture Research Quarterly*, Cambridge Press, 15:1, 2011.

Peter Lovell

Peter Lovell is a Director of Lovell Chen. He is a graduate of Melbourne University and qualified with a Bachelor of Building Degree. Over the past 30 years he has established himself as a key participant in the building conservation field and has been involved in many aspects of conservation practice. His professional activities include long standing membership of

Australia ICOMOS and past participation in the Executive, and membership of various heritage organisations. He is currently a member of the Archaeological Advisory and Technical Advisory Committees of Heritage Victoria.

Theodore Prudon

Dr Theodore Prudon is a Dutch-born architect and principal of Prudon & Partners, a New York firm specialising in restoration. As the founding president of Docomomo/US, Prudon leads the US branch of the international organisation dedicated to preserving Modernist structures and neighbourhoods. He went through the preservation program at Columbia University and has been teaching in the program for over 30 years. He was trained as a Modern architect, and, over time, the two interests of preservation and designing new structures combined. Prudon is an adjunct associate professor of historic preservation at Columbia.

He has recently published a book, *Preservation of Modern Architecture*, which is an international overview of the state of preservation of modern buildings and sites, including a discussion of activity in Australia and an overview of the Burra Charter.



Modern housing redux: the (un)loved and the (un)learned

Theodore Prudon

Abstract

This paper examines the perceived failure of Modernism as an appropriate architectural expression for public housing despite the social agenda of Modernist architects in their housing schemes. Policy and financing decisions by successive US administrations have moulded the form of public housing in the US which, in turn, has influenced subsequent political decisions to provide social housing within a free market context. US and European examples illustrate the fraught path of Modernism in public housing and the on-going threat posed to architectural icons through lack of shared vision and lack of social infrastructure and on-going physical maintenance.

Introduction

Two recent events highlight the theme of (Un)Loved Modernism and a particular typology: modern housing. The first one is the continuing interest, dialogue, debate and decisions around Robin Hood Gardens in London and the subsequent rejection of listing by the Secretary of State and second, a housing charette organised by the Graduate School of Architecture and Planning at Columbia University in New York (figure 1).¹ These two seemingly unconnected events are directly correlated to the premise that is the subject of this conference. Quality of life, or the lack thereof, is a common theme in any of the (Un)Loved Modernism discussions and the architecture alone is blamed for the so-called failures.² That argument is particularly used against many of the modernist housing complexes, and surfaces again against Robin Hood Gardens' heritage listing perpetuating myths about modern architecture (figure 2).³

When considering the theme of (Un)Loved Modernism, it seemed more interesting and challenging to focus on one specific issue: modern housing. In the last couple of decades various other modern building typologies have been the subject of great concern and many preservation battles everywhere but housing, especially social or public housing, has hardly been part of the preservation debate and its battles.⁴



Figure 1: Columbia University, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Housing Charette, June 2009, students and faculty at work. (Photo courtesy Deirdre Gould, 2009)



Figure 2: Robin Hood Gardens, Tower Hamlets, London. Architects Alison and Peter Smithson, completed 1972. View from the landscaped inside court towards one of the wings. (Photo courtesy Andrew S. Dolkart, 2011)

It is important to place housing and its preservation, especially in the United States, in the broader context of American modernism, which followed a somewhat different path than in most of Europe. While the exhibits at the Museum of Modern Art in the 1930s would suggest considerable influence, aside from some younger proponents like Wallace K. Harrison and Edward Durrell Stone or the first generation of European immigrants like Richard Neutra, Rudolf Schindler or William Lescaze, the architectural, intellectual and philosophical influence of the European émigrés and their modernist ideals was not really felt until after World War 2.⁵

The Great Depression of the 1930s, with its severe financial restrictions and heart-

wrenching homelessness, impelled a more active and greater government interest in housing policy, health, safety and welfare. Early housing advocates, such as Catherine Bauer, published extensively on the types of social housing built in Europe.⁶ Prior to World War 2 new policies were introduced and housing was constructed in the context of various New Deal initiatives. However, it was the housing needed near war production and armament facilities during World War 2 that changed old production methods and, for pragmatic reasons, forced the abandonment of earlier stylistic interests in favour of a simpler and more modest modernism: need, time and money. Against this wartime backdrop and the subsequent post-war housing needs for returning soldiers and the desire of the American corporation to portray an aura of efficiency and modernity, modernism is accepted – sometimes reluctantly. The housing debate in the US even today remains mired in the question as to what the role of government and the private marketplace should be.

In the 1950s and 1960s American transportation infrastructure such as highways and airports was expanded as well as the civic infrastructure in the form of large urban renewal projects with construction of new public buildings, office buildings and new housing projects. There were some low-rise residential projects, but there were also many multi-storeyed examples. The objective was to provide decent and affordable housing for many: a goal reminiscent of the policy ideals set out in the 1930s. Once again American practitioners and policy makers tended to look for inspiration towards Europe, especially the UK with its New Town developments. Hence, in the mind of the general public, modern architecture became visually associated with post-war housing and office developments. Subsequently, the rejection of massive urban renewal and the conditions in public housing caused a backlash against what was seen as the failure of modern architecture in general. Simultaneously, preservation emerged as an opposition and regulatory force advocating the value of nineteenth century neighbourhoods, which were so often the victim of those urban renewals. The social and political changes of the 1970s and 1980s created an undeserved aura of failure that directly affected the perception of post-war housing in the US and many other western countries. General public opinion did not 'like' modern architecture creating an historic legacy that has made the preservation of modern architecture in the US not easy and that of public housing almost impossible.⁷

Housing in the US: prior to World War 2

While circumstances and reasons may vary somewhat from country to country, an increase in population and decreasing employment in agriculture in the second half of the nineteenth century caused migration to the urban and industrial centres. In Europe and America the ever larger number of people living in destitute and unhealthy circumstances, combined with

unscrupulous and unfettered real estate speculation maximising density and rents, resulted in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. Housing reformers demanded better services and more decent, affordable housing. Government agencies initially interceded to combat infectious diseases by enacting measures such as building codes and zoning laws, and began to provide municipal services such as running water, sanitation and utilities.

The nineteenth century attempts to improve the quality of worker housing often originated as charity or employer-sponsored small settlements, but the beginning of the twentieth century saw not only regulatory and political change but also a greater participation of the architectural and design community. In addition, technological advancements and the rationalisation of the building industry allowed the production of more readily available materials and prefabrication of larger sections to whole buildings, which, in turn, helped reduce construction time and, presumably, costs by reducing the amount of required skilled labour. The moral and social implications, in tandem with technological advancements, inspired many modern architects. Reinforced concrete and steel permitted changes in construction and affected plan layouts by alleviating the need for load-bearing walls and enabling large strip windows and simple detailing which came to define much of modern design.

The changes, however, extended beyond aesthetics, policies and technologies to new forms of living. In many ways, the 1927 Weissenhof housing exhibition in Stuttgart, Germany with dwellings by Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, J. J. P. Oud, and others, presented contemporary ideas of living in different housing typologies ranging from freestanding single family residences to row houses and apartments. This exhibit introduced the modernist design aesthetic and publicised its social benefits and financial advantages to half-a-million or so attendees who visited the exhibition in the summer of 1927.⁸

Other developments in the 1920s influenced the design of modern housing until well after World War 2. The formation of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) in 1928 in La Sarraz, Switzerland is one such event. Its focus on housing, the minimum dwelling and urban planning influenced many architects, among them Jose Lluís Sert (who later designed Peabody Terrace at Harvard and housing on Roosevelt Island in New York). In continental Europe, in the aftermath of World War 1, England and Germany built over one million units, the Netherlands provided housing for one fifth of its population, and the newly established Soviet Union took on the responsibility of housing its citizens wholesale (Jackson 1985:220).

Many US housing advocates studied these European developments and the role of government and influenced local, state and federal government agencies in the US to implement similar legislative reforms and infrastructural upgrades. With a suspicion of Socialist-sounding ideas, an absence of the physical devastation and housing shortage of Europe post-World War 1 and an emphasis on private enterprise, housing tended to remain private undertakings initially involving unions, benevolent societies, and philanthropists and later private developers. Only the large municipalities like New York City and Chicago would get involved in building housing directly. The Great Depression and its homelessness did propel housing into the national spotlight, both as a moral obligation and as an economic stimulus, with the adoption of relevant legislation indirectly introducing the practical and economical aspects of modern design. "The National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 had four goals: to increase employment, to improve housing for the poor, to demonstrate to private industry the feasibility of large-scale community planning efforts, and to eradicate and rehabilitate slum areas 'to check the exodus to the outer limits of cities with consequent costly utility extensions and leaving the centrally located areas unable to pay their way.'" (Jackson 1985:221). Though the threat of suburbanisation to the cities was already apparent in 1933 and a cause for concern, by 1945, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) housing policies contradicted the goal stated here. These so-called federal New Deal programs addressed the housing problem three-fold: one, direct building of housing units; two, providing subsidies for building public housing to localities; and, three, legislation to stimulate private investment in the housing market. In many ways the housing debate in the last decade has given rise to the same issues.

One such example of building housing and providing employment was the Greenbelt Town Program, which demonstrated Garden City ideals of decentralisation and open space living. Other initiatives were more incidental such as those of the Farm Security Administration or the Tennessee Valley Authority where housing programs were incorporated in broader economic assistance or development efforts. These projects provided some young architects with opportunities to experiment with efficient house plans and economic building methods designed to create small, mass-produced single-family and low-scale residences. Similarly, the public housing of the 1930s and early 1940s, built and operated in cities by local housing authorities through federal subsidies, utilised the suggestions of housing reformers like Catherine Bauer (1905-1964) and Edith Elmer Wood (1871-1945) who were inspired by European examples, mostly in Scandinavia, Germany and the Netherlands. Whereas most of the Federal efforts were concerned with low-rise single family occupancies, the urban housing authorities generally built high-rise apartment structures.

One of the major federal initiatives of the 1930s was the formation of the FHA⁹. With its various guarantees and financing it was able to impose minimum design and construction standards, including minimum space standards, indoor plumbing, light and air, and electric appliances. These standards sought to prevent substandard housing and protect FHA's investment. While establishing a minimum quality it also tended to result in many similar neighbourhoods with small, traditional-looking houses that reflected examples published in the various FHA bulletins.¹⁰ Although the FHA programs re-energised the construction industry in the late 1930s and early 1940s until America's entry into World War 2, its major impact was on post-war developments.

Housing in the US: post World War 2

In both Europe and the United States, housing construction came to a virtual standstill during World War 2, and in the US emphasis shifted to mobilising the war effort and constructing immediate (semi-permanent) housing next to manufacturing plants, ship yards, and military installations. Innovative and quick means of satisfying housing needs were put to use; experimentation with prefabrication and new or unusual materials was encouraged to meet the demand for new buildings. This wartime effort, with its mass production and distribution of standardised parts, had a direct impact on the post-war housing boom: the building process changed to obtain greater efficiency and lower cost (Albrecht 1995). Aside from big cities where (private) high-rise residential construction tended to prevail, most of the post-war development took place in the suburbs with its single family houses built, not for rental, but homeownership which, in many instances, was made possible through FHA guaranteed financing (Hayden 2004a:128-153).

In this context it is important to understand US housing policy as it evolved in the decades before and after the war. FHA guaranteed the security of mortgages and attached minimum standards for design and construction to those guarantees. Separately, the mortgage interest deduction designed to stimulate home ownership resulted in a tax break for the middle class and was a *de facto* middle class housing subsidy. This essentially two tier housing system continues to drive much of the housing industry in the US.

While the mortgage guarantee was a nationwide policy, other programs – even if federally funded – operated through state and local agencies and housing authorities. Funding was used to support housing authorities directly or the private market through rent vouchers for eligible families and individuals. In some states, rent subsidies were made available through state agencies independent of federal funding. However, most of those projects were withdrawn from these particular programs and converted to market rate-based developments.

Against this background we must place the post-war suburban developments and the construction of urban high rise housing and the demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe housing complex in St. Louis as a starting point and explore how the view of public housing has evolved, culminating more recently in a program titled Hope VI (figure 3).¹¹ This program, accepted by many housing authorities across the country, including Chicago, has resulted in the demolition of older

housing projects to make way for low-rise townhouse-like developments. In some instances, the publicly-supported housing was dispersed over a larger area in an attempt to create economic and housing diversity. The planning and development itself has an anti-modern tinge suggesting a solution intentionally diametrically opposed to the 'failed' model of Pruitt-Igoe and visually inspired by the retro-look favoured by New Urbanism. Critics have called this "public housing through gentrification."

Housing in the US: suburban and low-rise developments

Key to the post-war developments is the continued emphasis on home ownership as the solution to the housing needs. This has affected the design and preservation of housing in general and that of multi-storey residential structures and public housing in particular. This, in many ways, is epitomised by post-war suburban development, which, even when financially supported by government, concerned – with very few exceptions – not rental housing but home ownership, the so-called American dream to which so many generations of Americans have aspired.¹² Three examples, Greenbelt, Maryland; Levitttown, New York; and Mar Vista, Los Angeles may serve as illustrations of this phenomenon (Prudon 2008:239-268). This, combined with the myth of the failure of Pruitt-Igoe as architecture, has coloured the debate, not only in housing but also for preserving modern architecture in general.

Greenbelt, just outside Washington DC, was planned and built by the Federal government between 1935 and 1938. It is a rare surviving example of pre-war housing policy, a model of comprehensive planning of a new community, and almost modern looking.¹³ While some 20 greenbelt towns were authorised, only three were constructed close to large urban or industrial centres.¹⁴ In the Maryland example, housing was rental and managed by a non-profit organisation or local co-operative intent on preserving the original goals and character of the development. In recognition of its significance, Greenbelt, Maryland was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1997 (Shprentz 1999 and Coffin & de Winthuysen Coffin 1988). Continued development encroaching upon the town has affected much of the original town.¹⁵ By keeping construction methods and materials simple, employment could be provided to relatively unskilled labour but probably increased its relative cost.¹⁶ The original 1930s housing stock was significantly expanded in 1941 and 1942 with an additional 1,000 residential units as defence housing. After the war, government agencies retreated from direct housing ownership and management. Greenbelt towns were transferred to non-profit societies or local housing authorities.¹⁷

The Maryland National Park and Planning Commission wrote in 1956: "Greenbelt may fall short of present day standards of housing design, and the row house may not be the dwelling type now most in demand, butin many respects it is still, after 20 years, the best example of suburban community designed for the automobile age" (Knepper 2001:122). The influence of Greenbelt as a planning example continued in the 1960s and 1970s when James Rouse established his two new towns at Reston, Virginia and Columbia, Maryland.

The post-war Levittowns, were a stark contrast to the pre-war Greenbelt towns and were entirely private developments that became synonymous with post-war suburban development in America. The original Levittown, on Long Island, built between 1947 and 1951, provided some 17,000 small houses intended for returning World War 2 veterans and their young families. Built in two stages, the initial 2,000 rental units, so-called Cape Cod-style houses with a 25' x 30' (7.6m x 9.1m) floor plan on a 6,000 square feet (550m²) lot, along gently curving streets conformed to FHA guidelines for good neighbourhoods (Kelly 1993:17).¹⁸ Kelly talks



Figure 3: Pruitt Igoe Houses, St. Louis, Missouri. Architect: Minoru Yamasaki, completed 1956 and demolished March 16, 1972. The complex consisted of some 33 eleven story buildings with about 2870 apartments. (Photo courtesy State Historical Society of Missouri, 1972)



Figure 4: Levittown, Long Island, New York. Built between 1947 and 1951. View of a typical street showing the original houses have been changed and adapted.
(Photo courtesy of Flora Chou, 2007)



Figure 5: Mar Vista, Los Angeles, California. Architect: Gregory Ain, designed and completed in 1947-48. View of Beethoven Street with original houses to which discrete additions have been made.
(Photo courtesy Flora Chou, 2007)

about Levittown as being for working/ lower middle class at first, but introducing the idea of ownership and American dream to a broader group which then had the opportunity to change/ gain equity and mould the house to their needs over the years. In 1948 the second phase introduced the so-called “ranch”, which was modelled on the California house to be able to compete better in quality. Twenty five-year deed restrictions, included to obtain FHA-approvals, simultaneously ensured a code of acceptable behaviour and taste for an aesthetically harmonious community. The restrictions not only limited sales by race but also prevented hanging laundry to dry on the weekend when men were home from work, banned fenced- in backyards, limited the size, shape, and colour of additions and remodelling.¹⁹

Nearly all of the 17,447 Levitt houses have been expanded and remodelled, and additions, roofs, storeys and dormers have been added to reflect the changing profile of Levittown’s residents, and it retains little of the homogeneity that lent its original identity (figure 4). Still, it remains the model of the quintessential suburban community and the efforts of immediate post-war housing.

In the Mar Vista development, the third example, architect Gregory Ain managed to create a diverse yet cohesive streetscape through variations on a single

basic plan and different orientations vis-à-vis the street as well as by incorporating public landscaping by Garret Eckbo (1910-2000), one of America’s pre-eminent modern landscape architects (figure 5).²⁰ While the initial plan envisioned some 100 houses, FHA was reluctant to approve such modern house designs out of fear that it would affect the resale value. Only 52 homes were approved to gauge interest and marketability in sales. “The builders were told time and again to intermingle ‘colonial, Cape Cod, Italian, Spanish and what have you’ with a few modern dwellings. After months of plugging, the project was finally accepted on condition that only half of it be built at a time, to see how the houses sold” (Adamson 2002:57 and Anon 1947:128). The relatively high cost, and probably the non-traditional, that is modern, design, contributed to slow sales and therefore the financing of the second 50 did not receive FHA approval (McCoy 1984:129-130).

Mid-twentieth century suburban housing developments of somewhat traditional design appear to have been what represented (and perhaps still do) the ideal for many Americans regardless of economic resources. It is in this context that it is easy to understand why living in public housing represented more of a stigma than as an amenity or social benefit. The subsequent ‘failure’ of multi-storey housing, whether Robin Hood Gardens or Pruitt-Igoue, further exacerbated an already existing perception.

Multi-storey residential buildings

While multi-storey residential buildings, from the midsize walk-up tenements to the fifteen- and twenty-storey apartment houses, had become important as housing for the urban poor by the beginning of the twentieth century, unregulated dense, substandard developments remained prevalent. It was not only because of catastrophes and health emergencies that action would be taken. Humanitarian concerns began to foster activism for better housing regulations. In Europe the acute need for housing after World War 1 created the political will for significant governmental action and attracted many young European architects to design well-planned, efficiently built and cost-effective social housing. While most of this pre-war housing was low-rise, CIAM's work in the 1920s and 1930s, and the visions of Le Corbusier in particular, became important in shaping the design of post-war housing and its construction.²¹

In the US the subsidised or public housing that did occur before World War 2 tended to be low-rise except in the major urban areas where multi-storey buildings were primarily aimed at improvement of urban housing conditions for the 'deserving' working poor. In 1937, the United States Housing Authority was established to provide subsidies for slum clearance and housing construction in the urban centres. This spurred the creation of local housing authorities to receive federal funds and build clean, decent, modern housing resulting in simplified and less ornate masonry apartment houses of small to medium scale utilising labour intensive and simple trade construction methods in order to provide as many jobs as possible. However, compared to Europe, this involved only a small number of housing units.²²

After World War 2, the United States government continued to focus on providing subsidies for municipalities to construct low-income, medium to high density housing, but to a lesser extent than the direct or indirect support for home ownership and suburban development. Because funds were often tied to slum clearance in Title 1 of the 1949 Housing Act, much of this assistance went to the urban areas, where the tight space and density requirements necessitated multi-storey apartment buildings that, throughout the 1950s, became increasingly taller and larger in scope. Tall towers with cruciform or star-shape plans with a central core, as seen in Le Corbusier's *Plan Voisin* of the 1920s, or with narrow slabs with double-loaded corridors or an open-air gallery, earlier proposed by Gropius in his 1929 and 1930 lectures at CIAM, became technologically and materially possible, not to mention more economical and customary.²³

While representing only a small fraction of the housing constructed in the 1950s, the simply detailed high-rise apartment towers grouped on a superblock site came to be seen as synonymous with public housing in the minds of the general public although most of the public housing units were built as two- to four-storey structures (von Hoffman, nd). The relocation and upheavals for people caused by the demolition of existing, if blighted, neighbourhoods, together with the declining quality of the replicated designs and the use of inexpensive building materials, the forced demographic and societal changes and, finally, the lack of (economic) diversity and opportunity, changed an initially positive impression of modern housing into a negative one by the end of the 1960s.²⁴ This negative perception and discomfort with high-rise housing was somewhat limited to low income projects but did also affect more moderate income ones. Projects such as Chatham Towers in New York and Marina City in Chicago were privately constructed but the land was often acquired through the previously mentioned Title 1 provision in the 1949 Housing Act. Construction of this type of affordable or middle-income high-rise housing was an attempt to entice the middle class lured by suburban life back to the cities. Unfortunately, the backlash against the destruction of those communities and the new construction that emerged fuelled the preservation movement in the US.

Much of the more innovative multi-storey housing built in the US in the decades after the war was not only aimed at housing the 'deserving' poor. Various states and municipalities also sought to stimulate construction of affordable housing in larger urban communities like Roosevelt Island in New York City or Cedar Riverside in Minneapolis, both examples of an interesting mixed income housing development in the spirit of the English new towns made possible through innovative federal funding.²⁵

While private construction of high rise multi-family housing for middle to upper middle class urban living continued in the major urban areas, the building of low income housing was largely abandoned by the middle of the 1970s and replaced mostly with rent subsidies. In the last decade, townhouse-type low rise buildings, almost as an amalgamation of suburban development and the nineteenth century townhouse, have replaced high rise development.

In Europe, the years immediately following World War 2, saw a severe housing shortage caused by physical destruction and a lack of new construction. High-rises were technologically possible and more economical because of the use of reinforced concrete. Le Corbusier, for instance, realised some of his theories of urban building in the vertical stacking of modular housing units in his 1946-1952 *Unité d'Habitation* project in Marseilles, France, while the 1957 *Interbau* Exhibition in the Hansa quarter of Berlin adjacent to the old Tiergarten demonstrated the new urban housing possibilities in some 45 new residential buildings designed by as many as 51 architects from 30 different countries, including Alvar Aalto, Le Corbusier, and Oscar Niemeyer. The area has since been heritage listed (Dolff-Bonekämper and Franziska Schmidt 1999). Both private and public sector housing increased exponentially in the 1960s as did high-rise modern towers aided by public monies or subsidy policies for both low and middle-income populations (Wynn 1984:2-3). Other countries, including England, Germany and the United States were also more active.²⁶

The 1972 demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe development in St. Louis symbolised a turning point and became an icon of failed public housing signalling the end of consistent support for high-rise public housing in the US (figure 3).²⁷ This perception is not limited to the US as the destruction of projects in Chicago (Cabrini Green),²⁸ Glasgow (Red Road) or Amsterdam (the Bijlmermeer) demonstrates (Doctor 1997 and Brierley 1997).

Many post-war multi-storey housing projects still exist across the world and, regardless of the country, seem to present one of the most difficult problems in the preservation of modern architecture. The lack of maintenance or the initial lack of quality combined with the minimal standards for size and amenities, the subsequent social issues such as isolation, crime and lack of social services and employment opportunities in the respective communities that are not economically diverse, are presenting powerful negative factors. However, on the positive side, the continued and growing need for affordable housing, the rise in real estate values and a general movement of people returning to cities have created a new demand and thus new opportunities for preserving this architecture in a meaningful and useful way. It is here that the preservation of modern architecture can play a role not only in helping to keep a substantial portion of the existing housing stock, that can and should be improved, but also can serve, even more importantly, as lessons to be learned from past public housing endeavours.

In a practical sense the preservation of the individual high rise building faces considerable limitations when compared with low-rise residential architecture. The early to mid-twentieth century multi-storey building unit size is often quite small by contemporary standards, its structural system quite rigid, its services fixed, its amenities limited and its site lacking enough space to expand and adapt to new needs. As a result, the preservation and continued use of many of these buildings is possible only by accepting the existing configurations or combining units, and implementing technical and physical upgrades where possible. To illustrate different conditions and strategies some case studies, while not all public housing per se when viewed from its ownership, are presented here to demonstrate how continued use and preservation may be accomplished successfully using the social and financial policies in effect at the time of renovation.

Modern housing case studies: Chatham Towers, Peabody Terrace, and the Raymond M. Hilliard Center

In the last decades buildings have not remained in the original or institutional ownership and attempts have been made to privatise much of the originally social and subsidised housing by either turning it over to the occupants or to investors.²⁹ The case studies, Chatham Towers in New York; Peabody Terrace in Cambridge, Massachusetts and Raymond M. Hilliard Center,

Chicago, are examples of mid-century projects created for particular occupant groups; moderate income, married students and low income and subsidised residents, respectively.

Chatham Towers, close to Manhattan's Chinatown and Civic Center, are two medium-height Brutalist concrete towers planned as affordable or market rate housing (figure 6). Started in 1960 and completed in 1965 the project was one of the many private but subsidised initiatives of the time created under Title 1 of the 1949 Housing Act (Anon 1964a). The project was made possible through the efforts of several organisations and credit unions. I.M. Pei designed apartments for New York University and a 420-unit, middle-income housing project named Chatham Green, which is directly to the east of Chatham Towers.³⁰



Figure 6: Chatham Towers, New York, NY. Architect: Kelly and Gruzen, completed in 1965. Brutalist concrete buildings constructed as affordable housing remains today. (Photo courtesy Jennifer Ko, 2007)

The design was the work of a group of younger architects at Kelly and Gruzen and included a landscape design of the plaza and adjoining playground by modernist landscape architect, M. Paul Friedberg, which provided the transition from the towers to the street (Anon 1966a). Chatham Towers received awards from the New York AIA citing its "originality of concept and use of materials in the planning and design" and was hailed as one of thirty-eight most important buildings constructed since 1850 in New York (Anon 1966b and Fried 1967). Fifteen years following the completion of the towers, the critical acclaim remained constant.³¹

The buildings have not received any local or national designation as a historic resource because of its residents' reluctance toward regulatory guidelines that may come with local designation.³² Residents have adapted interiors to accommodate their changed expectations and taste which was possible because all partitions were constructed in plasterboard (Rozhon 1994). Finally, because of the possibility to make changes and the demand for housing in New York remaining so large, Chatham Towers will retain its value while the regulations underlying its co-operative ownership moderate extensive exterior alterations.

The Francis Greenwood Peabody Terrace was intended for married students at Harvard University and is the first large housing project in the US designed by Josep Lluís Sert (1901-1983) then a practising architect and dean of the Graduate School of Design at Harvard.³³ (Figures 7 and 8) Given Sert's work with Le Corbusier and his active involvement in CIAM, notably as its president from 1947 to 1956, it is not surprising that the project shows a European influence. Whilst widely acclaimed upon completion and greatly liked by architects and designers, reviews from former occupants have been mixed.³⁴ Located along the Charles River in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the project has 500 residential units,



Figure 7: Peabody Terrace, Married Student Housing, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Architect Josep Lluís Sert, completed 1964. View of the complex from across the Charles River. (Photo Theodore Prudon, 2007)



Figure 8: Peabody Terrace, Married Student Housing, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Architect Josep Lluís Sert, completed 1964. View of the rear elevation showing the horizontal strip windows of the galleries where the elevator stops at every third floor. (Photo Theodore Prudon, 2007)

for which design began in 1962 with the first units completed by 1964. The urban plan still remains an excellent example of modernist urban planning and seeks to actively connect the new urban neighbourhood to its surroundings through its massing. The massing was deliberately created to achieve the most economic solution possible with a density of 60 to 80 units per acre (148 to 197 units per hectare).³⁵

In 1993, after some 30 years, the entire complex was renovated and included work on the exterior and upgrading of the kitchens, bathrooms and interior finishes. The infrastructure systems remained largely unchanged. Sprinklers had been added earlier to comply with fire safety codes. Because there are no concealed spaces (vertical ducts or dropped ceilings) all sprinkler piping and fire alarm systems and electrical conduits had to be surface mounted.³⁶

There is little doubt in the minds of the design community that the complex deserves preservation, but the critique levelled against the project today is indicative of arguments in general. The complex is still generally liked and admired by architects and designers, but

found less attractive by many others (Cott 2003).³⁷ Vegetation in and around the complex has matured and the neighbourhood character has changed because of many new additions (Hale 1974:73-77).³⁸

Standing well apart from public housing's stereotypical image of drab high-rise slab towers are the circular and curved towers of the Raymond M. Hilliard Center in Chicago, designed by Bertrand Goldberg (1913-1997) (Buck 1964:B9). Built from 1962 to 1966, Hilliard Houses, as it is

known, consists of four residential towers for families and seniors and one low-rise community building on a 12.5 acre (4.8 ha) site located 3 miles (4.8 km) south of Chicago's downtown Loop (figures 9 and 10). The residential towers have distinct round forms that are reminiscent of Goldberg's celebrated corn-cob shaped Marina City towers along Chicago's waterfront or his Prentice Women's Hospital at Northwestern University (now demolished). The Hilliard Center is a statement not only about Goldberg's architectural and engineering ingenuity but also his views on the important role of architecture in society. The hallway and common spaces were meant to foster community and mutual aid to the senior residents who may require physical or emotional support (Blum nd:193-194).



Figure 9: Richard M. Hilliard Center (now Hilliard Towers), Chicago, Illinois. Architect: Bertrand Goldberg, completed 1966. View of the residential high-rises with community facilities in the foreground. (Photo courtesy Flora Chou, 2007)

By the time Bertrand Goldberg began designing the Raymond M. Hilliard Center, public housing in Chicago had already come under scrutiny for its poor management, institutional design, racial configuration, and patronising approach toward the population it was seeking to serve. The New Deal-era public housing projects in Chicago had combined progressive goals with practical job creation for architects and construction workers. The resulting superblocs, filled with multiple high-rise buildings covering only 10% to 20% of the sites, reflected the 'towers in the park' image and the belief that a change in environment would improve the behaviour of the residents.³⁹ Because of the problems in the earlier projects in the 1950s and early 1960s in the mould of Chicago's infamous Cabrini-Green project, the Hilliard Center met with some resistance at the onset of its approval as "extending a ghetto" of public housing concentrated along South State Street in the South Side of Chicago (Buck 1963:E4).

Bertrand Goldberg received the commission in 1963, shortly after the completion of his Marina City towers, which was built for a labour union seeking to keep residents in the central city as a way to retain jobs for its workers. Goldberg was able to incorporate his strong social and political beliefs into his architecture with that project. When attending the Bauhaus and later working for Mies van der Rohe in 1930s Germany, he had begun by examining shapes and forms structurally superior to rectangles (Blum nd:151 and Cook & Klotz 1973:122-146). He could design a space as needed with "the line of enclosure drawn around it." (Goldberg 1969:258).

The Hilliard Center was a public housing project, owned and operated by the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) but financed with federal monies, which required minimum unit sizes, quality of amenities, and design innovations.⁴⁰ The unorthodox design met strong resistance from the federal public housing authorities, which apparently characterised the design as "too good for the poor." Goldberg was told to redesign the project and he was even offered an additional fee. Charles Swibel, then the head of the CHA, who had been involved with obtaining the land for Marina City, convinced the federal authorities to allow the design to proceed (Blum nd:196). Despite the attempt to use good design to salvage the image of high-rise family housing, the Hilliard Center was the last significant, tall family housing built by the CHA. When offered a choice, only a handful of original residents agreed to return after its rehabilitation.⁴¹ Currently some 55% or 350 of 654 available units remain classified as affordable low-income housing; the other 45% or 305 units continue to serve as public housing to the same population of seniors and families as before.⁴² In an effort to distinguish the complex from its earlier public housing image, it was renamed Hilliard Towers Apartments. While Hilliard Center was not without its share of problems, it never generated the contempt seen at other CHA projects. In fact, during the overhaul of CHA's housing projects which began in the late 1990s Hilliard Center was the only CHA high-rise residential buildings not slated for demolition.

In 1999 when Holsten Real Estate approached the CHA about acquiring the Hilliard Center, the buildings were in a dilapidated state: one of the family towers had been mothballed due to low occupancy, as had the upper floors of the other three towers. Initially retained as the



Figure 10: Richard M. Hilliard Center (now Hilliard Towers), Chicago, Illinois. Architect: Bertrand Goldberg, completed 1966. View of galleries with the entrances to the individual residential units. (Photo courtesy Flora Chou, 2007)

management company, Holsten now owns and operates the complex but the CHA retains a land lease, which has covenants to ensure affordability of the housing as well as address the historic significance of the buildings. The buildings were listed on the National Register in 1999 as part of the Raymond M. Hilliard Center Historic District. The original landscaping by Alfred Caldwell (1903-1998), a noted Chicago landscape architect and frequent Goldberg collaborator who also designed the landscape at Marina City, was retained and many of the original trees remained though additional plantings were installed (Blum nd:176).⁴³

The Hilliard Center rehabilitation strikes a careful balance between practical use and historic preservation. The simplicity of these buildings, the result of public housing guidelines and attitudes of the 1960s as well as the structural and design experimentation of the architect, makes its significance and preservation relatively easy to argue but adaptation to current expectations of residential comfort more difficult. The rigidity of the original structure as witnessed in the poured in place concrete walls between bedrooms and the living room, made dismantling the partitions to create more spacious rooms difficult and costly.

Other housing initiatives: “New Town-In Towns”

Housing policies in the 1960s and 1970s underwent a number of changes. One such change was the introduction of the New Town in Town program. Earlier in 1966 the US Department of Housing and Urban Development established the Model Cities initiative made possible by legislation enacted by Congress. The program was part of President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society and War on Poverty initiative and redirected urban renewal efforts to pay more attention to improvements of both the physical and the social infrastructure. While the Model Cities Initiative was abandoned in 1974 it underwent a number of changes and additions in the following years including the addition of a program called “New Town in Town”. These

initiatives sought not only to stimulate the construction of new public housing but to do this in the larger context of community development. The two best known examples of these policies are Cedar Riverside, Minneapolis, Minnesota⁴⁴ and Roosevelt Island, New York.⁴⁵

The redevelopment of the Cedar Riverside neighbourhood in Minneapolis was under discussion for some time. Several local developers had begun purchasing property in the neighbourhood as early as 1962 and Ralph Rapson (1914-2008), then the dean of the architecture school at the University of Minnesota, was retained as the project architect.⁴⁶ The design team also included urban planners Barton-Aschman and landscape architect Lawrence Halprin (1916-2009) in addition to others.

The first plan, unveiled in 1968, which continued to be developed in the following years, did envision five neighbourhoods with a total of some 12,500 residential units, 1.5 million square feet (135,000 square metres) of commercial space and extensive recreational space and parkland. Only 1,299 units were built before the project



Figure 11: Cedar Square West (now Riverside Plaza), Minneapolis, Minnesota. Architect: Ralph Rapson, completed (first and only phase) 1973. View of the towers.
(Photo courtesy Caroline Stephenson, 2009)

stopped because funding for the federal program was cancelled in 1974. Initial financing came from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development in the form of loan guarantees, while in 1973 additional financing was granted under the New Town-in Town program.

Because all utilities and services were planned and built to the planned larger scale, many of the maintenance challenges and improvements necessary today are the result of this intended larger scale and the inexpensive construction. Today the project is owned and operated by a private developer with an agreement with HUD to maintain the rent-subsidised apartments through its voucher programs. In the current economic housing climate, the voucher program, ironically, provided the private owner a steady cash flow not so easily achieved in a fully commercial rental project. Today Cedar Riverside continues to function as a housing project and is probably the largest Somali community in the US (figures 11 and 12).



Figure 12: Cedar Square West (Riverside Plaza), Minneapolis, Minnesota. Architect: Ralph Rapson, completed (first and only phase) 1973. View of one of the interior urban spaces designed originally by Lawrence Halprin. (Photo courtesy Caroline Stephenson, 2009)

The site is architecturally different from the surrounding neighbourhood of academic and cultural institutions and is physically segregated because its interior urban spaces are elevated above street level to accommodate a large parking garage underneath. Because the project was never fully realised, the planned physical connections (bridges and paths) were never built. Entrances and stairs designed to reach the elevated inner urban spaces are closed either for security reasons or because of dilapidation. Unfortunately, the urban spaces themselves have lost many of the original features and elements typical of a Lawrence Halprin-designed interior urban environment. Cedar Riverside is in no immediate danger and seems to fulfil its basic function. However, the need for investment to complete infrastructure and architectural upgrades will put considerable pressure on the complex and possibly its occupants in the future.

The other example of the New Town-in Town program was Roosevelt Island in New York City. The two projects have fared quite differently not in a small part due to their location. On Roosevelt Island the master plan, developed by Philip Johnson and John Burgee in 1969, was envisioned to be much larger than Cedar Riverside when finished. The first phase, Northtown I, designed by Sert and Johansen and Bhavnani was followed in 1989 by the construction of Northtown II to the designs of Gruzen Samton. Finally Southtown also by Gruzen Samton was completed in 2004. This last phase included luxury condominiums (figures 13, 14 and 15).

Of the two New Town In-Town projects, Roosevelt Island resembled the ideals of the program most closely. While the census in 2000 still reflects that ideal of the economically and racially diverse community, the subsequent completion of the luxury housing has affected the



Figure 13: Roosevelt Island, New York, NY. Architect: Masterplan, Johnson & Burgee; first phase, Northtown I, Jose Lluís Sert and Johansen and Bhavnani; Northtown II, Gruzen Samton, 1989; Southtown, Gruzen Samton, 2004. View taken from Queens with Manhattan in the background. (Photo courtesy Harris Graber, 2011)



Figure 14: Roosevelt Island, New York, NY. View along the East River. (Photo courtesy Katherine Malishevsky, 2011)



Figure 15: Roosevelt Island, New York, NY. View of Main Street with 19th Century church and housing dating from phase I. (Photo courtesy Katherine Malishevsky, 2011)

original mix but the island continues to be a successful and desirable residential community.⁴⁷

Returning to Robin Hood Gardens, Tower Hamlets, London⁴⁸

While the American examples seem to be the result of different policies and cultural preconceptions, the underlying issue of devising policies and strategies to provide decent housing to the economically disadvantaged is shared by all initiatives. Much of the building stock we are dealing with today dates from the 1960s and 1970s when public housing was seen as one of society's responsibilities. In one form or another the projects resulting from those policies have come under pressure either to be demolished to make way for low rise traditional schemes, changes in ownership or wholesale renovation or sale. While the American debate is limited (the earlier mentioned Columbia University charette being the beginning of such a debate) the discussion around Robin Hood Gardens and the arguments offered for its demolition are instructive and are worth thoughtful consideration that may help to structure the debate.

After completing architecture school, Alison and Peter Smithson joined the London County Council at the end of the 1940s before establishing their own practice in 1950. The design for the Robin Hood Gardens Complex was started at the end of the 1960s but did not proceed without complications and aggravations.⁴⁹ The project consists of two long parallel rows flanking an open area in the middle. The open area was the subject of considerable study in the design process and many of the early illustrations feature a variety of activities in this area, which was conceived as a 'stress free zone' away from the noise and action of the surrounding city. Many of the early studies focus on the acoustics and sightlines in the communal area and their benefits.

The buildings themselves are stacks of mostly duplex units with an internal stair reached from broad galleries every three floors. Referred to as a 'streets in the sky', the galleries are reminiscent of other earlier projects. All the exteriors are constructed out of high quality precast concrete panels reflecting the Brutalism stylistically prevalent in the UK at the time and which can be found in use in other post-war housing projects in London (figure 2).⁵⁰

The project was refused listing or landmark status and, in addition, a Certificate of Immunity was issued, which precluded the possibility of listing for five years.⁵¹ The rationale given for that refusal is of most interest in this discussion about housing. Aside from the discussion of criteria that recognise the prominence of the Smithsons, the intellectual underpinnings and the interest of the internal urban space with its evocative landscaping, most of the critique is directed on the relative significance of the Gardens in the context of the Smithsons' *oeuvre*, the uniqueness of the project as housing and under the category "Influence and critical evaluation" a discussion of the flaws of the project. It is there that a critique of public housing is inferred and which can be read to be applicable to many of the projects described in the earlier sections:

He [the Secretary of State] considers that it would be contradictory to provide social housing that was not a good place to live. He also notes that the Smithsons' intended to foster a sense of community, particularly with their use of street decks, which further persuades him to conclude that the overarching aim of Robin Hood Gardens as a social housing project was to provide a decent place to live. Whether Robin Hood Gardens was a decent place to live is consequently relevant to his review.⁵²

The Robin Hood Gardens housing complex had been scheduled for demolition. The ensuing preservation battle has been indicative of the many opinions and the differences between the proponents and critics of public housing in particular, and the preservation of modern architecture in general.

Arguments of this sort also permeate the public housing discussion in the US and are equally used to justify much of the demolition. There is no question that standards in every aspect of life have changed and these changes warrant attention. However, as some other successful conversions and adaptations have shown over the last three decades, and is evident in some of the case studies outlined above, these issues are not insurmountable. On the contrary, it offers new challenges and opportunities as the studies around Boston City Hall or even Robin Hood Gardens have shown (Powers 2010).

More specifically, two aspects are discussed further in the above quoted letter: one, vandalism (not specifically defined as to what it is) and, the much more arbitrary argument of the effectiveness of the design. To attribute vandalism to the design of the buildings is, at best, incongruous and already decried at the time by Alison Smithson. The effectiveness of the design argument is probably the reverse of the earlier ideal that by providing decent housing people could improve socially. So conversely the failure to improve social behaviour can be assigned to be the failure of the design of the building.

While the suggestion that the opinions of the residents should be taken into account is important, it sidesteps the real issues. The views of the residents are about the quality of life, which may involve some criticism of the building's design but are more likely to concern ongoing safety and a complete lack of adequate maintenance. This does not eliminate the need and obligation to bring housing to contemporary standards as much as possible as would be the case with any building. However, heritage decisions should not become post-occupancy evaluations by transient groups of occupants for purposes of justifying demolition but rather as an incentive for improvement. By placing any consideration of listing outside the realm of possibility for five years, the very notion of preserving the recent past, as an evolving process as history so clearly demonstrates, is negated and, almost, an incentive is provided inviting demolition. Finally, buildings and people evolve and changes to the design can be made and conditions can be adapted without losing the spirit of the buildings. As Nicolai Ouroussoff, the architectural critic of the *New York Times* writes:

Architecture attains much of its power from the emotional exchange among an architect, a client, a site and the object itself. A spirited renovation of Robin Hood Gardens would be a chance to extend that discourse across generations.⁵³

Conclusion

While much of the discussion has been addressing the aspect of housing and its preservation, first and foremost in the US and its particular political, economic and regulatory circumstances, the parallels with the Robin Hood Gardens story are, in many ways remarkable. However, the question of what needs to be (Un)Learned remains to be reintroduced in the on-going housing debate. While there may be differences in financing and ownership structures, when comparing today with earlier times or making comparisons between countries, it does not change the basic requirements or public responsibilities either socially or economically. It is what the Robin Hood discussion can teach us and the Columbia charette attempted to address.

It is up to us to learn from the past and embrace our (Un)Loved heritage.

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Endnotes

- 1 The purpose of the Housing Charette: Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Columbia University, New York, June 12, 2009, was to initiate a debate and dialogue about public housing in the literal sense of the word. Aside from the acknowledgement that the term 'public housing' needs to be de-stigmatised, the main questions addressed were: why is the word 'public' in housing not be interpreted and valued in the same vein as infrastructure like in public transportation and secondly, what should the government do to stimulate the construction of much-needed affordable housing? In many ways the ideas explored were part of a discussion that has been ongoing in the US since the 1930s. The terminology to describe public funded and owned housing varies from country to country. In the US the term 'public housing' generally refers to rental housing for economically less advantaged groups of the population that is owned and operated directly by a government entity. However, today support for housing is mostly through rent voucher programs, financing or loan guarantees for privately developed and owned properties. Even some of the traditional government housing authorities are seeking recourse in private developments, a process that is lauded by some for its presumed efficiency and effectiveness and questioned by others because of fairness, financial incentives and ultimate concerns for real improvements and affordability.
- 2 There are many exceptions to this argument. For instance, a complex that is a direct contrast to Robin Hood Gardens is Alexandra Road Estate in West Hampstead, a Grade II* listing. The project is generally liked by its occupants, who were instrumental in its listing (Freear 1995).
- 3 The arguments are laid out in more detail in the letter from The Culture Team of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on behalf of the Secretary of State dated 13 May 2009 addressed to Jon Wright, Case Officer, Twentieth Century Society and signed by Lauren Warren, Heritage Protection Policy Advisor.
- 4 For a general discussion about post-war mass housing in different countries, see Glendinning 2008, Glendinning and Muthesius 1993 and Harwood and Powers 2008.
- 5 See Hitchcock and Johnson 1995. This edition with its new foreword by Philip Johnson was originally published under the title *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922*. It also contains a reprint of an article by Hitchcock looking back twenty years later in 1951. Most of the examples are European and include several low-rise and multi-storey housing complexes as well as a chapter on Siedlungs.
- 6 Catherine Bauer (1934) describes not only various housing policies and projects in different European countries but she also states on page 213: "Architecture is the Social Art".
- 7 Some of the general issues involved in the preservation of modern architecture as well as some case studies may be found in Prudon 2008.
- 8 The Weissenhof housing exhibition was organised by the Deutscher Werkbund, a German association of architects, designers and industrialists, which was founded in 1907. The project, financed by the City of Stuttgart, was to demonstrate that modern design could be used effectively to address the housing crisis in Germany. Mies van der Rohe, who was in charge, invited 16 architects from around Europe to build prototypes of mass housing using new materials and techniques. The cluster of houses and apartments brought together the work of some of the most progressive and ultimately some of the most influential architects of the twentieth Century. See Pommer and Otto 1991 and, Kirsch 1989. Several of the buildings also appeared in Hitchcock and Johnson 1995 and, thus, in the 1932 Museum of Modern Art exhibit.
- 9 The primary mechanism for government involvement, and the key agency to much of the housing developments in the post-war era in the US, was the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). Started in 1934 as part of the National Housing Act, FHA programs sought not only to stimulate the building of housing by private industry but also to support the hard-hit construction industry and the beleaguered banking industry during the Depression. To this end FHA insured the loans banks made to builders for home

construction, as well as the long-term mortgage loans made to individual homeowners. By insuring the mortgage loans and limiting the banking risk, it was hoped that more loan funds would be available for the home building industry, bolstering the construction industry and the possibility of more favourable terms opening a better chance for home ownership to the working class (Jackson 1985:204). Prior to the Depression, mortgages were limited to 40 to 60% of the appraised value, meaning a prospective homeowner had to provide at least a substantial down payment and/or apply for a second mortgage. The FHA-insured mortgages covered 80-95% of the value, allowing a much lesser down payment. Additionally, the average length of a mortgage was 5 to 10 years and not fully paid off, or amortised, at the end of the term. Homeowners had to refinance for the remainder of their mortgage, but risked foreclosure if financing was not available. These terms were more favourable for the banks, but made homeownership risky for the owners as well as for the banks, limiting homeownership to the upper and middle classes. See Jackson 1985:195-205 and Wright 1981: 240-242.

- 10 FHA published guidelines for house and neighbourhood design to ensure designers and planners consider certain issues, like space planning, orientation, street layout, etc., in projects that would receive FHA approval. In its 1939 manual *Planning Profitable Neighborhoods*, the FHA recommended against tightly packed, straight grid neighbourhoods with narrow 40' x 100' (12 x 30m) lots in favour of a more park-like subdivision with gently curving streets to ease vehicular traffic, a landscaped park area, and lots of 70' x 150' (21 x 45m) in contrast to what was generally being built privately by merchant builders. The recommended models were based on the suburban models like Radburn, New Jersey by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, who, in turn, were influenced by the early twentieth century planned Garden City-style communities in England. Subsequent publications focusing on the neighbourhood or subdivision units continued to advocate for such planning well into the 1940s.

FHA also published principles for planning small houses that veered toward the more traditional ideas of house and home as those most successful for housing. Based on the simplified designs of traditional architectural styles such as those available in the early suburbs and through mail-order kits, the designs illustrated in the bulletins included Colonial Revival, Cape Cod, Tudor, Spanish, bungalow and later ranch houses; conspicuously modern design was discouraged as a poor investment. Although the FHA guidelines were not steadfast rules and they originated from a need to protect the interest of residents as much as the developers and banks, it became easier and more cost effective for builders to adhere to some, if not all the guidelines to acquire quickly FHA approval, obtain loans, and sell the houses. Eventually, the guidelines became entrenched more like standards and deviations did not easily receive approval. Houses with a modern design vocabulary generally faced such difficulties. The Eichler developments and Mar Vista are two examples from the post World War 2 period. Also see Jackson 1985:197.

- 11 The program administered by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was the outcome of a report issued by the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing, a federal commission established in 1989. The program was enacted into law in 1992. The approach recommended was based on the actions around the Columbia Point Housing in Boston built in 1954. Here the solution had been to turn the project over to a private development firm, which demolished the housing and built a new complex.
- 12 The suburban subdivision was quintessential American in its scale, design, planning and financing. The policies and ideals leading up to these developments have been the subject of a great deal of study over the last two decades. See for instance Jackson 1985 up to Hayden 2004a. Also of note are studies that examine the suburbanisation phenomenon in relation to the development of housing from a social history perspective see Hayden 1984 or Wright 1981. For a discussion about sprawl, Hayden 2004b details different forms of sprawl including some more recent residential developments. Hayden in this and her earlier writings points to, among others, the policies of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) as reasons for the continued development. For a more

comprehensive history of sprawl and its positives and negatives, see Bruegmann 2005. In the US, attempts have made to develop criteria for listing suburban developments, see Ames and McClelland 2002.

- 13 For more on the original intent of the greenbelt towns, see Cam 1939.
- 14 The three are Greenbelt, Maryland; Greenhills, Ohio, and Greendale, Wisconsin. Some of the objectives of the towns were seen as too much like socialism and made some uncomfortable. The program was accused of being a threat to the private sector more so than the other New Deal programs and caused funding to be cut and the program to be folded into the Farm Security Administration as early as January 1, 1937 (Knepper 2001:25-29).
- 15 A recent real estate article in the real estate section of the *New York Times* quotes a local planning official as having studied the merits of the old plan of Greenbelt in planning a new major development directly adjacent, which is replacing an earlier development from the 1960's (Hughes 2007).
- 16 The potential savings were estimated at \$ 5 million but the site employed 13,000 people, who otherwise would have received unemployment or other benefits (Coffin and de Winthuisen Coffin 1988:49).
- 17 The area surrounding Greenbelt became a desirable location because of its large open spaces in close proximity to Baltimore and Washington and it saw a tenfold population increase between 1940 and 1990 (Lange 1997:190). This publication is mostly a social and political history that provides a good insight into the community as it evolved over time.
- 18 The Levittown Cape Cod was very similar to the Cape Cod kit named "The Nantucket" offered through the mail by Sears Roebuck twenty years prior (Hayden 2004a:108).
- 19 While FHA guidelines did not specifically suggest segregation by race, it did provide guidelines that sought homogeneity in income, race, and age for a successful community through restrictive covenants (Kelly 1993:60-65). Even after such covenants were ruled unenforceable, FHA underwriting guidelines continued homogeneity and not racial mix based on a belief of financial and social stability for neighbourhoods (Mitchell and Smith 1979:168-185).
- 20 For a description of the plan, see Anon 1949 and McCoy 1984. For the work of Garrett Eckbo, see Treib and Imbert 1997.
- 21 While initially CIAM was primarily concerned with housing, this quickly also included an interest in its broader implications, ie urban planning (Mumford 2002). For a general introduction of Le Corbusier and his 'Ville Radieuse', see Frampton 1992:178-185. An overview of the urban design and housing projects designed by the various CIAM participants may be found in van der Woud 1983.
- 22 During the interwar period, over a million houses were built by the local authorities in England and Wales while in the four years before the outbreak of World War 2, only 130,000 new units were sponsored by the USHA. See Jackson 1985:190-230 for more on the New Deal housing programs.
- 23 For a discussion of the evolution of high rise housing in the US, see Mumford 1995. He notes the influence of both the European modernist and the already existing American practice of building multi-storey residential structures. See also Stern, Gilmartin and Mellins 1987:428-447 for a summary of housing in New York City in the two decades before World War 2. Most of the projects noted are multi-storey structures in cruciform typologies. Only the Christie-Forsyth Street development proposal by Howe & Lescaze of 1931-1932 shows a pure modern scheme.
- 24 The issues surrounding the design of modern high rise housing and their success or lack thereof remain an important subject of discussion and controversy with very divergent points of view, which continues to affect preservation not only where it will concern these buildings directly but also as it concerns the general perception of modern architecture.

In her conclusion Radford (1997:208-209) argues that some of it did work and serve well. One of the culprits identified is the so-called 'two-tier' housing policy in the US, ie public housing versus the middle class mortgage income tax deduction. That opinion is echoed in Fuerst (2003) and he comes to a somewhat similar conclusion when discussing the Chicago Housing Authority. Peter Hall (2000:239-240), in discussing Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis, sees its failure not the result of a 'planning mistake' but of the arrogance of the 'Corbusians', who did not understand what was needed for the population inhabiting the buildings. A point of view to some extent echoed in Hunt (1997:637-642) in his review of Radford's 1997 book.

- 25 A good summary of the history of the development of Roosevelt Island may be found in Stern (1995:641-659). An overview of housing and their design and design methodologies for both low rise and highrise for the 1960's and early 1970's may be found in Macsai (1976).
- 26 The amount of historic fabric loss, though, depended on how much power the governments had in acquiring land through eminent domain. For instance, eminent domain was limited in France and therefore more of the historic fabric was retained (Pearsall 1984:24) while West Germany utilised eminent domain to redevelop large areas of its cities in the 1960s and 1970s (Kennedy in 1984:59-64).
- 27 According to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development since 2006 some 195,000 units of public housing have been demolished and another 230,000 are scheduled for demolition. See Brown (2007) on Atlanta where the typical brick structures – dating from 1936 – are being demolished to make way for quasi-colonial low-rise housing dispersed in presumably mixed neighbourhoods developed by private developers. The same has been taking place in New Orleans and Newark. For Newark, see Martin (2008), and for New Orleans, see Saulnay (2006) or Ouroussoff (2007). Ouroussoff states: "Some [public housing] rank among the best early examples of public housing built in the United States, both in design and in quality of construction".
- 28 In 1999 the Chicago Housing Authority adopted the Plan For Transformation reflecting HUD's Hope VI program. The viability of each high rise was assessed to determine whether it was physically and financially feasible to rehabilitate the buildings. While all housing for seniors (including Hilliard) was remodelled, for family developments demolition and rebuilding (in low rise quasi-historic) ways was considered more cost effective. By 2001 22 of the some 51 family high rises had already been demolished. Today only 9 of those high rises remain (Wilkosz 2009:13).
- 29 Landler (2006) describes the purchase of housing units in Dresden, Germany by outside investors and refers to similar purchases in cities like Berlin. For a – somewhat – comparative discussion between the US and Europe, see van Weesp and Priemus (1999).
- 30 For a brief summary of the history of AMIHI, the non-profit developer, see Siegler and Levy (nd).
- 31 Goldberger (1979:33) described the buildings as "...powerfully articulated towers of raw concrete [that have] aged well." Giving the building credit despite their "heavy-handed Corbusier" inspiration, he described the complex as "well scaled, comfortable, and visually attractive – qualities which help any building survive the passage of time." As part of the acclaim for this project, the firm Kelly and Gruzen earned a Bard Award when Chatham Towers received first honours: "Kelly & Gruzen's rough expressionist towers, represent a new romantic reaction from international style simplicity" (Bird 1967:44).
- 32 Chatham Towers was originally a limited-equity co-operative but became a private co-op in the 1990s when the city property tax abatements for the non-profit Association for Middle Income Housing, Inc. ended. As a private co-op, the co-operative owns the buildings and the residents occupy the apartments under the terms of a lease, which in effect works as ownership. While the New York City landmarks law does not specifically require owner consent, it has been part of the operative procedures for the last decade to not designate without it.

- 33 José Luis Sert (1901–1983) was born and studied architecture in Barcelona, Spain from 1922 to 1929, where he also practised from 1929 to 1939 until the Spanish Civil War forced him to leave. He became best known initially for the design of the Spanish Pavilion for the 1937 World's Fair in Paris, where Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* was first displayed. In that period, he worked extensively with Le Corbusier in Europe, was an active participant in CIAM and served as its president from 1947 to 1956. He emigrated to the United States in 1941. In New York from 1941 until 1958 his practice, Town Planning Associates (TPA) with his partners Paul L. Wiener and Paul Schulz, was working throughout Latin America; among the numerous projects included a never implemented city plan for Havana, Cuba. Rovira (2003) provides the most detailed general discussion of Sert's work. Rovira (nd) contains detailed descriptions of most of Sert's projects.
- 34 The magazine *Architecture Boston* in 2003 dedicated its July-August issue (Vol 6, No.4) to Peabody Terrace. Different architects, former tenants and people that grew up there as children are interviewed and asked for their opinions. Hale (1974) lists some functional issues mentioned by the residents such as the elevator skip-stop system and the inalterable heating system. Space was apparently deemed adequate.
- 35 Sert's plan for the residential buildings uses a basic structural unit to maximise the number of units possible while minimising the cost of construction. Each three-storey module contains two apartments per floor for a total of six. The middle floor has an enclosed gallery, which provides access to the centre stair embedded in the unit, the elevator, and the two apartments on that particular floor. The apartments on the floors below and above are only accessible from the centre stair and have no direct elevator access. As a result, the elevator stops on every third floor only, hence the name skip-stop for the system. While this solution was adopted to offset the cost of the elevators and to avoid a slab-like configuration, it became and continues to be the primary source of aggravation and contention. This module—three bays wide and three storeys high with a stair in the middle—is repeated and stacked in low and high rise alike, allowing for the differentiation in heights. A detailed description of the original project and its various components is found in Anon (1964b:122–133). Sert used the skip-stop elevator in a number of his housing projects. He undoubtedly knew of Le Corbusier's use of the system. It saved costs not only for elevator construction but it also eliminated the need for galleries and corridors every other floor. It meant, however, that two thirds of the residents had to walk and carry everything up and down the stairs. Others in the US used the system, see Macsai, Holland, Nachman and Yacker (1976:382-395). In Peabody Terrace of the approximately 500 apartments, 15% are efficiencies (studios) measuring 415 square feet (38.5m²), 40% has one bedroom but is still only 487 square feet (45m²), 40% are two bedrooms and 766 square feet (71m²), and 5% are three bedrooms and 960 square feet (89m²) (Anon 1964b:124). A different mixture of apartment sizes is given in Anon 1964c:12–13.
- 36 I am indebted to Leland Cott, FAIA, who provided much of the detail contained in the restoration section. His firm of Bruner/Cott & Associates in Cambridge, MA was the architect for the renovation of Peabody Terrace in the 1990s. Dixon (1994:100-108) states that the renovation was necessary not only because of physical conditions, but also because of negative opinions voiced by the students.
- 37 Also see Anon 2003 for a discussion about public housing and high rise buildings between Lawrence J. Vale and Hubert Murray, head of Urban Studies at MIT.
- 38 The complaints centre on the town-gown issues and the lack of community within the complex itself. The latter is not entirely surprising given the fact that the occupants are an extremely transient population: graduate students.
- 39 Such a moralistic attitude toward the poor was a large part of the housing advocates' campaign to gather support for improved housing conditions since the nineteenth century (Wright 1981:234).
- 40 Unlike Hilliard Center Marina City was a moderate income project, with minimum unit sizes dictated by Federal Housing Authority (FHA) guidelines, cost limits and rents lowered

to overcome the perceived prejudice to living downtown in non-standard, high-rise housing during the height of suburban flight.

- 41 Based on interview by Flora Chou with Peter Holsten, January 19, 2006.
- 42 Both the affordable units (55% of the project units) and the CHA public housing units (45%) limit the income of the occupants to 60% of median income, which for a family of 4 in Chicago is approximately \$75,000. The difference is that the CHA units cannot rent for more than 30% of the occupant's income while the affordable units have a set rent based on the requirements of other funding sources. The units are not physically designated public housing or affordable; instead, the percentage of the units for each category is maintained as they become available in both the family and senior towers.
- 43 Caldwell worked for the Chicago Park District during the Great Depression and was responsible for many of the city's well-known landscapes, including the 1937 Rookery at Lincoln Park Zoo and Promontory Point on the city's lakefront. He was influenced by the Midwest works of Frank Lloyd Wright and Jens Jensen. Caldwell taught at Illinois Institute of Technology from 1944 to 1959 while Mies van der Rohe was director and designed much of the campus landscaping as part of Mies's masterplan (Kamin 1998).
- 44 A good summary of the project, its design and development can be found in Hession, Rapson and Wright (1999:192-201)
- 45 A good summary of the history of the development of Roosevelt Island may be found in Stern (1995:641-659).
- 46 For a tribute to Rapson, see, for instance, Mack (2008). The architectural office was located in the Cedar Riverside neighbourhood across from the project and continues today under the direction of his son Rip.
- 47 Brozan (2005) provides some interesting statistics. At that time the total population was a little under 10,000 with a mixture of approximately 45% white, 27% black and some 11% Asian. With regards to income 37% earned less than US\$ 37,000, 40% between 37,000 and 100,000 and 23% more than 100,000.
- 48 A summary of the project may be found in Risselada and van den Heuvel (2005:174-177). For some urban aspects, Smithson (2005:176-177). A more detailed expose of the design and its various features is found in Smithson (2001:296-313).
- 49 Apparently Alison Smithson complained bitterly about the "Labour Union Society" in 1974 and the bureaucratic egalitarianism (Risselada and van den Heuvel 2005:174).
- 50 The 'street in the sky' concept can be found in other housing estates most notably the Barbican and Golden Lane Estate both in London and by Chamberlin, Powell & Bon. To some extent Bertrand Goldberg used the same concept in his Hilliard Towers project in Chicago.
- 51 The preservation advocacy efforts were instigated by the Twentieth Century Society in co-operation with the magazine *Building Design*.
- 52 As contained in the previously quoted letter from The Culture Team of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport dated 13 May 2009 addressed to Jon Wright, Case Officer, Twentieth Century Society and signed by Lauren Warren, Heritage Protection Policy Advisor.
- 53 Nicolai Ouroussoff, "Rethinking Post-war Design in London", *New York Times*, March 18, 2009. The article describes his visit to Robin Hood Gardens.



Migrant architects practising modern architecture in Sydney, 1930-1960

Rebecca Hawcroft

Abstract

This paper outlines the European émigré architectural community in Sydney from 1945-1965, its experiences, and the difficulties it encountered. This community included university teachers such as George Molnar, commentators such as Eva Buhrich and furniture designers such as Paul Kafka. Within this context the paper focuses on the work of a number of architects including; Hugh Buhrich, Dr. Heinrich Epstein, and Hans Peter Oser to illustrate the modernist architecture produced and to highlight the challenges and opportunities the émigré architects of the period faced. The architecture of this group can be seen as 'unloved heritage' in that very few examples are heritage-listed and almost none of its practitioners are included in Australia's architectural histories. The paper seeks to redress the omission of this group from the Australian architectural histories and highlight the wide variety of European modernism applied in Australia by the large numbers of lesser known émigré architects.

Introduction

The growing awareness of twentieth century heritage has led to a review of the accepted architectural histories that dominated our understanding of the development of modern architecture in Australia. One aspect of this revision must be an appreciation of the production and consumption of modern architecture by the European émigré community.

Preceding the large post-war migration programs, the number of refugees who arrived in Australia prior to the outbreak of World War 2 was small. Only 8,000 were admitted, yet their impact on the cultural life of Australia was considerable. Among these émigrés were architects who had studied modern architecture at university level in Europe, often with leading figures in the movement as their teachers. Many abandoned promising careers and thriving practices to flee the rise of Nazism.

International discussions of the history of mid-twentieth century European émigré architects have focused on the influence and success of Bauhaus architects in the US and, to a lesser extent, the UK. Australian architectural histories produced in the 1970s and 1980s generally do not. Donald Leslie Johnson (1980:86) notes the importance of "European strains" in the local development of the modernism:

These were the three decisive factors or communicants in the development of modernism in Australian architecture – immigrants, travelers and magazines.

The presence of migrants producing modernist architecture is noted, however the story of their contribution is that of dominant single personalities working outside the norm, such as Walter Burley Griffin and later, Harry Seidler.

Within Australian architectural historical discourses the great influence of Frederick Romberg and Harry Seidler has been widely accepted, but very little of the presence and production of other émigré architects has been written. Freeland (1968) only refers to Romberg and Seidler. Johnson devotes a chapter to Seidler and makes considerable mention of Romberg and some mention of Victorian émigré architects Ernest Fooks and Karl Langer. Robin Boyd (1952) refers to Romberg and Seidler and briefly mentions Fritz Janeba and, in *The Australian Ugliness* (1960), mentions Seidler and Czechoslovakian émigré architect Ernest Milston. Despite these brief mentions the majority of migrant architects and the stories of their careers are not contained in these histories. Importantly, there is also no mention of the considerable contribution migrant clients made to the development of modernism in Australia.

Recent publications have provided a greater focus on the contribution of migrants in Australia in the post-war period, including the work of migrant architects. The 1993 “émigré edition” of *Art and Australia* and the National Gallery of Australia’s 1997 exhibition and book *The Europeans: Émigré Artists in Australia 1930-1960* (Butler 1997) mark the beginning of a growing awareness of the cultural legacy of post-war migration. There has also recently been a re-examination of the work and experience of migrant architects in Victoria (Edquist 1993, 2000), yet there has been no equivalent work focusing on the architecture of migrants in Sydney in the period.¹ Yet the contribution made by these architects is significant. Their careers in Australia demonstrate the complexity of the migration experience, the opportunities for success, and the limitations it offered and the support networks activated within a community that was in many ways separate from mainstream Australian society. The following is a summary of a research thesis focusing on the production of modern architecture within the European émigré community in Sydney from 1930 to 1960.

The hurdle of registration

The migrant architect faced many difficulties upon arrival in Australia, not least of which was an inability to gain registration. In the 1940s the New South Wales Board of Architects was not registering architects who were not naturalised citizens of the Commonwealth. In 1941 when the recently-arrived Hungarian architect, George Molnar, applied for registration he was refused on the grounds that he was not a naturalised Australian citizen. The Board’s stated policy was to “refrain from registering foreigners, especially those who had come from Europe in recent years” (Molnar nd). However even if citizenship was obtained, like the Royal Institute of British Architects, the NSW Board would not recognise qualifications from foreign schools of architecture (Molnar nd). Although some could sit further examinations to gain registration, those who were refused were left with limited options.

Similarly the outbreak of World War 2 in 1939 closed most architectural offices. For many migrant architects, a job in the NSW Public Works Department or similar government office offered secure employment.² Most architects (migrant or otherwise) spent the war years anonymously designing structures for the war effort, if they were not assigned roles as manual labourers doing factory work (such as both Hugh Buhrich and Henry Epstein).

Ferdinand Silberstein-Silvan emigrated from Czechoslovakia with his wife and child in 1949. Perhaps because his degree from a Prague university was not recognised in Australia, he worked for the New South Wales Electricity Commission until his retirement in 1968 (Silvan & Kubickova 2002). Before emigrating, Silvan had been a well-known and highly regarded architect practising in the inter-war functionalist style. He had studied at the German College of Technology in Prague and had had his own practice for ten years. During this time he designed, amongst other buildings, three villas in Bratislava and Dolny Kubin, five blocks of flats in Trencin, three school buildings (figure 1) and other small public buildings. He was a staunch advocate of functionalist principles and these buildings remain highly regarded for the high quality of his realisation of the style. Two of his buildings are now listed by DOCOMOMO Slovakia and he has recently been the subject of a monograph published in Slovakia (Silvan & Kubickova 2002). Silvan died in Sydney in 1983, unknown in the local architecture community. As bright, and once successful, members of the Jewish middle class, the Silvans’ marginalised position in Australia must have been frustrating.



Figure 1: Obchodna Academy, Trenčín, Slovakia, 1932-1936, by Ferdinand Silvan.
(Source: Silvan, S. and Kubickova, K., 2002, p. 67)

Husband and wife Hugh and Eva Buhrich emigrated from Germany with qualifications from elite European architectural universities. With their qualifications not recognised Eva turned to journalism and Hugh, who remained unregistered until the 1970s, maintained a small private practice by referring to himself as a 'planning consultant' and 'designer'.

In terms of an exposure to 'authentic' modernism there are many parallels between the education of Hugh Buhrich and that of Harry Seidler. Buhrich studied at Berlin University with modernist expressionist architect Hans Poelzig and later worked in Switzerland in the offices of Alfred Roth, a member of CIAM who had collaborated with Le Corbusier on designs for the Weissenhof Siedlung. Buhrich is perhaps the only architect to work in Australia who had had direct experience of expressionist modernist teachings. Yet, while Buhrich was practising as an architect in Sydney, he remained virtually unknown.

Buhrich's early designs, which perhaps most clearly represent a direct connection with his modernist teachings, were disappointingly not realised. Construction of his own house at 315 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag was halted in 1941 due to war-time restrictions on construction (SMH 24 June 1941). It was finally completed in 1948 after extensive debate with Council regarding the aesthetic merits of the design. The house remains today and is recognised as a unique example of modern architecture illustrating Buhrich's sculptural application of modernism. His early designs for clients faced similar difficulties and it was not until 1947 that his first project in Sydney (the Amos residence, Bayview) was completed. It was featured on one of the first covers of *Australian House and Garden* magazine (January 1949). Perhaps as a consequence of remaining unregistered during his career Buhrich received no prominent large commissions and is not mentioned in the main historical texts recording the development of modernism in Australia. Today Buhrich's own house of 1972, where he was perhaps best able to fully express his unique application of expressionist modernism, is seen as one of Australia's best modernist houses (Myers 1991; Torre 1997).

The contribution of his wife, Eva Buhrich is also beginning to be appreciated. Although she never registered or practised architecture in Australia she became a prominent commentator on architectural issues with a regular column, 'Living', in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Eva contributed regularly to many magazines and building journals and was probably the first Australian woman to write about these issues under her own by-line in a major Australian newspaper (Hanna & Willis 2001:68). Her designs also occasionally appeared in the popular press and examples of her work can be seen in the *Australian Women's Weekly* in 1946 and *Australian House and Garden*, 1960 (Hanna & Willis 2001:97). Her only book, a populist self-help text on outdoor living space, was published in 1973 (Buhrich 1973).

Activating networks

Despite the many hurdles presented to migrant architects, there was a considerable network of support offered to those arriving in Sydney. Some appear to have been able to utilise this support

network better than others. The name Peter Kaad regularly appears as a character witness on the registration applications of migrant architects, and it seems the firm Lipson and Kaad was the first port of call for many European arrivals. While Kaad was Australian-born of Dutch heritage, Lipson was a Jew, the son of Lithuanian parents who had fled persecution in Russia and settled in Scotland (Lipson 1992). Samuel Lipson had trained in Glasgow and emigrated to New South Wales in 1926. Lipson's family were strict Jews who spoke Yiddish at home. Lipson noted that his religion was often a point of difference and that he had experienced discrimination whilst in Scotland and later from colleagues in Australia (Lipson 1992).

Lipson perhaps represents the previous generation of migrant architects who, whilst interested in Bauhaus principals, were rather more influenced by the Dutch modern architecture of Dudok.³ Initially employed in the Commonwealth public service Lipson later formed his own company with friend Peter Kaad. The firm became one of the most successful and prominent in the period and designed several of the era's best buildings including the Trust Building on King and Castlereagh Streets (1934), S. Hoffnung and Co Ltd Building on Clarence Street (1938) and the streamlined functionalist Hasting Deering Building, off William Street (1937).

In the 1940s the Buhrichs had applied for jobs with Lipson and Kaad but were unsuccessful due to their poor knowledge of Australian building regulations (Gordon 1991). The firm instead directed them to Professor Alfred Hook. Professor Hook is recalled by many architects of the period as offering great support to those newly-arrived. Professor Hook offered informal social network for migrant architects as well as education as to Australian construction techniques and specialised knowledge required to practise, including the solar design issues faced by Australian architects. Others in the universities with close ties to the migrant community in the period were fellow émigré architects George Molnar and Emery Balint, both of whom had graduated from the Technical University of Budapest.⁴ Molnar taught design at Sydney University for many years before becoming Professor of Architecture at the University of New South Wales. Balint was foundation Professor of Building at the University of New South Wales.

Connections with the Jewish community also appear to have been important for this group. In an interview late in his life, Samuel Lipson noted that, although he did not know members of the Jewish community in Sydney before his arrival, he was taken up as a member of "the same village (and) shown around to get to know other people" (Lipson 1992). Lipson had a valuable connection in Abraham Landa, the State Government Minister for Housing who gave him work during the difficult years of World War 2. Lipson also notes that like-minded architects and artists would gather to discuss modern architecture in the Sydney cafes operated by migrants to emulate European examples. Repin's Café was one notable example and was established by Russian migrant, Ivan Dmitrievitch Repin who not only ran a chain of Repin's Cafes but also imported coffee. The Repin's Cafe in King Street was noted as having "a touch of Europe about it largely because it was frequented by European-style, coffee-loving intellectuals" (Bersten 2002).

Austrian émigré architect Hans Peter Oser appears to have been a charismatic man who used the network of support provided by the migrant community to move rapidly up the Sydney social ladder. Oser clearly established important networks early as his 1945 application for registration contained an impressive list of referees including John D. Moore, Walter Bunning and Sydney University's, Professor Alfred Hook. Similarly, later in his career, Oser was known for taking on young Jewish architects who were having difficulty finding work (Quinton 1997:87). Oser formed a partnership with French émigré architect, Jean Fomberteaux, in the 1960s that was highly successful and, at its peak, Oser & Fomberteaux employed twelve draftsmen.

Prominent in the press but absent from the histories

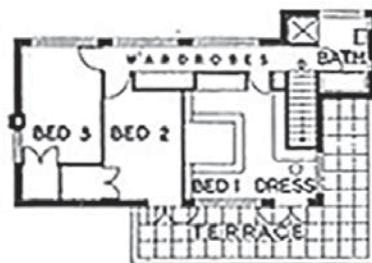
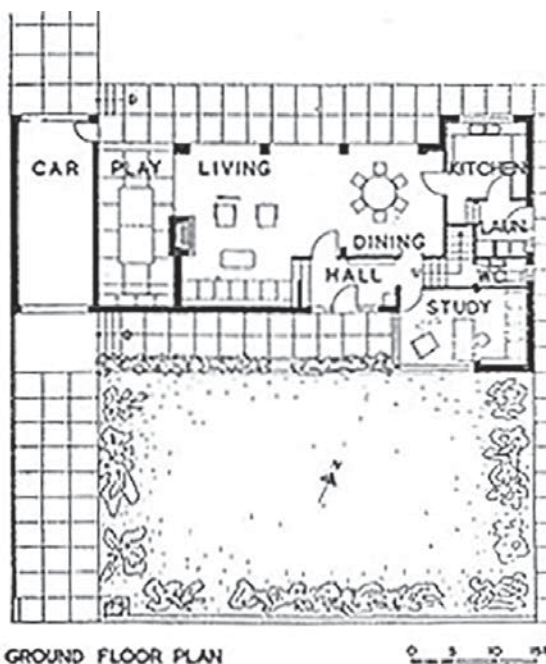
Despite their sustained success and continual presence in the press the firm Oser and Fomberteaux is not mentioned in any history of modernist architecture in Australia. Competent practitioners of modernist architecture, like many of the migrant architects, they have slipped from view in the reflections of the growth of modernism in Sydney in the post-war period.

Like Oser, Hungarian architect Hugo Stossel's projects were regularly featured in the populist publications such *Sixty Beach and Holiday Homes* (Shillito 1954) as well as professional journals such as *Building and Engineering*, and *Architecture in Australia* (Stossel 1951, 1955). Hugo Stossel had emigrated in 1938 and was another architect with considerable achievements overseas who was forced to prove his ability and sit further examinations to qualify for registration. In his 1946 application for registration the 42 year old included a list of his previous projects in Vienna and Budapest that included several large office blocks, a theatre seating 2,000 that had been featured in several European and American Architectural magazines, a residence for the General Manager of the "Wagon Lits" company that had also featured in two European architectural magazines and the Soviet embassy in Bucharest (Stossel registration file).

After registration, Hugo Stossel practised successfully as a modernist architect in Sydney throughout the 1950s and 60s (figure 2). In 1955, *Architecture in Australia* featured Stossel's "Economically Built Factory at Artarmon, NSW" for Webbing & Trimming Pty Ltd (Stossel 1955). The factory was a prefabricated steel frame structure with saw-tooth roof. The front elevation was broken into geometric forms by the use of concrete tiles and an upper band of glazing. The front doors were a deep red 'Formica' and the featured lettering red to match. Stossel designed an apartment block on a corner site in Onslow Avenue in Elizabeth Bay that was featured in *Building and Engineering* in May 1951 (Stossel 1951). The steel framed reinforced concrete structure with cavity brick, and a curtain wall of floor to ceiling steel-framed windows, remains and is listed by the Australian Institute of Architects. H. Stossel & Associates was active throughout the 1960s, including contributing unsuccessful schemes for the Sydney Opera House competition and the Rocks Redevelopment competition in 1963 (Stossel 1993), and the firm remained prominent into the 1970s and 1980s.



Figure 2: Stossel House, Lindfield, Sydney, 1954 by Hugo Stossel. (Source: Shillito, P., 1954, p. 85)



Architects: H. Stossel



Figure 3: Hillman House, Roseville, Sydney, 1949, by Dr. Heinrich (Henry) Epstein. (Photo: Max Dupain, courtesy Max Dupain & Associates)

broken by ribbon windows, sited on a steep block amongst Federation and 1920s bungalows. Epstein had a short career as a modern architect in Australia (dying at the age of 59) but he completed numerous projects including the high rise North Shore Medical Centre (1956-59), the Jewish Macabean Hall on Darlinghurst Road (1960-66) and a multi-storey office building on Macquarie Street, but the Hillman House can be seen as one of his most clearly expressed and intact, surviving Modernist buildings.

The Hillman House also offered Epstein the opportunity of collaborating with furniture maker Paul Kafka. The relationship between modernist architects and furniture makers was very important. The Hillman House clearly illustrates how the two professions worked together. Epstein designed an extensive range of built-in furniture for the house which Kafka carried

out with extreme skill. Kafka's June 1950 invoice to the Hillmans records furniture for virtually every room of the house, including beds, wardrobes, bookshelves, a cocktail cabinet, table and chairs. His work blurred the distinction between furniture and architecture in that he also made the staircase, wall-panelling, windowsills, and a mantelpiece (HHT Hillman House file)⁵.

Paul Kafka was the son of a Viennese furniture maker who had trained and practised in Vienna before emigrating to Australia in 1939. He had established his own business in Waterloo not long after where he made custom-made furniture employing between 20 and 30 tradesmen. His work furnished

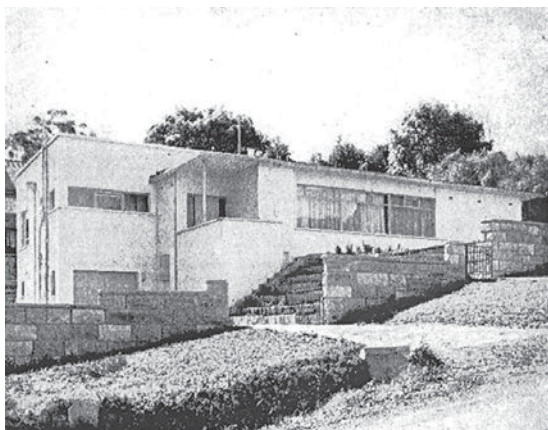


Figure 4: Kafka House, Pymble, Sydney, 1950 by Hugo Stossel. (Source: Shillito, P., 1954, p. 59)

The importance of migrant clients

The frequency with which the clients of modernist architects were also migrants indicates that there was a particularly warm reception for modern design within this community. There are countless examples of the architects mentioned in this paper finding like-minded clients who had also emigrated from Europe. It seems these clients often allowed the architects to better realise modernist designs.

One example of the success of this relationship is Dr. Henry Epstein's design for the Hillman House at 40 Findlay Avenue, Roseville (figure 3). The Russian-born Epstein had emigrated from Austria in 1939 after studying in Vienna and graduating with a Doctorate of Architecture. Chaime Hillman was a Polish immigrant tailor who had purchased a vacant block in Roseville and in 1947 commissioned Epstein to design a house (HHT 1995). Epstein was given free rein and the result was a remarkable composition of white rectangular prisms

many of Sydney's modern homes in the period. Like the work of Schulim Krimper in Melbourne, Kafka's cabinet making was true craftsmanship and modern design that stood in marked contrast to the mass produced furniture available in Australia in the 1940s and 1950s (Johnson 1988:85-86). Kafka did a lot of work in the eastern suburbs of Sydney including the Frank Theeman House in Rose Bay designed by Hans Peter Oser, 85 Victoria Road, Bellevue Hill designed by George Reeves and 29c Winulla Road, Point Piper designed by Hugh Buhrich (Kafka file). His own house at 11 Eton Road, Roseville was designed by Hugo Stossel in 1950 (figure 4 & 5). The house was geometric in form with white rendered exterior and flat roof. Internally it was highly textured with wood panelling, built in units, and heavy drapes. The house was featured in *Australian House and Garden*, May 1952. Kafka's wife was interviewed in 1981 and noted that many of Kafka's clients were Europeans who wished to maintain the same standard of craftsmanship in their furniture to which they had been accustomed (Watson 1981).

Conclusion

This architecture is 'un-loved' in that it is largely unknown, un-listed and has previously been absent from histories. Certainly many of the works of migrant architects are hard to identify and have been modified or demolished. However it is important to acknowledge that there were a great many architects with authentic European modernist architectural training active within Sydney, designing, commenting and contributing to the development of modern architecture in the post-war period. Their presence and production is an important aspect of the history of Sydney, and one that requires greater understanding so that the buildings of this period can be identified, assessed and conserved.

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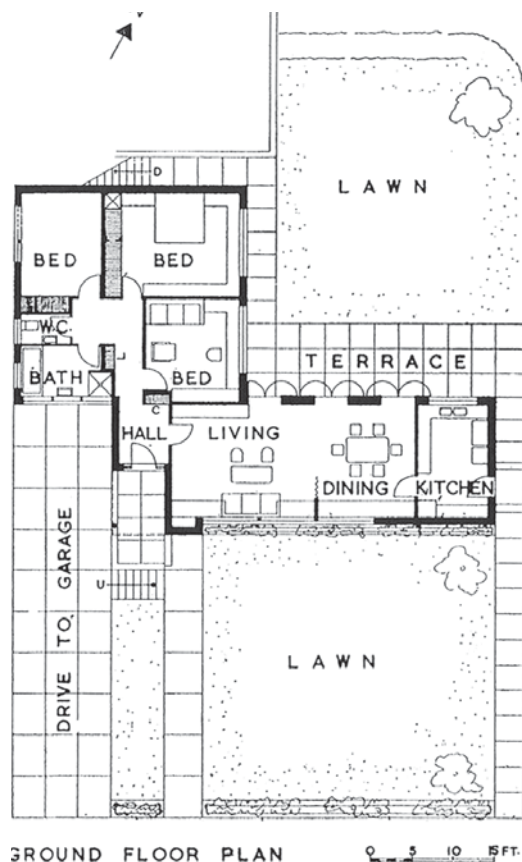


Figure 5: Kafka House, Pymble, Sydney by Hugo Stossel. (Source: Shillito, P., 1954, p. 59)

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Endnotes

- 1 Anne Watson, formerly a curator at the Powerhouse Museum, has undertaken a study of migrant furniture makers in Sydney in the period.
- 2 A job in the NSW PWD was highly sought after in the period and the department pursued the introduction of many modern architectural ideas (Jack 1980).
- 3 Dudok's influence is considerable in Australian modern architecture, but has not been studied in detail.
- 4 Balint's application for Australian citizenship in 1944 lists him as born at Mohacs (Hungary), and resident of Australia for over five years (*Argus*, 21 March, 1944).
- 5 Editor's note: Most of this built-in joinery was removed by one of the house's later owners despite the heritage listing of the house including its interior fittings. Subsequent Land & Environment Court cases have ensured the entry hall seat, cupboard and mirror have been retained.



Moral rights and Australian contemporary architecture: recent professional dilemmas and the thoughts of Peter Muller in this discourse¹

David Jones

Abstract

The moral rights of contemporary design projects has arisen as a difficult ethical dilemma in Australian architectural discourses, and is more complex when matters of heritage are implicated. This paper considers the position of moral rights under the *Australian Copyright Act 1968*² having regard to the Australian exemplars of Peter Muller. Muller is one of the most highly regarded Australian architects of the twentieth century possessing a passion for organic architecture realised in several significant Australian and Indonesian design exemplars. The paper considers recent Australian debates about moral rights and projects that implicate several architectural and landscape architecture projects, the current legal interpretations, and explains the ideas, values, and opinions and practice of Muller in this context. A clear conclusion is that while the Act confers rights, there is no mechanism to ensure adherence to these rights, and particularly in the situation of a living designer where one of their designs is being accorded heritage status.

Introduction

Recent moral rights provision amendments to the *Australian Copyright Act 1968*, and how it relates to works of creators, especially works that are increasingly deemed contemporary works of state, national and or international heritage significance have provoked debate and uncertainty. Designers such as Harry Seidler (1923-2006), Glenn Murcutt (b.1936), Harry Howard (1930-2000), Ashton Raggatt McDougall (ARM), and Richard Weller have entered into this discourse. This is also a new realm for planning and heritage administrators and practitioners who are unclear as to adherence and responsibility under the provisions and obligations contained in these legislative amendments.

Drawn into this discourse are the various Australian professional institutions and associations. The Architects Institute of Australia (AIA) issued member Advisory Notes on the topic referring members to the Australian Copyright Council's (ACC) *G043 Information Sheet on Moral Rights* (2006). ACC published more extensive guidance notes on *Architects: Copyright & Moral Rights* (2003; 2006) that provides detailed information, examples and discussion. The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) have a *Moral Rights Practice Note* (2004) pointing members to the ACC publications and website. The Planning Institute of Australia (PIA), members of which are more often administering development change and legislative obligations, do not have comparable policies or Notes, offering only a tacit reference in their *Professional Code of Conduct*. Both ICOMOS and Australia ICOMOS have no specific documents or policies on moral rights. ICOMOS, however, has an *Ethical Commitment Statement for Members* (2002) that in Article 4 implies that a member has a responsibility to adhere to their respective professional organisation "codes and disciplinary standards," and Australia ICOMOS (AI) has an *Allegations*

of a Breach of the Ethical Commitment Statement (nd) that provides an avenue for practice complaints.³

For designers, it is not a debate many wish to entertain publicly. But, clearly it is a realm of personal angst. For particular contemporary designers, who are finding their creations being placed on local, state and national heritage lists, there is uncertainty of protocol and attribution occurring where listing and or creation alteration and curatorial management is entertained.

It is also clear that while a listing may attribute the 'design' to the principal architect, it is the direct associated allied professionals who are little-mentioned in the overall design credits; less at the time of some peer award ceremony. Accordingly, there are also valid questions of equity of attribution where more than one creator has had a direct role in the design and execution of a project.

Indirectly drawn into this debate has been the internationally prominent architect Peter Muller (b.1927) who has adopted a personal strategy to express his concern at the lack of respect of integrity and moral rights courtesy. Muller has, over the last 15 years, very much prior to Australian parliamentary debates about moral rights, been quietly frustrated with the lack of respect given to his own built designs and has expressed this disquiet by publicly "disowning" particular precedents of his authorship on his personal website.⁴

To aid an inner appreciation of the situation, Muller kindly agreed to be interviewed as a filter through which this topic is examined.

Moral rights and copyright in Australia

Copyright is defined under Australia's *Copyright Act 1968* and sets out the parameters for copyright including applicable periods of time, scope for cover and types of materials covered. The latter includes different types of materials including paintings, drawings, sculptures, digital imagery, craft works, photographs, engravings, films, videos, sound recordings, textual materials, as well as designs. The *Act* details when other people, including architects, academics and students, other than the copyright owner, can use the copyright material with or without permission.

The *Act* was amended in 2000 to include copyright material using digital technologies and communication systems, including the internet. A further amendment *Act*, gazetted in December 2000, sought to attribute creator 'ownership' over designs and that the "integrity" of work is respected.⁵ The latter amendments are directly applicable to this debate, being applicable to contemporary architectural and landscape architectural three-dimensional projects as distinct from drawings and plans that normally carry copyright under existing provisions of the *Act*. It is in this context that contemporary 'heritage' of state, national and international significance and relevance has considerable bearing and is yet to be fully appreciated, legally tested, and a robust discourse entertained.

In essence, the *Copyright Act 1968* now mandates that the designer must be attributed where any change or demolition of their built or executed project, whole or part, and that the 'integrity' of their design must be respected and due acknowledgement made. The interesting dilemmas are where to position contemporary heritage in this context, the present failure of the attribution process, and the lack of clarity as to who monitors and ensures attribution and acknowledgement.

In 1996 Canadian Justice Sir Hugh Laddie (1946-2008) expressed, in establishing an internationally accepted legal precedent, that copyright comprised "three sacred principles":

- "Thou shalt not steal"
- Ideas devised by the human mind may be owned; and
- Reward.⁶

Thus, the *Copyright Act 1968* ensures 'personal property' can be subject to copyright.

In Australia, you as the “creator” own the artistic work, and the creator is the only person entitled to ‘reproduce’, ‘publish’, ‘exhibit’, ‘communicate’ and ‘adapt’ such work to the public. There is no registration process for copyright but individual creators are encouraged to place a ‘Copyright Notice’ on their work often involving “© Peter Muller 2009,” “© The Office of Peter Muller 2009,” or “© Peter Muller International 2009”, as examples.

As a general rule, copyright under the *Copyright Act 1968* for “artistic works” applies from the year of creation and lasts for some 50 years after the death of the “creator”. However, copyright expires if the creator died before 1 January 1955, except where a government owns the copyright.⁷

Under the *Act*, “artistic work” means:

- *a painting, sculpture, drawing, engraving or photograph, whether the work is of artistic quality or not;*
- *a building or a model of a building, whether the built model is of artistic quality or not; or*
- *a work of artistic craftsmanship to which neither of the last two preceding paragraphs applies ... [sic.]*⁸

Plans themselves are deemed “underlying” works and are separately protected under the *Act*. A Conservation Study or CMP would be protected under copyright as a literary work however if the report was written in the course of employment, the employer would own the copyright.

The term “creator”, as distinct from ‘designer’, is used in the *Act* to describe individuals like writers, architects, composers, painters, choreographers, directors, producers, screen writers, performers, etc.

The personal rights of the “creator”, whether or not the creator owns the copyright or ever owned the copyright, are covered within this scope. These rights require acknowledgement or attribution in three ways:

- *A right of attribution of authorship;*
- *A right to not have authorship falsely attributed; and,*
- *A right of integrity of authorship.*⁹

To date, the moral rights provisions of the *Act* as it relates to “a building” have yet to be legally tested, although several precedents in Australia have already been forthcoming.

Because of the lack of a legal precedent, there are several topics of uncertainty as to the application and scope of the moral rights. These relate to:

- the right of creator consent and waiver;
- what constitutes ‘reasonable’ treatment to a creator;
- the position of ‘moveable’ work;
- the position of landscape architecture works of a “soft landscaping” nature;
- changes or alterations to buildings; and,
- site specific artworks.

It is clear also that the creator has the right to request their/any identification mark to be removed from any work “affixed to or forming part of the” the building subsequent to the change or relocation.

One key aspect for the above clearly rotates around the ability to know the creator and the ability to locate and thereby notify the creator. If the name of the creator is unclear, obscure or not identified, then it is impossible to apply the notification process. In the case of most contemporary heritage listed buildings and places the creator or creators are more often known, so it is notionally easy to locate that creator(s). But the more difficult aspect is to identify “their representative”. If it is an incapacitated creator, or the creator has died, the valid copyright period is still applicable.

The second aspect is the voluntary nature of the process that places professional ethical

responsibilities upon a prospective designer, planner or heritage practitioner. Two relevant questions are:

Whose responsibility is it to ensure and police this process?, and

How do we know that the moral rights of a creator have not been infringed and respected and their rights of integrity observed?

In Australia, at present, there is no formal mechanism to ensure adherence, and no checking mechanism other than professional codes of conduct and a personal ethical appreciation and respect to the moral rights provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968* by designers, planners, heritage practitioners and site managers.

Moral rights debates in Australia

Moral rights have not previously been the realm of heritage practitioners and site managers. But, recent changes in the Australian *Copyright Act 1968* inserted moral rights provisions, and the increasing local, national and world heritage listing of contemporary designs (largely creations of designers since World War 2) together with defined temporal obligations in these provisions, now necessitate an obligation for author integrity and respect and full attribution to be afforded.

The National Gallery of Australia (NGA) has been the subject of two recent public controversies about its approach to renovations and moral rights. In the first instance, a dispute by the architect to the NGA, Colin Madigan (1921-2011) spilled into the media in June 2001 where Madigan claimed that changes by architects Tonkin Zulaikha Greer constituted derogatory treatment of his original design. The RAIA [AIA] were invited to intercede to seek the removal of the liability infringement of an architect's integrity right that resulted in a "totally different design approach" that "established a preliminary methodology and a precedent for future consultations, a number of which are in the wings."¹⁰

Media reporter, Farrelly, expressed this debate in terms of a family law custody battle:

The current National Gallery debate is little more or less than a classic custody tussle. Architecture is always mixed progeny, with at least two – client and architect – and probably more assisting not only at birth but at conception. Grrrruesome. Even thereafter, architects occasionally get all anal, hanging around to select every little thing down to carpet, cupboard handles, furniture, paintings.

Normally, though, and quite rightly, the architect moves on once the birth pictures are taken, leaving the infant edifice in full care and control of the client, loving or otherwise.

But later, much later? The question exercising many a professional mind is this: what rights, if any, should the original architect have when, years or even decades later, the now mature building needs amendment. Whose building is it anyway?¹¹

A second debate at the NGA concerns the Sculpture Garden, designed by Harry Howard in 1982, which was listed on the Register of the National Estate in 1993. Notwithstanding a newly-drafted conservation management plan (CMP), which was relatively unheard of for late twentieth century exemplars, the Garden area was at risk of deterioration, subject to economic-driven change in deference to management and security costs and issues, and may now never realise the original design concept and philosophy.¹² While successive Gallery directors undertook modifications to the Garden, and subsequently engaged a team of architects and landscape architects to devise a new operational scheme for the building and Garden, "little attempt was made by the new designers to understand the original design principles, the history or the significance of the place."¹³

The Brisbane Riverside Centre has also been the subject of a legal claim by architect Harry Seidler in 2003 because of signage and physical façade changes to the Centre associated

with 'The Pig 'N' Whistle' hotel area. Seidler claimed that such changes infringed his right of integrity to the original building design and launched formal court proceedings. Unfortunately, the matter was settled out of court on a confidential basis in October 2003 negating a legal precedent case for Australia.¹⁴

The vitriolic 2003 public debates about the National Museum of Australia (NMA), and in particular the 'Garden of Australian Dreams' are exemplars on this discourse. Attempts by the NMA administration to change the fabric of their recently-completed complex resulted in considerable design and media discussion prompted by a review of the operation and agendas of the NMA. The debate was not simply about the "Museum [being] told it's lost the plot,"¹⁵ but about the question of design authorship, attribution and integrity before and after construction. In essence the NMA wished to change physical components of the executed design that would compromise the design integrity of this ARM and Room 4.1.3 peer multi-award winning and extensively-photographed project. Central in this debate was the moral rights of designers. A NMA internal review report highly criticised the NMA's "disjointed arbitrariness" of content and narratives in some exhibitions, questioned the under-representativeness of key figures in Australian post-contact history, noted the neglect of significant engineering and science projects and discoveries that enabled Australia's scientific and technological advancement, criticised signage, acoustics and the cinema arrangements, and in particular proposed a major review of the 'Garden of Australian Dreams'.

Landscape architect and academic, Professor Richard Weller, one of the designers of the 'Garden' lampooned the critique of the Garden. Vocally and in the print media he threatened to take legal action if the recommendations were actioned believing that "the plans are offensive to our artistic integrity". Continuing, "to change our design makes a complete mockery of the entire process by which the work was chosen and created," stated Weller. He believed that this action would contradict the numerous peer design and construction awards that were forthcoming to the 'Garden' and Museum, overall, following its construction and opening.¹⁶ Emotionally, Weller stated: "We don't want (NMA review chair) John Carroll to be the first man in history to censor a garden".¹⁷

The 'Garden of Australian Dreams' is a large outdoor concrete courtyard devised in the post-deconstructionist style evocative of the stylistic works of landscape architectural practice Room 4.1.3 that meshed well with the design approach taken by the Melbourne-based architectural practice ARM in the building. The landscape design includes a fibreglass swimming pool, a map of Gallipoli and other Australian references such as a dingo fence and the paintings of Jeffrey Smart. "It has proven very popular with visitors, precisely because it looks and feels unlike normal gardens," Weller stated.¹⁸ In contrast, the NMA review panel perceived the 'Garden' to be uninviting, its "expanse of concrete over-whelming" with "little that is explained clearly to visitors." It proposed the addition of a lawn, sundial, Aboriginal rock art and tree planting.¹⁹ Weller threatened legal proceedings as a response invoking the recently enacted moral rights amendments to the *Copyright Act 1968*. This was supported by the AILA.²⁰ No change, or proposal to change, has since been entertained by the NMA, on the apprehension of legal precedent and advice, and on the validity of this accusation that the NMA consciously chose and directly participated in the fruition of the design and thereby has a direct participatory ownership over what they chose and guided.

These examples are not isolated as Seidler, Murcutt, John Andrews (b.1933), Peter McIntyre, John Stevens, Bruce MacKenzie (b.1932), Muller and Allan Correy (b.1931), all significant living designers, have witnessed the demise of their often award-winning designs or precedents.²¹ It is also a problem common around the world. Charles Birnbaum has put forward North American case studies that deal with similar dilemmas in the US National Park Service. Birnbaum concluded with an observation and a plea:

*We must be committed to these landscapes that are often a part of our everyday lives, even those that we take for granted. If we allow these losses and modifications to continue - unmonitored by the profession and allied communities - we run the risk of erasing a significant chapter of landscape history.*²²

Ethical questions of moral rights

Weller's frustrations at the NMA administrators are not an isolated incident. His is simply a more forthright expression by an author of the potential or consequential amendment, despoliation or demolition of a created design. This frustration is prevalent, in Australia, in the architecture and landscape architecture disciplines, as well as in the emerging public art realm. It is not new, but what is new is that the enacted legislation gives more teeth to the management of designs created, constructed, and planted, and places a higher ethical responsibility upon the host owner to afford greater respect to the work.

The questions raised in these examples are real and contemporary. They rotate around questions of:

- Intellectual property;
- The practice of relinquished design ownership;
- The credibility and standing of peer design and heritage awards and heritage registrations;
- The position and merit of twentieth century heritage in Australia;²³
- The role and merit of contemporary architectural and landscape architectural designs within our community and heritage administrations;
- Importantly, the position of 'duty of care' and moral rights; and specifically,
- Where does the living designer 'fit' within a place that has heritage significance and listing; should change, alteration, extension, and or demolition be entertained?

These are ethical questions, underpinned by our academic research and management activities, and do not necessarily reflect the opinion and values of the living designer of the subject project. In this regard,

- How does the living designer view the integrity and qualities of the executed design?
- Is it a 'stand alone' design or precedent project, or a specific-client audience design, or is it a design that is simply a phase in a larger design inquiry and thereby 'process design'?
- Does it possess 'heritage merit' from the living designer's perspective?
- Should we be consulting these living designers about what they themselves consider to be the 'heritage' of their design portfolio rather than proceeding on an inequitable survey-to-survey, or place-to-place, basis as the situation arises?
- Does the living designer actually value the heritage listed place as 'heritage'?
- Is the designer happy not to be consulted about the executed design's prospective alteration, change, renovation and or demolition?
- Does the designer wish to be consulted about such, or have a role in the future curatorial management of the place if it carries heritage listing? and,
- Does the designer actually care about the elevation of one or more of their designs to heritage status whether local, state or national?

Clearly, the principles of the Burra Charter, and provisions to the *Copyright Act 1968*, place an obligation upon the heritage practitioner to seek primary research material to document and guide conservation measures for the place under study. Further, it is also clear that the living designer is a primary research component in their own right. But the protocols of how to proceed with such an investigation, what occurs after the research verification and heritage listing phases, are not.

In the case of the Sydney Opera House, architect Jørn Utzon (1918-2008) has been directly consulted on changes and renovations to the structure, inter alia with its World Heritage listing. The tireless communication by Richard Johnson with Utzon opened up a remarkable opportunity for the designer to revisit and supervise the re-establishment of his design in accordance with the original design proposal and drawings. This collaboration has enabled the preparation of a clear set of fundamental design principles and vision for the building, assuring a potential model of how to capture the essence of significant contemporary buildings and places of heritage significance.²⁴

In another situation, landscape architect Allan Correy was directly consulted on his design intent and thoughts as to how to curate and manage the extant Mt Lofty Botanic Garden that carries only, now defunct, Register of National Estate listing.²⁵ But these are isolated instances. We need to appreciate the nature of these engagements and discuss protocols on how to proceed with heritage places as a subset of the larger moral right discourse.

Peter Muller, heritage and moral rights: thoughts and practice

Architect Peter Muller (b.1927) was born in Adelaide, Australia, and established the practice of 'The Office of Peter Muller' (1952-88) in Sydney in 1953, and 'Peter Muller International' (1988+), designing many buildings and residences in Australia, Indonesia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, The Philippines and Sri Lanka, until his professional practice retirement in 2007.²⁶

His designs for the Muller House (1954) at Whale Beach, Sydney, the Audette (1952) and Gunning (1960) Houses in Castlecrag, Sydney, a suite of IPEC offices and Hoyts Theatres across Australia (1964-68), the Oberoi in Bali (1973-2001 including upgrades), the Oberoi in Lombok (1997), and the Amandari Hotel Village (1988-89) in Kedewatan, Bali, are deemed architectural precedents by his peers and architectural critics.²⁷

Educated at the University of Adelaide and Adelaide's School of Mines & Industries (1944-48), Muller obtained a Fulbright Travel Scholarship (1950-51) to study at the University of Pennsylvania before returning to Sydney in 1952 to establish his practice.²⁸ During 1975-77 he served with the National Capital Development Commission as Director in charge of establishing the Australian Parliament House design competition terms of reference. Of his portfolio of projects, only the IPEC Building (1964), in Frewville, Adelaide, carries any heritage listing, as it is included on the State Heritage Register for South Australia. It has been subject to a *Conservation Study* (1993) but Muller was not consulted on its contents or recommendations, nor subsequent renovations and alterations, and neither was landscape designer Robin Hill, whose associative work of this project was not even mentioned in the registration or study.²⁹

Muller's lack of a public profile is very much a reflection of his individualist style and approach, and very little has been written about his projects. The dearth of writings has also been assisted by his extensive time overseas in the 1970s-90s. Urford's thesis extensively documented Muller's portfolio of projects but the thesis remained publicly obscure until its recent publication, personally guided by Muller, as well as the release of a series of unpublished photographs by prominent Sydney photographer Max Dupain that profiles several of Muller's Sydney projects.³⁰

Architectural critic Philip Drew has observed that Muller's work, influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright's style, is more individualistic and independent in its exploration than Wright's, and is very site and culture responsive.³¹ This was noted in correspondence between Wright to Muller in 1956.³² Natural materials and spiritual principles of cultural architecture guide Muller's particular responses in deference to newer synthetic finishes and appropriation of fashionable overseas styles and terms. While Wright's design language had a direct influence upon Muller, it did not undermine Muller's individual expression enabling "his own lights ... pursuing an organic ideal within the Australian context" and a distinct culturally responsive design approach overseas.³³

Drew has concluded that:

Peter Muller occupies an important place in post-war Australian architecture as the leading romantic architect of his time, one who has developed, as an alternative to the modern movement, an organic conception of architecture.(Drew 1980: 572) ³⁴

In interviewing Muller about the concept of 'heritage', it is not one that he has seriously considered. For him it is a new notion in its terminology; one that he does not use in his oral or text vocabulary when talking about his designs, but is allied to his notion of the "disowned project."³⁵ Muller has expressed it as, "... an honourable recognition to have placed upon your work," but often the owners do not wish it.

The Muller house (1954) at Whale Beach, Sydney, is a classic contemporary design that has been extensively compromised by extensions and alterations by the current owners without

consultation with Muller. "Basically the site determined the house" and I "threaded the architecture through the marvellous 200 year old Angophora tree." It is a house that was extensively photographed by Muller and Max Dupain portraying the sculptural arms of the Angophora (*Angophora costata*) branches embracing the house and reflected in the water-filled roofs. "That house taught me how to respond to the site."³⁶

Frustrated with despoliation of a house and studio that Muller personally designed for himself, that expressed his 'reading' of the North Shore landscape characteristics, Muller has written,

*... [that] house [has been] totally ruined over time by insensitive alterations and additions ... including the removal of the magnificent 200 year old Angophora gum tree to make way for an additional room. The grey brickwork and natural timber fascias throughout have been painted white....a disaster. The whole colouring of the house originally co-ordinated with the natural bush setting.*³⁷

Here is a demonstration that the respect for integrity of a design and attribution for the creator was not forthcoming. But this example also possesses a dilemma of the personal moral attachment as the Whale Beach house was Muller's own home and studio for many years and he personally designed it to enable his design-style to evolve and mature.

In the case of the Lance House (1962) in Darling Point, Sydney, Muller was drawn into the demolition discourse about this structure in 2003-04. "I did not have any special feelings about" this house. It was sold by the Lance family, and the new owner wrote to Muller "seeking my okay for demolition; "I replied in writing saying 'okay', 'no problem', " and "I don't care."³⁸ Despite this approach to the original architect, the prospective demolition resulted in an unsuccessful court case wherein legal argument focused on the heritage and architectural significance of the building and thereby the international standing of the architect.

There is a contradiction in the above thoughts. While the Lance House was specifically designed for a client at a particular time and recognising the "occupancy-span" argument, the Muller Whale Beach house opinion contrasts to what a new owner did to this house. Thus, one house was more significant to Muller than the other, both as representative examples of his design work, and the latter possesses personal attachment values. This may demonstrate the value of a third person assessment of significance, in conjunction with the architect rather than rely solely on the architect to assess his own work.

Behind this personal response by Muller is the belief that his designs are for the client at the time to live and evolve in. He 'reads' both the client and the site to realise a design that is more often "conceived as a piece of sculpture." Changes in ownership break this special relationship and thus the house loses its 'design' spirit – "it's sense of place". Such cannot be encapsulated in heritage listings as "how can you preserve the integrity of the building" as expressed by Muller.³⁹

Similarly, "I was not concerned with time" in my designs and their 'historical' occupation and "I wasn't concerned with heritage." "For me, it was the intellectual engagement with the client and the place" that was important. Each design was separate and not evolutionary, as each design was site-responsive yet laden with culturally stylistic explorations.⁴⁰

*In the end, one's photos and memories are really all that is left of the past which is gone and no longer a reality, the future is a concept, not a reality, because it hasn't happened ... only the immediate present is real [sic].*⁴¹

For the IPEC Building state heritage listing, in South Australia, or indeed research leading up to its listing, and subsequent alterations, Muller was not consulted. When discovering the listing, Muller said,

... naturally at first one is quite flattered, but the reality comes later.

*I found that the owners of the buildings are not always pleased and in the case of the IPEC building in Adelaide for example, they decided ... [to alter] its configuration to suit their particular needs and simply rented out the spaces and let the property run down.*⁴²

Muller's particular relationship to time is also an important aspect to his personal view of 'heritage'. In his mind, time is transient. Time in design is linked to the client for whom he designed the house and the occupancy-span of time within which the client resides in the house. Change the client and occupant and you stop time. Thus, demolition is a feasible option once this occupancy-span ceases.

... [I] am more inclined to accept the inevitable ... all is transient ... best to look forward to the next project as if it were your only one [sic].⁴³

But, how do you deal with a dilemma that has recently confronted Muller. In 1964 Muller prepared some sketch designs for Dr Walsh while working in Adelaide on the IPEC project. Design fee payment never eventuated and no construction drawings were thereafter sought. Yet, the house was constructed faithfully to the design sketches, very much in the materiality and ethos of Muller's style, and has been lovingly cared for and respected by two families since c. 1964. It was a complete surprise to Muller to discover that the house existed, and more so that it epitomised and respected his approach and has even experienced bathroom renovations that respect his design integrity. Yet, he did not know it was executed. Where are moral rights positioned in this instance?⁴⁴

The Richardson/'Kumale' house (1956) in Palm Beach, Sydney, is presently being renovated by a series of different architects more recently in direct consultation with Muller⁴⁵. While the house is not heritage listed, it is a portfolio precedent in Muller's mind. In pondering changes to this house, and the substance of this paper, Muller has responded:

... my contention is that one should be free to make changes to one's own designs as [one] sees fit. Historians wish to retain buildings as they were originally conceived but that makes no sense for buildings which are in continuous occupation and need to allow for changes in personal ownership requirements and changes in technology... [in these instances, I support] the strict proviso that the original creator, if still alive, should be involved and in control of all design decision making. Only he really understands how to maintain the integrity of the original concept.⁴⁶

A further question to ponder is, "why do we not ask the living designers which of their executed projects they deem 'heritage' of their genre", and secondly, whether these places should be heritage-listed. Muller certainly has not been asked these questions previously until our interviews.⁴⁷

Professional dilemmas

The Australian *Copyright Act 1968* has laid a framework for moral rights in respect of the integrity of constructed designs but there has been little legal precedent nor procedural framework to ensure that such respect does occur. It is difficult applying this scenario generically for all architecture if you adopt a wider perspective. But clearly where a recently-designed structure, within the ambit of the timelines defined by the *Act*, has obtained heritage registration, there is and should be a greater ethical and procedural responsibility placed upon heritage and planning development administrators and practitioners to ensure respect of integrity of design and authorship is adequately and responsibly ensured because such listing implies the place is of community wealth and legacy to Australians.

Thus, while the *Act* confers rights, there is no formal mechanism to ensure adherence to these rights placing reliance upon professional institute and personal ethical documents and values, and particularly in the situation of a living designer, where one of their designs is being accorded heritage status and thereafter curated.

Heritage practitioners in Australia need to better ensure respect of the integrity of place and authorship in their conservation studies but also in their assessment, renovations and recommendations pertaining to contemporary designed places that have been local, state and national heritage listed.

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Endnotes

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- 41 Muller to Jones, 9 May 2001: 1.
- 42 Muller to Jones, 9 May 2001: 1.
- 43 Muller to Jones, 9 May 2001: 1.
- 44 As a note, the owners of the Walsh house have requested that the address of this residence remains private.
- 45 Editor's note: Overall, there has been 6 architects involved over 8 years, of which only Walter di Qual directly invited Muller's involvement. Muller strongly objected to the

owners the second last set of architect renovation plans and the owners embraced Muller's plans and he is presently involved in partnership in the renovation of this house. Muller to Jones, 24 October 2013:1.

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Going public: The modern heritage house on display

Hannah Lewi

Abstract

This paper investigates issues surrounding the conservation, display and interpretation of modern houses of architectural significance. It draws on a large body of research collected by the author through visits to Modern heritage houses in the UK, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Australia, alongside interviews with heritage curators and conservationists associated with these properties. From this work, three key themes are elucidated: Firstly, the paper examines the status of Modern heritage houses as 'historical documents' and the role they play in the ongoing formation of architectural histories of Modernism. Secondly, the research critically interrogates how conservation, interpretation and display strategies have been modified to the particularities of Modern houses, in contrast to older and more 'traditional' heritage properties. Thirdly, the protection of many Modern houses has involved controversy over their value, and divided opinion as to their appropriateness for public custodianship. Accordingly, the interpretation of these Modern heritage houses has tended to strike a balance between the display of biographical interest surrounding the client and family, and architectural significance. These interpretation motivations are closely considered in terms of the narratives they are communicating to both the visiting public and the expert audience.

As modern twentieth century architecture ages and recedes into the realms of history, surviving examples have increasingly become accepted as valid additions to heritage inventories and protected sites (Whiteley 1995:220-237).¹ In the particular case of modern houses deemed of significance, their 'embalming' as house museums for public display offers one kind of lifeline for the future. The very act of preservation may be seen as antithetical to the ideals of modernist architecture; characterised as distinctive in its celebration of newness and ephemerality and its opposition to age and historicity. However the following account will not pursue this now well-trodden path analysing the paradoxes of conserving modernism. And, as other commentators have pointed out, the conservation movement and modernism did develop hand-in-hand, not merely as adversaries but rather more like antagonistic siblings, each with a different yet in some ways complementary response to progress.² Nor is the particular program of conserving and restoring a modern house easily generalised as antithetical to the ideals of modernism; through their embalming and ongoing care, these houses can maintain some illusion of eternal youth and 'presentness' – not necessarily at odds with their original conception.

The public display of modern domestic exemplars also continues some of modernism's central preoccupations: avant-garde and cubist movements experimented with the creation and staged display of interior modern rooms before and after World War 1; and modern architects often exploited the genre of domestic display when showcasing radically new conceptions of living

to a public audience – for example the display of designs at the Weissenhof Estate, Stuttgart in 1927, and the inclusion of novel pavilions at international expositions such as Charlotte Perriand's model modern apartment at the Salon d'Automne in 1929. This custom of displaying experimental technologies for the home, and innovations for new lifestyles, gained further momentum in the mid-century through the likes of Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion House, the Smithsons' 'House of the Future', and many other examples created for commercial technology developers (Lewi & Smith 2008:633-661).

The genre of the house museum as a form of cultural display has, a long pre-modern pedigree stretching back to seventeenth century antecedents of the 'open house'. Jeremy Aynsley has set out a useful taxonomy of three types of representations of rooms and interiors found in the twentieth century. First, there are ensembles taken from previous locations and reconstructed in museum interiors. These reconstructions place emphasis on the originality of the fabric that is seen as worthy of protection as a museum exhibit. Second, there are interiors that are preserved in their original locations as part of their extant architectural environs. These 'curated houses' may be part of a gallery or museum, owned by a heritage body or private foundation. Third, there are interiors that are drawn, filmed or modelled as representations through which to imagine or sell houses, furniture ensembles and so on (Aynsley 2006:9). It is the second category of the 'curated house' or house museum that is of interest in this paper. The basic functions of preservation, investigation and communication inherent in any museum can be found in a curated house. In a house museum, writes Magalay Cabral; 'the document (object/cultural asset) is the actual space/setting (the building), as well as the collection and the person who owned (or lived in) the house.' (Cabral 2001:41). An understanding of the intimate relations between these categories of *setting*, *collection* and *owner* are critical for the conservation, interpretation and display strategies adopted in house museums. Through a series of case studies of modern houses, the aim here is to tease out some of the connections between conservation, interpretation and display in these houses, alongside an understanding of the transformations enacted when houses pass from being loci of everyday living into sites of public display.³

The two main cases drawn from Australia are the Rose Seidler house in Sydney and Robin Boyd's Walsh Street house in Melbourne. The Rose Seidler house, designed by Harry Seidler in 1950 for his parents, won the Sulman Medal for architecture in 1952 (figure 4). The building still maintains a significant place in the history of Australian modernism as a relatively early and provocatively European modern house. The property was gifted to the NSW government in 1988, with the Historic Houses Trust of NSW maintaining a charter to manage it as a house museum. A full conservation plan for the building, contents and landscaping was prepared by the Historic Houses Trust in 1989 as part of this transfer to public ownership. Harry Seidler was involved in this process and key early decisions in the conservation and display of the property. The museum is open for regular public viewing, tours and functions. The second Australian case house was designed by Robin Boyd for his family in Melbourne in 1958. This property is under the care of the Robin Boyd Foundation which was formed in 2005 as a not-for-profit group dedicated to the promotion of design awareness, design literacy and design advocacy. The Foundation was constituted in a situation of some urgency when Boyd's family offered the property for public sale in 2004, with the aim of transferring ownership to a public body that would take responsibility for the conservation and maintenance of the house and much of its contents. It is not envisaged that the Boyd house will ever function as a formal curated museum house but rather will continue to have a different management agenda of semi-public use associated with the promotion of design innovation.⁴

The Seidler and Boyd houses sit well within a comparable range of international case studies of modern house museums. In terms of the choice of these examples, this study is selective and based partly on opportunities of access. The English sites visited and closely examined to date include: 2 Willow Road in Hampstead London, designed by Erno Goldfinger (1939) (figure 6); the Homewood, designed by Patrick Gwynne in Surrey (1938)⁵ (figure 1); and the Red house, Bexleyheath, designed by Phillip Webb and William Morris (1853 – just squeaking in as modern). All these properties are managed by the National Trust UK. Kettle's Yard, the former home of Jim Ede in Cambridge and now managed by the University of Cambridge as a

house and art museum, comprises the final English example (figure 5). Other European cases studied include the Sonneveld house Rotterdam, designed by the architects Brinkman and Van der Vlugt in 1933 (figure 3), restored under the auspices of the Stichting Volkskracht Historische Monumentum, and now managed by the Netherlands Architecture Institute in Rotterdam; and the Braem House Antwerp, designed by Renaat Braem in 1958 (figure 2), now managed by the Flemish Government Heritage Department. Interviews were conducted with curators, managers and conservationists of these properties.

What unites these houses is that they were designed by the architects or designers themselves as their family residence and sometimes office, except for the Sonneveld house, which was commissioned by the industrialist client who also commissioned the famous Van Nelle Factory by the same architects in Rotterdam. Because of their basic similarities, their comparisons and subtle contradictions can be fruitfully drawn out. These comparisons centre on the aforementioned close relations between the buildings and settings, the collections and owners that have been critical for the implementation of conservation, interpretation, display and management strategies adopted in the house museums. My analysis places more emphasis on the strategies of interpretation and management, and less on the details of their material conservation, which has been the focus of a number of other accounts.⁶ However, no one aspect can be examined in isolation, and the techniques and decisions surrounding material conservation are in many ways inseparable from those of interpretation and display management.⁷ To order the following analysis, the themes of 'significance', 'completeness' and 'duration' are now outlined, followed by some concluding thoughts on the status of the houses as a particular form of public display and historical documentation.

Balancing significance

The attribution of significance or value typically establishes a guiding program for the display and interpretation of properties. In the case of most modern houses, significance typically falls across on the one hand social and biographical value, and on the other architectural and design significance. Some of the case study houses examined were intended from their inception as semi-public demonstrations of how life could be lived anew within an innovative modern environment, while also functioning as private homes. Yet although these attributions of architectural and social significance are inevitably intertwined, they do instigate different and at times arguably conflicting curatorial strategies. Decisions around what emphasis to place on aspects of significance obviously depends in part on the pre-established architectural status of the property. For instance houses like Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye, or Gerrit Rietveld's Schröder house are heavily invested in the canonical narrative of modern international architecture and have thereby called for less augmentation to evoke social significance and inhabitation in favour of architectural and design significance (Overly 2007:77). As a consequence these types of properties tend to project the somewhat stark ambiance of a 'young monument' (Overly 2007:77).

The caricature of the modern house as an unapproachable – even inhuman experiment – indeed presents a dilemma for curators and managing heritage bodies. For example, curators from the National Trust UK assert that the general public finds it 'incredibly difficult to access architecture so needs other ways of understanding the property.'⁸ The austerity of neo-classical architecture and the abstraction of modernism are



Figure 1: The Homewood, Surrey, UK, 1938 by Patrick Gwynne (All photos by the author)

together seen by the National Trust as occupying the pinnacle of such feelings of alienation: 'People respond more easily to painted interiors with light filtering through and its romantic associations'.⁹ However heritage bodies and curators appear keen to temper such public perceptions, and accordingly all the case study houses examined strive for some balance between the evocation of social or everyday interest and architectural value.

Striking this balance to satisfy a range of visitors, all within the limits of time, space and resources for interpretation, issues challenges to curatorial agendas for modern house museums. The architectural specialist may prefer to see a modern house as a study in spatial form or design connoisseurship akin to a monochromatic photograph. However it is assumed that the general public simply would not visit at all without some other evocation of social interest. Despite the rhetoric of balance presented by organisations like the National Trust UK, these potential conflicts in visitor expectations of interpretation may ultimately be irreconcilable. As one conservation architect interviewed on this topic stated:

Well I am a member of the National Trust, and I go around to their country houses. And always find the family story line is massively distracting. Before you get into the dining room – you are being told that that person is the seventeenth cousin of the Fourth Earl of somewhere. I don't care who it is. What I want to know is what are the proportions of this room, and what relationship does this bear to the grand tour, and what was it before ... The default position in the Trust's presentation is "so and so begat so and so". You know it has to be done. But I wonder with the modern stuff if there is not more of an opportunity to offer some sort of alternative narrative as well.¹⁰



Figure 2: Braem House, Antwerp, Belgium, 1958 by Renate Braem

In the modern house museums investigated in this research, specialist design knowledge has been somewhat subdued in interpretation and displays; eclipsed not by the traditional themes of grand histories, but more through the slightly voyeuristic communication of the former domestic life of the owners and their place in society. This social interest is often justified by and provided through an interest in the life of the architects who designed and occupied the houses – their biographies become a hook for displays that can augment the architectural experience and conjure a sense of 'personality' that shapes how the houses are received.¹¹ In some of the properties examined, conventional information boards about the life and importance of the architect-owners are placed in rooms around the houses. Willow Road has such a room with changing displays, and also a film that is viewed on arrival in the converted garage that strongly conveys the architect's voice. Other houses show architectural interest, less through formal didactic signboards and more through

the showing of the architect's personal office – as in Renaat Braem's home-office. While the conservation architect for the Homewood has remarked that the removal of Gwynne's office, and restoration to its original function as a bedroom, was executed according to Gwynne's own strong wishes but was ultimately a mistake as it lost a natural opportunity to expose his architectural archive to visitors.¹² The Rose Seidler house offers a more incidental display of architectural drawings for visitors to look through.

What does appear fairly universal in the range of curatorial strategies adopted is the opinion that conventional signage, and visitor-management strategies like guard ropes, are seen as less appropriate and more intrusive in the intimate setting of a modern house than in other types of heritage sites. To simulate an 'inhabited' home, other genres of information communication are called into play. These include scholarly guidebooks with biographical and social narratives (which the National Trust UK are particularly adept at producing (The National Trust 1996; 2003; 2004), and orchestrated visitor tours. For example, the tour on offer at the Red house when I visited was far more about William Morris's personal life at Bexleyheath than about his contribution to British design. And the tour at the Braem house gave many intimate insights into the architect-owner by the current curator who now lives in the house. Increasingly the short film is introduced as a primer to a visit, thus lessening the burden of interpretation in the rest of the house to follow. Very successful examples can be seen at Willow Road, the Sonneveld and Seidler houses.¹³

Returning to the issue of striking a balance between communicating social and architectural significance, the Rose Seidler house attempts such a balance through attention to the architectural and design value of the site, yet also through the inclusion of furnishings and objects that evoke something of the former everyday life of the house. There are, for example, a few slightly incongruous artefacts displayed in the house like the Viennese silverware set that Harry Seidler's mother Rose preferred to use (when her son was not around). These are seen as important in communicating, through their display, the European ties of the Seidler family and the agenda of 'total modern design' that their son sought to impose on family life (Richards 1994). The house is however primarily a museum of architectural interest rather than a home that documents typical family life in the 1960s. Some researchers have perceived this 'subversion' of social everyday value in favour of architectural status as a shortcoming in the interpretation program of the Rose Seidler house.¹⁴ The Boyd House also aspires to invest the house with architectural and design significance befitting Robin Boyd's place in the history of Victorian and Australian modernism. However, in part due to the more relaxed informality of the original design, there is a strong anti-monumental agenda that drives the desire to exclude conventional museum-like signage or interpretation *in situ*, and to provide very few formal guided tours. In contrast to the other houses, an interesting alternative mode of 'incidental interpretation' has been articulated as the long-term aim for the Boyd house.

Completeness and Empathy

Aside from formal interpretation on aspects of significance, another curatorial dimension that reveals the intimate connections between contents, buildings and owner/designers is how



Figure 3: Sonneveld House, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 1933 by Brinkman and van der Vlugt. (All photos by the author)



Figure 4: TRose Seidler House, Turrumurra, Sydney, Australia, 1950 by Harry Seidler. (All photos by the author)

'complete' the houses are presented in respect to their contents. Through everyday artefacts, furnishings, interior finishes, artworks and so on, parallel narratives can be presented about the houses that are not conveyed didactically through text, signage or films, but rather are shown mimetically and communicated through the integral display of things in their interior and exterior spaces. The selection and placing of objects in rooms on display in a curated house assumes a curatorial plausibility and veracity akin to any conventional museum. Things and rooms take on the gesture of an orchestrated exposition that says to the visitor: "Look! ... That is how it is".¹⁵ As conveyed through the restoration work of conservation architects and curators in each of the houses studied, complete rooms are rendered eloquent as visual tableau of carefully considered themes. As Laan and Wierda have remarked in reference to the Sonneveld house: 'The only way to fully experience what the interior looks like today, and the only way to find out more or less what it must have looked like at the time, is to see the final result of the reconstruction with your own eyes.' (Laan & Wierda 2001:133).

The condition of a house and the completeness of its contents at the time of gifting or acquisition obviously has great bearing on the ensuing conservation and curatorial programs. It is interesting to note that large heritage bodies like the National Trust UK are now being much more selective about what houses they will accept and place on public display. Where once they may have acquired properties essentially to protect them, with contents or not, they would now be unlikely to take on a house without a complete collection: it is the 'complete archaeological layering' of a house and its contents which are together deemed to be really significant.¹⁶ This change is indicative of many heritage organisations' shift away from advocacy and towards public education and curatorial projects.

There is also no doubt that a rich collection will potentially satisfy a far wider audience than merely the architectural specialist. And a rich collection and level of interior finish encourages both empathy for, and envy of, the owners of the houses. For example the Sonneveld house in Rotterdam is valued for its display of 'luxuriousness' as rendered in a modernist language. When the wealthy industrialist family moved into their new modern home they took none of their old nineteenth century furniture with them, but instead entered wholeheartedly into a new conception of affluent modern living. Servants were still present, but accommodated under new social conditions, and lustrous surfaces and furnishings were fashioned in modern, industrial materials. Paul Overy writes: 'At this time modernisation, modernity and modernism could be marshalled to represent a variety of political and social fronts and positions – fascist/ communist, upper middle-class villas/social housing etc.' (Overy 2006:81). Similarly, the Homewood house set in extensive garden grounds in Surrey recreates another English vision of the 'Moderne' plush estate. Here again there is no glimmer of socialist or functionalist notions of modern austerity, as characterised by much modern public architecture and housing. Rather this was a bespoke modern design for the bachelor architect-owner, complete with a wealth of modern furniture, the latest in home entertainment gadgets, a fold-away bar, mirrored walk-in robe rooms, and an exotic blue glass chandelier. At one time the servants' wing housed four servant helpers.

Willow Road also came to the National Trust with a full collection of furniture, art and personal objects. More complete than Homewood, and on a less lavish scale in central Hampstead, Willow Road again certainly seeks a balance between architectural and social/biographical interest. Although the émigré architect Erno Goldfinger is now regarded as occupying an important place in British modernism, it has been acknowledged that the National Trust would not have accepted the house on the strength of its architectural value alone. Through the homely display of detailed collections of personal items, the house gives that desired impression that the owners have recently just stepped out of the premises. Through little clues like the brand of Baked Beans left in the kitchen cupboard, visitors can empathise with the recent past. Similarly the Braem house in Antwerp came to Flemish Heritage with the complete contents of the architect-owner Renaat Braem who had lived there for some 40 years. While Kettle's Yard in Cambridge is perhaps the most extreme example of a modern house where the value resides in the meticulous maintenance of contents and art rather than the architectural design. The owner Jim Ede had accumulated a lifetime's collection of modern British art, artefacts and everyday objects, and he devoted his later years to maintaining an 'open house' in Cambridge for those interested in the

arts. Ede's daily routine of cleaning and arranging objects was both ascetically and aesthetically driven: the artful placement of a ring of pebbles on a dresser revealed a much larger life philosophy. And it was this consciously designed tableau of the domestic environment as a 'total work of art' that maintains the popularity of the house today.

A sense of completeness in the display of interiors in curated houses ultimately assists in creating an illusion of naturalism and quotidian intimacy that a once private home might be able to conjure to a public audience. For the National Trust UK this illusion occurs through what has been described as 'an uninterrupted connection between the eye and the actual; real objects that speak to you about the history of that particular place'.¹⁷ For most curators and managers spoken to in this study, the impression of a temporary recovery of the everyday past is disrupted by overt *in situ* interpretation, although others have critiqued this desire for 'naturalness', seeing it as indicative of a lack of curatorial guidance and innovation, and ultimately elitist in its presumption of prior knowledge.

In complete contrast to the presentation of domestic completeness, the Red house by Webb and Morris was somewhat controversially purchased by the National Trust UK on the open market and has little remaining by way of interiors. Morris only lived there for five years and a lot of his original finishes and furnishings were seen as 'experimental' and 'theatrical'.¹⁸ What did remain was irrevocably altered by subsequent owners, and in some rooms the Morris wallpapers date from well after he actually occupied the house.¹⁹ This lack of completeness contributed to the serious reservations that some in the Trust held about taking on the property, given the importance of furnishings to the legacy of William Morris and the expectations of the local visiting public for a 'complete' house and garden. In addressing this curatorial challenge, it is currently thought that rather than gather replicas and reconstruct earlier fabric, much will be left largely empty along the lines of the presentation of McKim Mead and White's Bell House in the USA, however complex questions around what exact period to 'fix' the display of the much altered house remains a dilemma.

Duration

The conservation of any building presents choices as to which particular date or period to restore the fabric of the building. Because of their relative newness, modern houses perhaps hold fewer of these dilemmas than are normally inherent in older buildings that are typically a complex palimpsest of additions and accretions. Modern houses offer therefore, in theory, an opportunity to present a 'single snap-shot' and a closer approximation of original design intent and 'authenticity'.²⁰ However despite less choices being apparent, the complexities of capturing a sense of duration and 'lived time' within the typical demands of conservation and the cessation of aging, are still profound in modern house museums. Modern construction techniques and materials are often less durable and more unstable than older robust methods and therefore more difficult to conserve. These technical conservation issues have been well discussed elsewhere, but they also impact upon curatorial decisions in modern house museums – for instance paperback book collections and soft cork floors were just two of a number mentioned in the course of this research. In the case study houses examined, approaches range from the total restoration of the house to simulate it as it was when newly designed, to the self-conscious display of wear and tear over time. Guidance on such approaches depends largely on resources available, owner's intentions for future use, and the documentation available to restorers. For instance in the case of the Sonneveld house, a thorough set of detailed photographs



Figure 5: Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, UK, 1958 by Jim Ede



Figure 6: Goldfinger House, Willow Road, London, UK, 1939
by Erno Goldfinger

of the house just after completion provided a reference-point to restore back to a semblance of original newness. The decision was taken to show visitors the house of 1933 as testament to the architect's original intentions to design a unique 'Gesamtkunstwerk' of that moment in time. While at Willow Road, the duration of time that the Goldfinger family lived in the house is partially captured, and similarly at the Homewood, where the decision has been made, for example, to retain the rather extraordinary dark brown kitchen added in the 1970s.

House museums, like other heritage sites, have been criticised for their tendency

to 'freeze' the histories of buildings and objects into just one specific context (Cabray/Cabral 2001:42).²¹ For Aynsley, the reconstructed modern room tableau recreated in a museum setting delivers this 'frozen moment': it is not possible to incorporate into a reconstruction the ways that the occupants lived in and customised the architect's work. In contrast the complete house museum does offer some opportunities to attempt the transcendence of such a fixity of moment (Aynsley 2006:18). This can be approached in a number of ways, from the core conservation strategies about what to restore and remove and how to resolve building fatigue, to the display and interpretation strategies that follow. At Willow Road for instance, the time lived in the house by the Goldfinger family is consciously recreated – used bars of soap received delicate curatorial attention, and new cork pin-up boards were stained with tea to resemble natural fading.

Another way of countering the deathly hand of fossilisation can be found in the manner that houses are visited and used, for how long, and for what purposes. Across the case study houses examined there appears indeed considerable variation in the management and duration of use by the public and by tenants of the properties. Accessibility ranges from the highly staged tour, to the free-roaming visit, to opportunities to stay in the houses or use them for extended functions. These differences are amplified by, and highly contingent upon, the original donors' wishes and the current managing bodies' resources. At Willow Road, despite the outward appearances of homeliness, it is now a public urban museum, and has had to accommodate all the logistics of this official change of status. Similarly the Sonneveld house now forms one of a collection of public museums in the heart of Rotterdam managed by the neighbouring Netherlands Architecture Institute. In contrast, upon Patrick Gwynne's insistence the Homewood remains an inhabited property, preferably by a family tenant.²² This condition was presumably motivated by Gwynne's wish to avoid the total 'museumification' of the house. It has had significant impact on how it can be displayed and visited. The current tour-guide for the Braem house was very much involved in its conservation and now lives there, and his occupation has also affected visitor accessibility and experience. Likewise, to date, the Boyd house has been occupied in various capacities and the intention is to foster appreciation of the property through use, rather than the fleeting and staged tour. This strategy provides a promising model for the appreciation of 'duration'. And while provision for a live-in tenant and extended private uses for properties obviously places many other challenges on the conservation of furnishings and contents, the benefits brought may be a richer appreciation of domestic inhabitation and messy liveability.

Transformations

Three concluding points are raised here and left open for further interrogation. First, while all conservation involves profound change and reconstruction, these changes are particularly acute when enacting any transformation from a private dwelling to a public amenity and museum.

At Kettle's Yard for instance, all efforts have been made to maintain the routines of everyday life established by Ede. However, as Sebastiano Barassi has suggested, the trajectory of change after Ede's departure is one of inevitable 'transformation from a private home to a professionally run organisation.' (Sebastiano Barassi 2002:12). These transformations – wrought through both conservation and curatorial strategies – result in uncanny representations of domestic and intimate settings of everyday life. Anthony Vidler has explored the implications of the uncanny as the *unheimlich* or 'unhomely', and the intimate relations between the homely and the unhomely or the familiar and the strange, in the history of architecture. Vidler explores the uncanny home through themes like haunted houses and ruins, homesickness and nostalgia produced as a reaction to the 'geometric cube' houses of modernism (Vidler 1992:27 & 65). To Vidler's exploration we could add the curated modern house as another powerful exemplar of the architectural uncanny; a meta-museum of the unhomely, where former functions, personalities, daydreams and mess have been permanently expunged. This sense of unease emanates from the representation of the familiar image of a house that is in fact no longer a house and no longer homely. It is arguably this perception of the unhomely that is precisely what curators and heritage organisations strive to counter, but its shadow never quite departs. As a visitor today, one approaches these houses with mixed expectations of both the authority of a museum and the voyeuristic pleasures of visiting a 'home-open'. This uncanny mixture of associations is felt acutely at the Sonneveld house that is now a recognised public 'young monument' in the middle of the city centre. Yet it is one that tells an intimate story, in part made possible by the involvement of the family's grandson in the project, who has remarked on his strange experience of returning to the now restored house of his childhood memories.

Second, the transformation from private house to public amenity, all the case study houses have, despite deceptive appearances, undergone profound changes that aim to purify original design intentions and to distil coherent narratives from their original chaotic state prior to their restoration. As Cabray has suggested, house museums often preserve the 'leftovers' of everyday life that don't belong in other institutions or archives (Cabral 2001:41). The preservation of these leftovers in curated houses inevitably involves, as in any museum, tactics of selection, alteration, distillation and fabrication. A number of commentators interviewed in the course of this research have referred to the desire to preserve some semblance of the muddled vitality of the original houses. For instance the conservator of the Braem house described the most confronting issue of the restoration project as the sorting and sifting of objects deemed of value or junk in an over-stuffed and decaying property.²³ While the somewhat incongruous florid Austro-Hungarian candelabra at Willow Road, which sits on an elegant, modern sideboard designed by Erno Goldfinger, is included as evidence of the idiosyncrasies of personal life. As one curator said; 'it is part of the package, so you don't try and alter it, you show what people are – which is a mess'.²⁴ Similarly, the inclusion of the Viennese silver-set at the Seidler House has already been mentioned. However, these curatorial decisions are exceptions and usually highly orchestrated deceptions. In fact all the houses displayed have, by necessity, been completely and utterly altered, edited, distilled and purified from the muck and tumble of everyday life into clean exemplars of modernism. A statement by the curators of the Sonneveld house powerfully illustrate this point: 'It is necessary to reconstruct the original state perfectly if the atmosphere, hygiene and comfort of this house are to be conveyed as clearly as possible... reconstructed in as pure a form as possible.' (Paijmans & Molenaar 2001:159).

Paul Overy has eloquently summarised that period rooms are 'no longer those rooms or houses themselves, however much they resemble them, or the photographs by which they are so often known.' (Overy 2006:74). So if these curated houses are no longer quite houses in the common sense we understand houses to be, what kind of places, documents or monuments have they become? Through their restoration and interpretation, curated houses and their contents can perhaps best be considered as having been transformed from 'found objects' into *both* historical documents *and* a kind of monument that communicates architectural and social significance to others. Michel Foucault speaks of this transformation as fundamental to the very processes of making modern histories, through which the work enacted on material documentation (books, texts, accounts, registers, acts, buildings institutions, laws, techniques, objects, customs, etc.) changes them into historical monuments of our time:

where, in the past, history deciphered the traces left by men, it now deploys a mass of elements that have to be grouped, made relevant, placed in relation to one another to form totalities ... it might be said that in our time history aspires to the condition of archaeology, to the intrinsic description of the monument. (Foucault 1994:7).

In the case of significant house exemplars discussed in this paper, such transformations enacted by conservation, interpretation and display allows them to be absorbed into the historical canon of architectural precedents. Yet it also renders their definition complex and unique; as a genre of representation they slip between the original built artefact and its simulation. Thus, in conclusion, the peculiar form of display exhibited in curated modern houses resides somewhere between an authentic facsimile of reality, a display or illusory theatre, a set of historical documents, and a monument.

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Endnotes

- 1 Whiteley is commenting on the National Trust UK's decision to acquire Willow Road by Erno Goldfinger, and in this review launches a stinging attack on the, at that time, rather sudden embracing of examples of English modernism into the sanctioned canon of English heritage.
- 2 For one discussion on the links between exhibiting modern rooms and modernism see Aynsley 2006.
- 3 This account does not attempt to summarise basic histories of the case study houses as these have been well documented in many other sources.
- 4 Although at first being under the auspices of the National Trust of Victoria, who assisted in gaining a mortgage for the property, the Boyd Foundation did not initially succeed in raising enough finance to support the mortgage on the property and the status of the house remained uncertain. The Foundation has recently become independent from the National Trust, and is hopefully gaining more financial support from individuals and corporations to maintain the property in public hands. Without this security the Foundation has not been able to enact a complete conservation plan as yet, or full strategy for the maintenance of the property and contents.
- 5 The conservation program and restoration work for both Willow Road and Homewood have been carried out by John Allan and Avanti Architects, UK.
- 6 See, for example, Macdonald nd:85-91; Macdonald, Normandin & Kindred 2007; and Prudon 2008.
- 7 Interview with representatives, curators and conservation architects at the National Trust UK offices in London, July 2007.
- 8 Interview with representatives, curators and conservation architects at the National Trust UK offices in London, July 2007.
- 9 Interview with representatives, curators and conservation architects at the National Trust UK offices in London, July 2007.
- 10 Interview with representatives, curators and conservation architects at the National Trust UK offices in London, July 2007.
- 11 Interview with representatives, curators and conservation architects at the National Trust UK offices in London, July 2007.
- 12 Interview with representatives, curators and conservation architects at the National Trust UK offices in London, July 2007.
- 13 Interview with representatives, curators and conservation architects at the National Trust UK offices in London, July 2007. At this meeting one area discussed was the role of films in interpretation, with one participant commenting that the film seemed appropriate at Willow Road as they had footage available which gave a sense of the architect's voice: 'The Willow Road film was hugely successful ... But there were then lots of other properties thinking "we want a film" – where there was just going to be what I call BBC tea and cake faded shots of roses.'

- 14 For a discussion on the evocation of everyday social value in the Seidler House see Teague 2006:130.
- 15 Mieke Bal calls this assumed authority of exposure 'apo-deictic': 'affirmative, demonstrative and authoritative on the one hand, and opinionated on the other'. See Bal 1996:2-3.
- 16 Interview with representatives, curators and conservation architects at the National Trust UK offices in London, July 2007.
- 17 Interview with representatives, curators and conservation architects at the National Trust UK offices in London, July 2007.
- 18 Interview with representatives, curators and conservation architects at the National Trust UK offices in London, July 2007. 'The philosophy that we are gradually evolving is that that is its moment of real significance as the cauldron and crucible that fed into Morris & co and that to import Morris things from a later period would be to dilute and undermine that essence.'
- 19 Since writing this study, original murals have come to light under existing layers of paint and wallpaper, which have greatly added to the heritage value and authenticity of the interiors.
- 20 Interview with representatives, curators and conservation architects at the National Trust UK offices in London, July 2007.
- 21 Life is not reproduced in a house museum, it is represented – like any other museum, which is, par excellence, the space for representing the world and its things. Moreover, objects have histories and trajectories, and the reconstruction of ambience 'freezes' the objects into just one specific context.' See Cabral 2001:42.
- 22 When I visited the house in 2007, it was not yet open to the public in part because of delays in finding a suitable tenant that could live in, and have open access to, all parts of the house.
- 23 Interview with conservator and curator of the Braem House, July 2007.
- 24 Interview with representatives, curators and conservation architects at the National Trust UK offices in London, July 2007.



Heritage and the modern house

Peter Lovell

Abstract

This paper explores the tension that can arise between current ways of living and expectations of the domestic environment and the physical limitations of the modestly scaled modernist houses of the early post-war period. This is examined through a series of case studies which explore the general sub-theme of *the single house under threat* in the context of heritage planning legislation, the original architect's design intent and current owners' requirements.

Introduction

Urban conservation practice in Australia has now moved well into the twentieth century in the awareness and recognition of the more recent past. Numerous places of the post-World War 2 period are individually recognised for reasons of cultural heritage significance, as increasingly are areas and precincts which reflect the extraordinary investment in post-war development and growth. And yet if one compared the numbers of Victorian or Federation buildings with post-war buildings which were protected by individual or area heritage controls the figures would be vastly different. This disparity reflects many factors; popular disenchantment with Modernism, the utilitarian nature of post-war housing, notions of disposability, on occasions the poor quality and hazardous nature of materials, the predominance of the popular view of heritage as picturesque, and 'old' and the abiding sense that the post-war period is still the recent past and that insufficient time has elapsed to permit dispassionate assessment.

In many respects the basic challenge of raising awareness of such places is similar to that faced in the 1960s with our nineteenth century heritage. The difference, however, is that 50 years on, the community is far more aware of cultural heritage and has an increasingly informed view. The Modern house or housing estate of the post-war period is not a place which fits easily within what contemporary communities necessarily view as heritage. They are still places which rely on knowledge and visual appreciation of a built form, and for many are an acquired taste. Their identification is one which is still likely to rely on the traditional assessment of architectural values and analysis of stylistic purity rather than on strong historical or social values. The questions to be asked are; is it architect designed, who was the architect, where does it sit in their oeuvre, was it recognised in awards? well ahead of questions of history, ownership and place in patterns of development.

The modern house in a heritage planning context

Some of the challenges faced in addressing the Modern house in a heritage planning context are evidenced in a recent planning application which was appealed to the Victorian Civil and

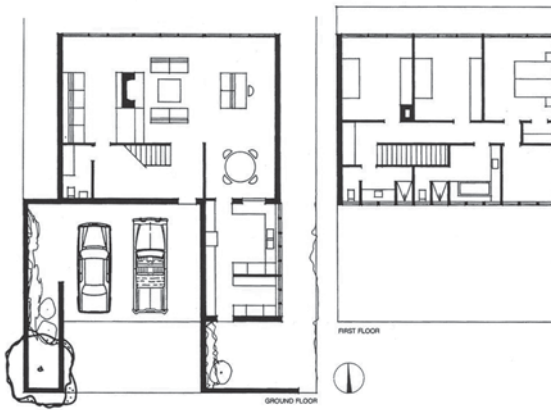


Figure 1: Indicative plan of the Bardas House by Guilford Bell, 1958.
(Source: The life work of Guilford Bell, architect 1912-1992)

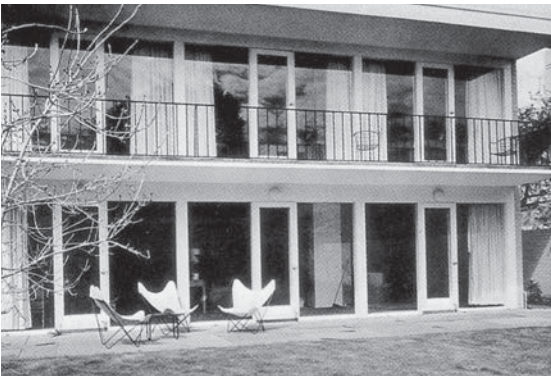


Figure 2: Rear elevation of the Bardas House by Guilford Bell, 1958.
(Source: The life work of Guilford Bell, architect 1912-1992)



Figure 3: 222 Domain Road, South Yarra by Roy Grounds, c.1958.
(Source: State Library of Victoria, Peter Wille collection)

are recognised for heritage reasons and which the Lovell Chen office has had to address in two recent projects.

The Yarra Boulevard precinct

In 2008, Lovell Chen was commissioned by the City of Boroondara to review proposed heritage precincts in the suburbs of Kew and Camberwell. The precincts had been identified in 2005-

Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). The case involved the demolition of the Bardas house, by Melbourne architect Guilford Bell. Designed and built in 1958, the house was one of a group of Melbourne architect-designed houses of the 1950s which turned their backs on their street, focusing habitable spaces onto internal garden areas (figures 12 & 2). The Bardas house was not the first of these and followed examples by others, including Roy Grounds (figure 3), Yuncken & Freeman and Robin Boyd. It does appear to be the first of such houses where Bell himself pursued this approach, but considered in the context of his work overall and the work of his contemporaries, does not stand out as a place of individual significance.

The matter before the VCAT was the demolition of the existing building, which was ungraded, but located in a heritage overlay precinct under the provisions of the Melbourne Planning Scheme. While acknowledging that the house was considered to be 'an interesting example of what progressive architects were producing in those years' the Tribunal decision was to permit demolition, assessing amongst other matters that the building was not an important work of the architect and was not a forerunner of the later work for which Bell is generally celebrated (VCAT 2008). A further factor in the decision was that the house made no explicit contribution to the streetscape in which it was located or to the precinct as a whole.

The issues raised in this case are those which arise for many Modern houses where the public realm presence can be unprepossessing, the architecture is internalised and concealed, and a conventional response to context is lacking. They are issues which it can be anticipated will be debated at length in the future as more buildings of this ilk

06 during an earlier project which involved the review of individual building gradings. The 2008 review examined 14 areas, nine of which were recommended for protection by way of heritage overlay controls under the Boroondara Planning Scheme. Of the nine, one, the Yarra Boulevard precinct in Kew, was identified on the basis of the high concentration of post-World War 2 architect-designed housing. The assessment of buildings within the precinct in relation to individual and precinct values raised a number of issues, particularly as related to comparative analysis and the impact of alterations and additions. This second issue also gave rise to consideration of the management of such places in a planning context where the focus of most heritage planning controls is on streetscape and public realm presence.

The Yarra Boulevard precinct in Kew is one of the most architecturally diverse in the City of Boroondara. While containing a scattering of houses of the late Victorian and Federation periods, the dominant phases of development are those of the interwar and post-war periods. In each phase there is strong representation of the work of prominent architects with, on occasions, quite dramatic contrasts in built form and style.

Located on land sloping steeply down to the Yarra River, the earliest sales in the area occurred in the 1840s when a number of large estates were established. These were progressively subdivided and re-subdivided in the later nineteenth century but much of the land remained undeveloped. With difficult access and lack of transportation links it was not until the 1930s that development began in earnest, largely as a consequence of the construction of the Yarra Boulevard (1931-33) on the western edge of the precinct. This resulted in two new subdivisions; the 30 lot Boulevard Estate in 1940 and the New Boulevard Estate a few years later. The interruption of World War 2 and prohibition on civilian building meant that development was again delayed and it was in post-war years that activity re-commenced.

While construction during the interwar periods of development had focused on the more accessible lots, it was in the post-war period that the more steeply sloping sites were addressed as ideally suited to Modernist forms. Located in a remnant bushland setting, the houses often perched on their lots. Steep driveways lead to undercroft parking beneath exposed structural framing on which asymmetrical cubic forms with large expanses of glass provided panoramic views to the city. Flat roofs, strong horizontal lines, shading devices, lightly framed balconies and unadorned use of brick, steel and concrete were typical features of many compositions.

In his exploration of the architecture of the area, Conrad Hamann identifies Enriched Modernism, Post-war and mainstream Modernism along with the 1960s continuation of these modernisms as the particular strengths (Hamann 2009:13). Containing a number of outstanding examples of each of these design phases, mostly linked with prominent architects and



Figure 4: Robin Boyd's Wilson House, 25 Dunlop Avenue, Kew, 1955-56, appeared as a floating box over an open undercroft. (Source: State Library of Victoria, Peter Wille collection)



Figure 5: 2005 view of the house with altered glazing and infilled undercroft. Managed changes which can be reversed. (Photo: Kate Paterson, Lovell Chen)

owners, the area is one which stands out in a Melbourne context such that it is well worthy of recognition for heritage reasons.

Equally it is an area in which the difficulty in managing and responding to such places with regard to the heritage values is evidenced in works which have occurred over more recent times and in the absence of any heritage controls. These works are the result of the inevitable desire or need for owners to upgrade, to modernise, to expand accommodation and to improve the ability for the buildings to respond to a contemporary lifestyle. They are changes which, on occasions, reflect the sometimes modest nature of the building and the fact that the materials and structures are a product of the limitations placed on early post-war construction. The changes which have occurred range from minor and easily reversible, to major; such that the original form is fundamentally challenged.

In observing the changes (figures 4 & 5) it is evident that the guidelines which typically apply in such heritage areas require refinement if they are to manage heritage places where the three dimensional qualities of the place are critical to the maintenance of significance.

The existing local heritage policy which applies to the Heritage Overlay area in the Boroondara Planning Scheme sets out broad objectives in relation to conservation of places of significance and provides guidance for works, including alterations and additions. As with many such heritage guidelines in the planning context, these tread a fine line between the conservation of the heritage place, in which management of heritage is limited to visible fabric in a public realm context and the broader consideration of conservation of the place within a precinct. While now refined and evolved, the guidelines have developed from those framed 25 or more years ago for use in the context of typical inner suburban terrace housing and Victorian and Federation villas. As such, their focus remains on the public presentation of the place and they lack the explicit guidance which is required in addressing works to buildings in which the architectural planning and three dimensional qualities may be as important as the presence in and presentation to the street. For such buildings, the infilling of an undercroft or a courtyard, a second storey, new openings, a changed glazing pattern, or the removal of a shading device can all be actions that can alter the place so that those values which go to its significance are compromised or possibly destroyed.

If examples of the Modern house are to be meaningfully conserved within a local heritage planning context there needs to be a careful re-examination of the relationship between values and the management of material change. In particular there needs to be a review of the guidelines which are applied in considering works to such places. Guidelines need to prompt an analysis of the place such that the values which contribute to significance are identified and greater scope is provided for tailored solutions which respond to those values, albeit on occasions that they are values which are not immediately appreciated in a public context. In the Yarra Boulevard precinct, where one objective is to conserve the Modern house, conserving what is visible without consideration of the whole will lead to a poor outcome. In moving to the next stage of the process new guidelines need to be crafted which respond to the particular needs of these places and which will enable the management of material change in a way which remains relevant as the environment in which heritage exists continues to evolve (figures 6 & 7).

Farfor Flats

Over the same period of time that the Boroondara heritage review was taking place, Lovell Chen was also in the process of designing alterations and additions to two Robyn Boyd-designed units located on the Mornington Peninsula at Portsea (figures 8 to 15).

The Farfor Flats complex was constructed in 1968 for Mrs Imogen Farfor. Mrs Farfor commissioned prominent architect Robin Boyd of the firm Romberg and Boyd to design the flats, which were conceived as four separate holiday houses, each with its own courtyard/kitchen garden and three-car carport. The remainder of the site, including a garden and driveway, was designated on the original strata title as common property. This arrangement was facilitated by the introduction in 1967 of the *Strata Titles Act*. This Act introduced the concepts of

the body corporate, common property, lot entitlement, lot liability and special provisions for support, transmission of services and the like.¹ Imogen Farfor retained one of the units for herself, and the other three units were variously sold or passed to members of Mrs Farfor's family.

The Farfor Flats complex was designed for a long narrow site extending north from Point Nepean Road to the cliff top over the foreshore at Portsea, on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula. The four units were positioned in two pairs, each pair sharing a party wall. Units 1 and 2 fronted the cliff top overlooking the sea, while units 3 and 4 were located at the southern end of the site. A driveway extended from the road and along the eastern side of the site, curving around between Unit 3 and the two northernmost units, Units 1 and 2.

Boyd's own description of the complex, as included in his 1970 publication, *Living in Australia*, was as follows:

This group of holiday houses at Portsea, Victoria, was built in 1968 on a long, comparatively narrow site running between the highway and a cliff above the bay beach. The four units are identical, but each has its own private, and in some way different, outlook from the long window-wall of its main rooms. Each of these window-walls opens to a terrace, over which the roof tilts up abruptly to give cover from the rain while allowing a deeper penetration of sun. Instead of a passage, a semi-outdoor garden space, roofed but only screened on one side, serves as a general hall. (Boyd and Strizic 1970:60)

The buildings are simple, generally flat-roofed, single-storey structures constructed of brick and timber. The external appearance was dominated by the terrace elevation, where a row of floor-to ceiling glazed windows and sliding doors opened onto a terrace.

Above was the dramatic form of the verandah roof, tilted up at a 45 degree angle and supported by substantial timber props (figure 10). Other than for this very distinctive elevation, the buildings were simple and understated and finished in white painted brick and exposed Western Red Cedar joinery and linings.

The units are thought originally to have been identical in plan form and fabric (figure 9). Each contained a living room and master bedroom facing onto the terrace. A small galley-type kitchen was linked to the living room and looked over a small enclosed courtyard. The other rooms – bathroom, laundry and bedroom/s – opened off one side of a passage, the other side of the passage providing access to the courtyard and carport.

The passage was a particular feature of the houses (figure 11), having been designed to be partially open to the elements, one side being enclosed only by insect screening (flywire). This blending of the inside and outside was also expressed through the creation of a pebbled garden (comprising pebbles, paving and some planting) within the passage itself. Notwithstanding the consistency of overall plan form, it would appear that the details of the design of each unit may

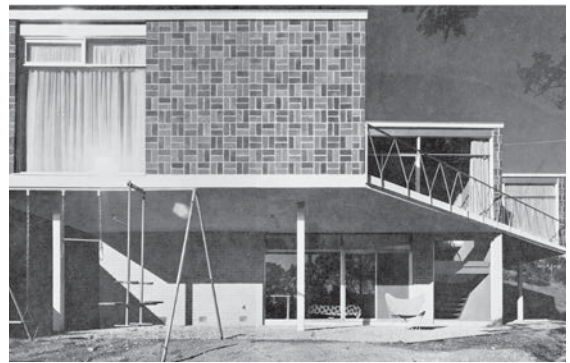


Figure 6: Gerd and Renate Block's Biancardi House at 20 Yarra Street, Kew (c.1958) (Source: Neil Clerehan, *Best Australian Houses*, 1961)



Figure 7: The house at 20 Yarra Street now set behind a major new addition. Albeit enclosed, the plan and program of the original concept have been maintained. (Photo: Peter Lovell, 2008)

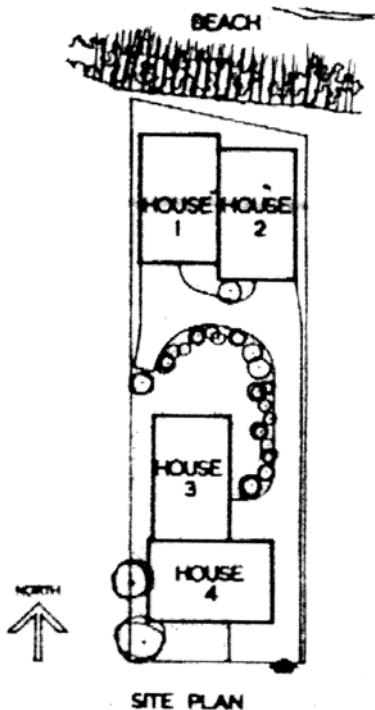


Figure 8: General layout of the Farfor Flats showing the alignment of the curved driveway. (Source: Boyd and Strizic, 1970)

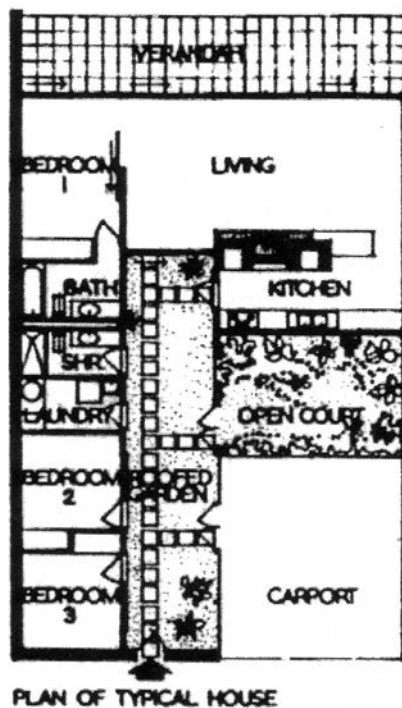


Figure 9: Plan of a typical unit. (Source: Boyd and Strizic, 1970)

have undergone some minor variations during construction, presumably to suit the particular requirements of the future occupants. For example, the terrace to Unit 1 was paved with slate, while the other terraces had 18"x18" (450mm x 450mm) precast concrete pavers.² There is also the suggestion that at Unit 2 glazing was substituted for the insect screen in the passage.

Like many of Boyd's commissions, the complex has been described in a number of architectural publications, both in the period following its completion and subsequently. *Cross-Section* (May 1969) noted that the design of the complex and the siting of the individual houses produced 'an interesting massing and privacy for each'. *Cross-Section* also remarked upon the holiday house quality of the design:

The planning and finishes of white painted brick and a great quantity of 'natural' Western Red Cedar establish an atmosphere of holiday informality, and the timbered 'Guest House', the wet and coolness of trellised ferneries, and evokes the pleasurable qualities of stick timber. (*Cross Section* 1969)

Farfor Flats was also one of a large number of Boyd buildings identified and illustrated in the special issue of *Architect* published in late 1971, following Boyd's death. Reference has also been made to Farfor Flats in more recent surveys of Boyd's career and work, including Philip Goad's article on Boyd's residential work of the period 1959-71, in the special Boyd issue of *Transition*, published in 1992 (Goad 1992).

All four units had undergone varying degrees of alteration with the greatest changes occurring in the two landward units where additions and alterations have been made at ground level.

The new works

Lovell Chen was approached by the new owners of Unit 1 to refurbish the unit as a permanent residence. Of all the units, Unit 1 was the more substantially intact and essentially retained its original plan form and much of Boyd's original detailing. It was a building conceived of as a

holiday house, simple and lightweight in construction and relatively basic in its facilities. Living spaces were adequate but not generous and bedrooms modest to small. Externally, as with the development as a whole, the presentation was focused on privacy and, to a degree, concealment, with the principal external design feature concealed from public view.

The brief for Unit 1, and subsequently received for Unit 2, required a transformation of the houses to meet the expectations of both clients. The more substantial challenge was to deliver increased living space and overall accommodation. As a key principle it was considered that that any works to the units needed to be addressed within a 'master plan'. While the brief for each unit was unique to the client, there was acceptance by both that the external form needed to present as a whole, maintaining Boyd's concept. For both clients the additional accommodation was achieved with the construction of a second level. The design followed the principles conceived of by Boyd, maintaining the form and materiality of the original houses. An L-shaped plan form was utilised which enabled retention of the original internal courtyard space which was a key aspect of the original pebbled arrival gallery. While the mass of the addition sits forward of the Boyd location for an addition, it maintains a sufficient setback to allow the steeply sloping sun scoop to remain the dominant feature of the elevation.

At ground level the initial response was to maintain the entry gallery space in Unit 1 and interpret the same space in Unit 2 where it had been largely reconfigured. Over time however, it became clear that delivering Boyd's concept of an outdoor space within the house would not meet the client's expectations and progressively this space was also modified with replacement of the flywire screen with glazing and replacement of the pebble and paving floor (figure 12). Internally the changes revolve around the maintenance of the arrival sequence but with the relocation of bedroom spaces to the new upper floor and expansion of the living spaces in the area which previously accommodated both living and bedroom spaces.

The approach to the design of the second level addition was informed by a drawing prepared by Boyd's office in July 1968 for an addition to Unit 2. This placed a second level to the rear of the unit over the entry and carport area. The design incorporated the same steeply pitched light-scoop verandah roof as located on the lower seaward elevation.

The Farfor Flats raised many of the issues which confront architects and designers in managing the Modern house in the twenty-first century. Of often lightweight construction and clad in

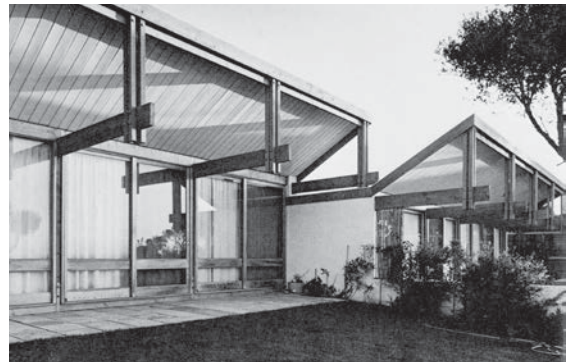


Figure 10: This view of Units 2 (on left) and 1 (on the right) was published in *Living in Australia* in 1970. (Source: Boyd and Strizic, 1970)



Figure 11: The original layout of the pebble garden-come-passageway. This is thought to be a photograph of Unit 1. (Source: Boyd and Strizic, 1970)



Figure 12: The modified passage/pebble garden following the works.
(Photo: Hin Lim, 2009)



Figure 13: View of the second level addition from the courtyard, Unit 1.
The addition is largely unseen when viewed externally.
(Photo: Hin Lim, 2009)

materials which have a limited life span, they are not buildings which are readily adapted without a relatively significant level of intervention. While some are of such significance so as to warrant preservation, many are simply good examples of their type. The ability to retain such places depends upon accepting a degree of change, but ideally pursued with an understanding of the fundamentals which make such places significant.

As noted by architectural historian Alan Powers, the challenge for the practitioner in preserving the Modern house is one of *essence* and *substance* (Powers 2001). These are places where the qualitative values of program and style may well surpass the quantitative values of material and fabric. While the conservation of any place is inextricably about both, the emphasis of one over another may result in a quite distorted outcome. Form, function and fabric need to be fully understood as the basis upon which intervention occurs and is managed so that the values which go to significance are maintained.

Conclusion

The 2008 survey and review of the Yarra Boulevard precinct in Boroondara confirms the wealth of post-war architect designed houses which survive in such areas, and their fragility and vulnerability. While statutory heritage protection by way of heritage controls may be implemented in this particular area there are others where it will not. Identifying and recognising the importance of these buildings must be a priority in the process of ongoing heritage surveys and assessments if we are to retain those examples which are important as opposed to those which

simply survived. Along with the process must be an ongoing process of education about and promotion of these places such that current and future generations recognize their value. There must also be the development of appropriate management tools to ensure that the process of conservation is relevant and realistic, including the precise identification of values which support significance.

Writing in *Modern Houses Melbourne*, 30 years ago, architect and commentator Norman Day commented in relation to guidelines then in preparation by the National Trust, 'When these guides are adopted universally the character of streets from our past can be recreated while allowing for the necessary renovation and improvement demanded by the contemporary owner'

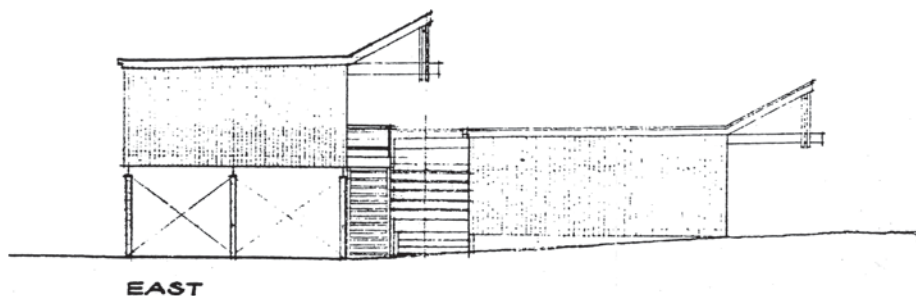


Figure 14: July 1968 drawing for the proposed second level for Unit 2.
(Source: Farfor Flats job file, Grounds Romberg & Boyd archive, State Library of Victoria)



Figure 15: The restored sun scoop to Unit 2. (Photo: Hin Lim, 2009)

(Day 1976:98). His comments were made in relation to very sensitive additions by architect John Kenny to a Victorian terrace house located in St Vincent Place, Melbourne. In looking at our 'unloved Modern', it is evident that we need new guidelines which address the particular issues which arise in conservation of these buildings and which continue to balance the desire and need to conserve with the demands and expectations of the contemporary owner.

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Endnotes

- 1 Previously, arrangements of this kind - involving several houses or units on one site but in separate ownership - were possible, but could not be organised on the basis of a straightforward subdivision *per se*. Rather, such arrangements could be achieved through a company share system or through variations introduced in the late 1950s and 1960s to the provisions of the Local Government Act and/or the Transfer of Land Act. *Survey Practice Handbook*, 1994.
- 2 Information from Farfor Flats job file, Grounds Romberg & Boyd archive, State Library of Victoria.



Book Review

Where Land Meets Sea: Coastal Explorations of Landscape Representations and Spatial Experience

Anna Ryan, Ashgate, 2012
ISBN 9781409429357 (hbk)

The book presents the research of Anna Ryan on her pursuit of 'an engagement with the concept of landscape, interrogating it as construct and questioning its material presence' (Ryan, 2012; 4). The field research focuses on coastal landscapes and the associated spatial experience of local communities. It questions the suitability of the term landscape when considering the physical and more-than-physical world and moves to generate awareness of the relationship between self and surroundings.

She develops the term *surroundings* as a substitute for the traditional term *landscape* to emphasise a broader understanding of the relationship of people and their local environment. This exploration of the spatial experience between the natural world and its local cultural interpretation is well constructed and convincingly articulated.

The book is illustrated with artworks from established professional artists and contributions from the research participants. It commences with a discussion of the experiential qualities and spatiality of human engagement with the coastal interaction of sea and land. Ryan engages with the writings of philosophical, geographical and architectural thinkers, primarily associated with the relationship between body, mind and context. She sets up discussions on geography and research methodologies, leading to the presentation of the field research focused on the Irish coast.

Over 60 participants are recruited to investigate the two coastal locations of Ireland: the South Wall of Dublin Bay, with an urban population and the Maharee Peninsula, which is home to a rural community. The participants were strangers to Ryan and were approached in public places including roads, pubs and at the coast. They were given a disposable camera and a location specific note. The South Wall participants were asked why they came to the location. The Maharee participants were asked what they thought was important about the location. A similar exercise was conducted with some participants asked to draw, rather than photograph.

The period between the participants taking photos and discussing their experience with Ryan took an average of one to two months. Ryan describes her role in these discussions as more of a facilitator rather than an interviewer, preferring to run the discussions informally with no planned questions. Aided by the photos or drawings Ryan discussed with the participants their lived experience of interacting with the ambiguities of the coast's fixed land and its shifting sea. The participants were perceived as placed within their surrounds, rather than as simply observers. Their reflection of coast as local lived experiences is not deconstructed but

recognised as instructional within itself. Ryan considers this method of participation 'is not so much a tool *of* the project; the methods *are* the project' (ibid: 117).

The investigation of these participant experiences expressed in the form of photos and drawings can be linked beyond Ryan's research to the visual arts methodology of practice-led research, where artists engage with their surroundings to producing active expressions of space, place, time and emotion.

Throughout the book, Ryan expands her consideration of the physical and more-than-physical world and notes 'The aspiration of this research is to encourage a deep awareness of one's relationship with one's surroundings, and in this way to draw more conscious attention to one's unconscious embodied special sensibilities' (ibid: 125).

While the research fieldwork is focused on the Irish coast and community, links can be made to other local cultures, including indigenous cultures that live the experience of a physical, emotional and spiritual relationship with nature. Ryan makes reference to Siberia, the Arctic and the Sahara to demonstrate that a 'given environment appears as place-ful for one group of people and as "empty wilderness" for others' (ibid: 4). In concluding, Ryan looks beyond her research toward an investigation of 'surroundings as a valid representation and conceptual understanding of spatial experience' (ibid: 258).

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