



Melbourne's 150th

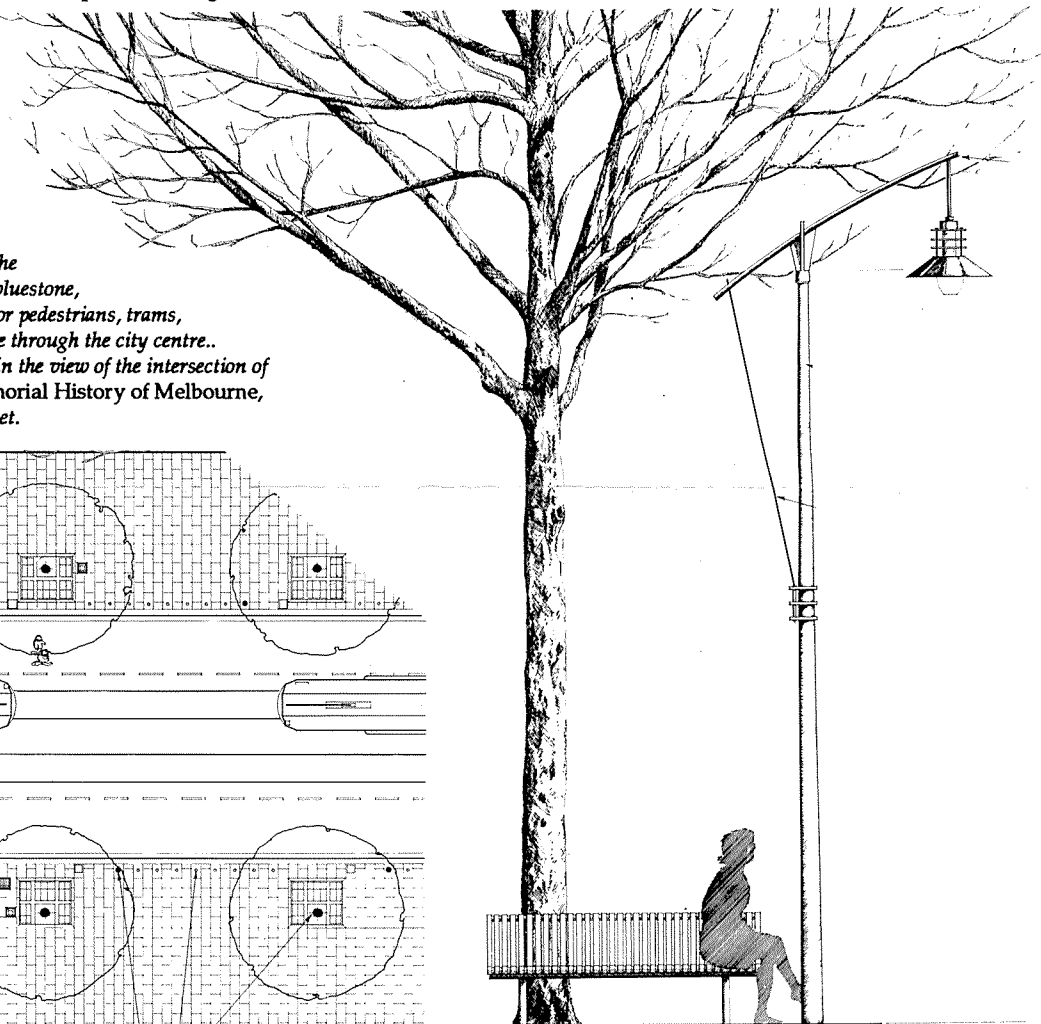
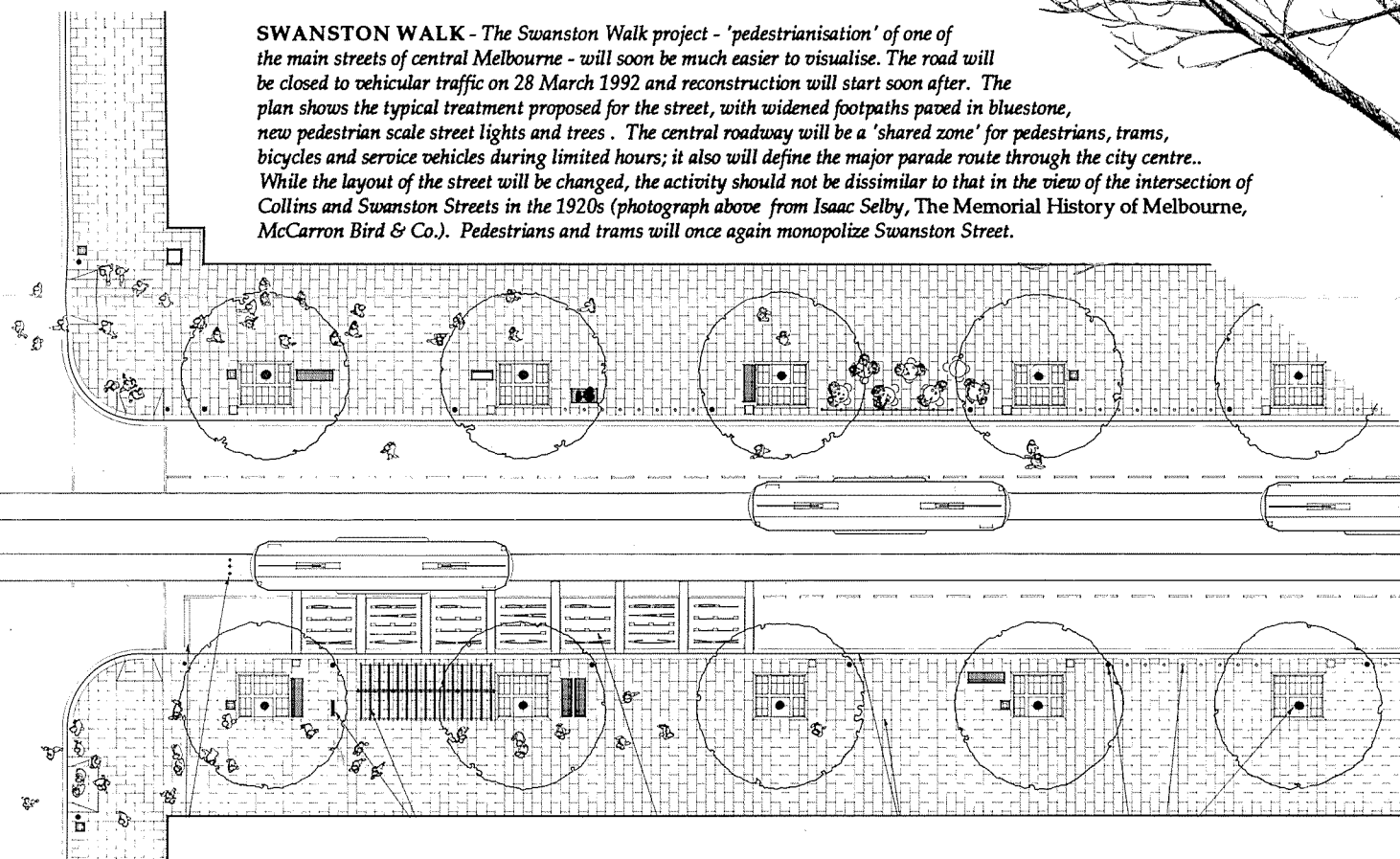
1992 represents 150 years of Local Government within the City of Melbourne. It is a year that finds the City at a crucial stage in its development. The 1980's with its runaway enthusiasm for commercial development saw massive physical changes to Central Melbourne. The current 25% vacancy rates in office buildings is seen by many as a disaster scenario and in many ways for the short term, it may well be. Much activity at street level has been lost, replaced by the corporate identity and the blandness of many new buildings. The future however is far from gloomy. The city is forced to re-evaluate its priorities with the fabric and building stock of the Central Activities District ripe for the introduction of Central City housing. The catalyst for much of this work in the next decade will be the foundations laid in the next few years. The Swanston Street proposal will be a catalyst for change, but is only one of many initiatives being undertaken to revitalise central Melbourne over the next few years. Fundamental to the vitality of Central Melbourne will be the effective use of wider Metropolitan Planning. There is an urgent need to think and plan on a regional level, and for the

State Government to show greater conviction in its regional planning. The seemingly arbitrary decision of Toronga and Nicholas sites can only slow the process of central city revitalisation.

There is also a need to judge the proposed changes in the time frame appropriate for cities, one of decades, rather than years. Swanston Street will not be an over night success, it will take ten years to develop its character. We need to show that we have the maturity and patience to wait for those things that are worth having. 150 years is a very brief moment in Urban Development.

While talking about waiting. Urban Design Forum has waited 18 editions to become international. Having early on become interstate, this edition now spawns a new arm of urban design in New Zealand. Two of the articles on the Auckland Waterfront Development and Auckland's Aotea Square are the first of a number of articles to be run on urban design in New Zealand where our new correspondent will be Stewart Niven Welcome New Zealand!!

SWANSTON WALK - The Swanston Walk project - 'pedestrianisation' of one of the main streets of central Melbourne - will soon be much easier to visualise. The road will be closed to vehicular traffic on 28 March 1992 and reconstruction will start soon after. The plan shows the typical treatment proposed for the street, with widened footpaths paved in bluestone, new pedestrian scale street lights and trees. The central roadway will be a 'shared zone' for pedestrians, trams, bicycles and service vehicles during limited hours; it also will define the major parade route through the city centre. While the layout of the street will be changed, the activity should not be dissimilar to that in the view of the intersection of Collins and Swanston Streets in the 1920s (photograph above from Isaac Selby, The Memorial History of Melbourne, McCarron Bird & Co.). Pedestrians and trams will once again monopolize Swanston Street.



Francis Tibbalds

The recent untimely death of Francis Tibbalds, after a long illness, is a significant loss to the world of architecture and town planning. He may be known to readers through his recent work in Melbourne, or through his efforts over a thirty year career in the UK to champion the cause of urban design.

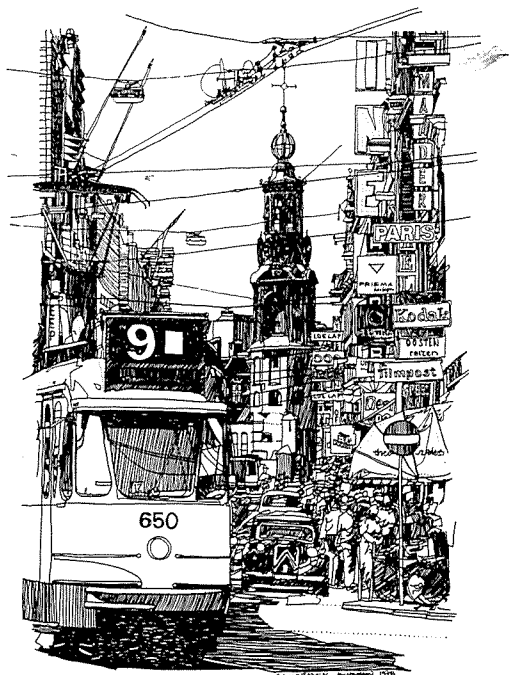
Tibbalds completed his architectural and planning education in London during the redevelopment of the 1960's. At a time when urban design was relegated to a minor role, he was motivated by its historic importance, and worked towards this in a variety of government and consultancy roles. He was principle architect planner on the Milton Keynes Plan, Deputy chief Planning Officer for Lambeth Council, and after working with Llewellyn-Davies, including planning new towns in Nigeria and the Middle East, started his own practice. Tibbalds was influential in re-integrating urban design into the British

planning process, and into planning and architectural education. This was the focus of his endeavours, as founding chairman of the Urban Design Group (1979-86), as the president of the royal Town Planning Institute (1988) and as visiting Professor to design schools.

As president of the RTPI his passionate and often outspoken calls for high quality in the production of the built environment and countryside made many headlines, and a highly imaginative contribution to planning; it was the highlight of a brilliant career. In addition to his abilities as architect, planner, urban designer and accomplished lecturer, he was a fine draftsman, and will be remembered by his delightful sketches of urban scenes.

In a society which tends to be run largely by committees, such outstanding and uncompromisingly committed personalities are indeed rare and inspiring.

Clive Alcock



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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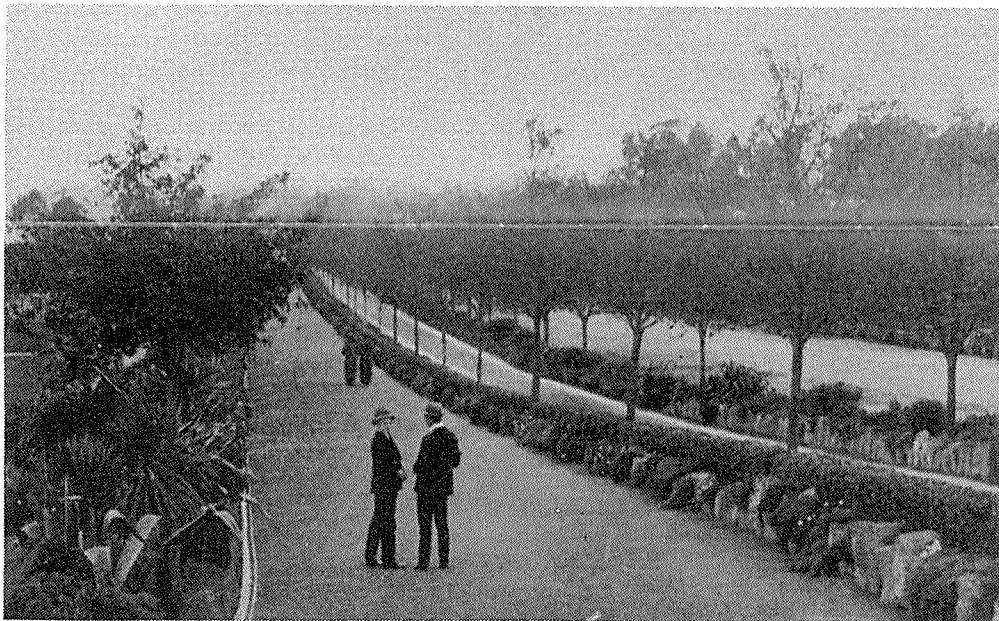
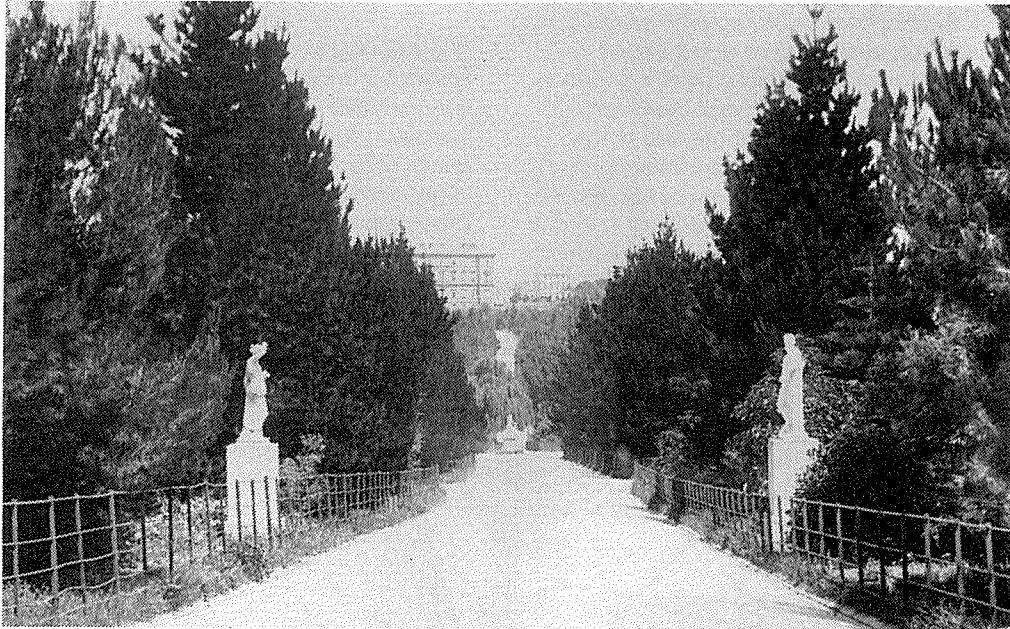
(Please send contributions in original hardcopy form; 600 words max. and include photos or diagrams if applicable)

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Streets are older than Holdens

by Georgina Whitehead and Ron Jones

'Streets are the most extensive and intensively used open spaces in Melbourne . . . They affect the activities and perception of all things in the city centre.' Grids and Greenery, 1987.



Top: View west along the Hotham Walk in the Fitzroy Gardens, Melbourne, c. 1870 when it was a pedestrian thoroughfare into the city (LaTrobe Library Picture Collection).

Middle: Alexandra Avenue in 1913 when, although a street, its sole purpose was to cater for recreational activities (Melbourne City Council Archives).

Bottom: Alexandra Avenue 1992, the route, no doubt, of many of Hodgkinson's successors.

LAST CENTURY, walking was the only means of transport for many people and the main users of streets were pedestrians. This informed the layout of paths in the Fitzroy, Treasury and Flagstaff Gardens which were designed in the 1860s by Clement Hodgkinson, the Assistant Commissioner of Crown Lands and Survey, who every day walked from his home in East Melbourne to his office in William Street opposite the Flagstaff Gardens. The paths in these gardens could almost be regarded as part of the street system as they were planned to provide pedestrians with a direct route into the surrounding streets. Indeed, well before the Fitzroy Gardens were established the main pedestrian thoroughfare between the city and East Melbourne was along the line of the Hotham Street Walk.

In contrast, one of Melbourne's busiest boulevards was not designed as part of the traffic network. Alexandra Avenue was conceived as a park drive 'somewhat similar to Rotten Row in London'. In conjunction with the flood mitigation works which straightened the Yarra's course between Princes Bridge and Anderson Street at the turn of the century, Alexandra Park was created along the river's south bank. Its principal feature was a boulevard over sixty metres wide divided into a carriage drive banned to commercial traffic, a tan track for equestrian use, a bicycle path and pedestrian path, each section separated by avenues of oaks, elms, planes and silver poplars.

Shortly afterwards, the southern approach to Princes Bridge was remodelled. St Kilda Road, which narrowed considerably between Nolan Street and the bridge, was widened to sixty metres to conform with the rest of its length and the central medians planted with trees and shrubs. New ornamental reserves were created on the road's west side - Snowden Gardens and a twenty metre wide plantation which displayed the statue of Robert Burns - both now consumed by the arts complex. The city's main entrance was transformed from a mere roadway into a formal approach through a decorative garden setting contiguous with the parklands of the Domain.

Although Alexandra Avenue was intended purely for recreation, its development coincided with the advent of the motor car. Before long a speed limit of sixteen miles per hour had to be imposed. By the 1920s when hedges and rockeries were removed to open up 'vistas of the river for the travelling public', its original purpose had been forgotten. It was only in 1958, six years after the opening of the Swan Street bridge, that Alexandra Avenue was 'discovered' to be a park drive and urgent steps were taken to have it proclaimed a public highway. As well as alienation of much of the park for road purposes, the bicycle path and most of the footpaths have been removed, what remains of the riding tan has been assigned to pedestrians, and bikes are now prohibited in Alexandra Park except along the river bank.

Perceptions altered as more people travelled by car so that buildings, public gardens and other open spaces came to be seen as decorations along the way rather than places to be experienced in their own right. Trees that had been planted at the edges of gardens as a shield against the outside environment were cut down to give views in from the roadway without any thought as to the sights, sounds and smells of the street which were revealed to those people actually using the gardens.

As the paths through the Fitzroy Gardens were lined with trees and statues, so city streets were adorned with handsome buildings proclaiming the wealth and taste of Melburnians. Nicholas Caire's photograph of Collins Street taken about 1902 shows richly detailed buildings in scale with the street and lit up by the sun,

crowded pavements, but very little vehicular traffic. The scene is evocative of Serlio's design for a theatre set with the street a stage for public life, its vitality almost entirely conveyed by pedestrians. Most people not walking are aboard one of the trams pictured which were used by all sections of society - the philanthropist Sir William Clarke, whose marble statue graces the entrance to the Treasury Gardens, dropped dead in 1897 whilst alighting from a Collins Street tram. The only motor car in the photograph is easily overlooked.

During the 1920s increasing car ownership was reflected in the new issue of car parking. The unmade edges of Alexandra Avenue were made available for this purpose and Yarra Park's transformation into a giant car park was begun. By the 1950s parking had developed into a major problem, solutions to which included proposals for 'underground' car parks in the Treasury, Flagstaff and Queen Victoria Gardens.

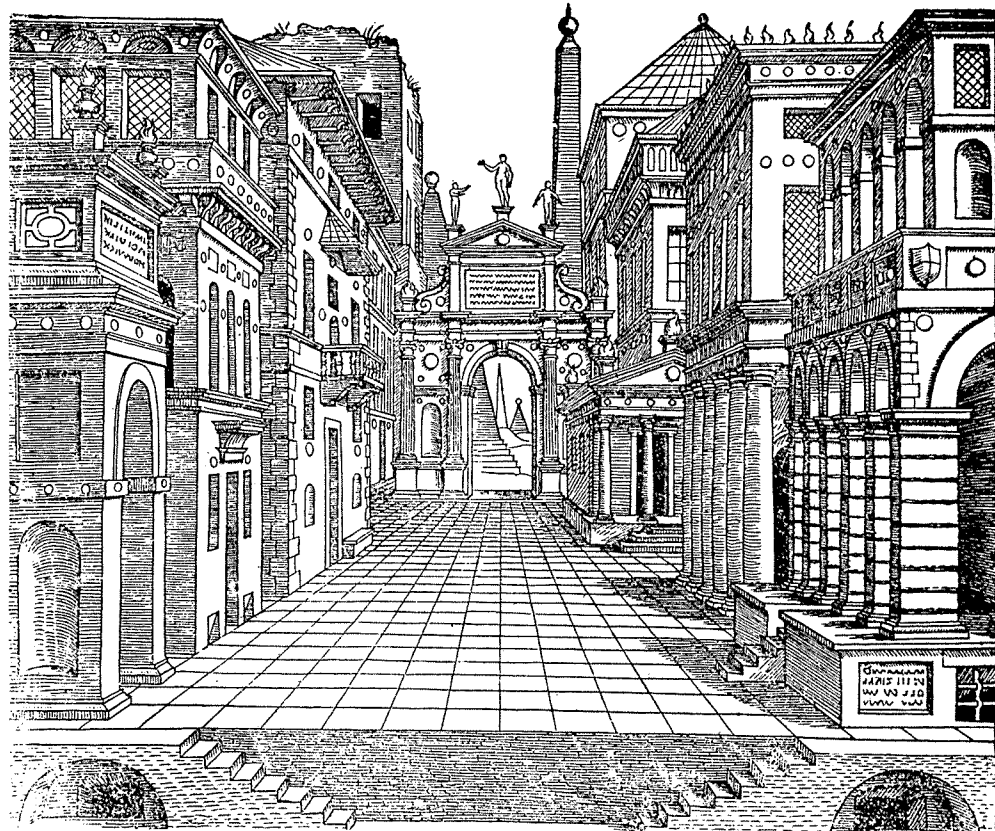
The city's streets became increasingly important as highways as motor traffic intensified. King's Bridge, built to relieve congestion in Swanston Street, encouraged even more people to drive through the city. Footpaths and medians were cut away in places but, just as significantly, phasing of traffic signals, the introduction of clearways and turn bans and general restriction of 'pedestrian crossings' to intersections have accommodated more and more cars. The roadway came to dominate the footpath to such an extent that it drove a wedge between each side of the street and often came to be seen as the street itself.

Five years ago a proposal to widen the Swanston Street footpaths by less than one metre was considered impossible to implement, despite Swanston Street's importance as a pedestrian thoroughfare where most of Melbourne's tram routes converge and with two major loop stations at either end, and despite a survey published in the Melbourne City Council's 1985 Pedestrian Strategy which showed the footpaths along some blocks to be severely congested.

Broadly speaking, the city's streets - particularly Swanston Street - have not physically changed a great deal, but increasing traffic and management which encourages that traffic have led to a dramatic change in people's perception and experience of the street. The regrettable design approach of Melbourne Central is symptomatic of contemporary attitudes which, in a reversal of those that informed the Collins Street architecture in Caire's photograph, make no attempt to treat the street as anything but a highway. The shops, the architectural features, all face away from the street and have to be discovered from within; and the office tower, like many city buildings, is designed to be viewed from a distant suburb rather than from its immediate surroundings.

In only half a century the common conception of 'streets' has become so distorted as to be almost synonymous with 'highways'. The qualities of Melbourne's city streets as public spaces, whether garden boulevards or commercial strips, have been so lost in the flood of cars that many people hold the extraordinary view that a street closed to automobile traffic is no longer a street.

In a bid to recover qualities lost through unbridled enthusiasm for the motor car, non-commercial traffic is soon to be banned from Swanston Street, and the street redesigned. But the new design for Swanston Street may appear to provide little more than widened footpaths and trees. Those who feel it is no longer a street are likely to see it as a botched job of making a mall. There are, however, alternatives to a 'city' comprised of highways and malls, as is obvious from Melbourne's history.



Parallels between stages for theatrical productions and stages for public life were recognised and exploited to enrich both. The design for a theatre set by Serlio published in 1611 (top; Sebastiano Serlio, *The Five Books of Architecture*, Dover, 1982) is a similar concept to Palladio's Olympic Theatre (1580) in Vicenza. The arched gateway at the centre of the set is a cousin of Michelangelo's theatrical Porta Pia (c. 1568), gateway to a then fashionable new street of Rome; all descend from Vitruvius's descriptions of classical Roman theatre. The general design concept of Melbourne's 19th century streets and architecture was similar again. But between Collins Street, Melbourne c. 1902 (middle; N J Caire: Landscape Photographer, Anne and Don Pitkethly, Rosanna, Victoria, 1988) and Melbourne Central, LaTrobe Street in 1992 (bottom), much has changed. Performances are arranged, indoors.



A Cry For Better Suburban Open Spaces

The greatest innovations in open space design should be aimed at the body of the landscape where most people live - the suburbs.

In these spaces of staggering homogeneity and apathy of design resolution, some new leases of life are needed. It is not a simple solution of more money or more design: the role of open space in the suburbs has to be restructured and revalued in a deep way. This carries a moral dimension which we need to face.

The fringes of nearly every Australian city are stacked with suburbs that are poorly integrated into the wider urban lifestyle of the city whole. Brisbane city has a sprawling suburban fabric, and on the fringe are places like Loganlea: with no industry and high unemployment, five kilometres from central shopping centre, no local primary school, few structured recreation facilities, and no community or cultural facilities.

Often housing those people who have no choice but to live there, and poorly accessed by public transport, they become social islands, where the neighbourhood shopping centre and the local park become by default the most common and the most potentially important public meeting public realms.

These social islands create a land of individuals rather than communities - there are few public spaces which attract people, so people socialise in the backyard, in squash courts, by the pin-ball machine in the corner store, or anywhere but in parks and 'designed' public open spaces.

The cultural aspirations of the suburbs will not become manifest until we recognise that places for people to live in, require places for people to share openly. Perhaps the Australian Ugliness of Robin Boyd's view will not pass until our common culture in the middle landscape is allowed to grow.

The Humble Park

The standard suburban park is currently bleak in form but has a significant potentiality to help bring back public life in the suburbs.

For this to occur, parks - in all their different forms, have to be significant cultural nodes in the suburbs. The typical suburban open spaces include the ubiquitous 10% of a residential development estate, which usually turns out to be the poorest allotments in the worst locations. It is pertinent to be reminded that such simplistic open space planning allocations have failed to create quality parks.

How can designers help the open spaces of our suburbs become meaningful and vibrant?

The design process has to be unlearned. Designers must be innovative in the design process by consulting the future or existing users whenever possible. Authentic places, which are full of local and cultural meaning, cannot be made without consulting the 'insiders' of a neighbourhood or locality. Without this local rapport, the designer will surely create what have been called disneyfield places - full of shallow meaning and 'designer' values. (Relph 1976)

I would estimate that 98% of suburban public open space design in Queensland is carried out without user consultation. Is it any wonder that most of our parks say nothing about Australia or Australians at

the local scale? The greatest possible innovation that open space design could achieve is to put culture on the design agenda by integrating the specific desires and social conditions of local users. It is not enough to answer 'there is never enough money or time to consult people'. We cannot continue to incidentally promote the values of an isolated and individual culture through design apathy. Even suburbs must be expressions of their people. Without the physical manifestation of 'my' place at the communal scale, the bulk of Australians who live in the suburbs will perhaps never come to know more than two neighbours, or be able to proudly describe the unique and communal values of their suburb.

'Vessels' of open space

In his studies of America's open spaces, Whyte (1988) continually reminds us that people are the most potent characteristics and attractive feature of a place's streets and open spaces. Research of Italian urban open spaces (Mongard 1990) confirms this, and reveals that these highly successful squares are generally devoid of 'landscape' elements and that people are in fact the predominant landscape. The open central space in these villages function as a 'vessel' for activity, which flows through it because it has to: both socially and functionally. In Australian suburbs, the open spaces are also devoid of 'landscape' elements, but unlike the Italian towns, there is no tradition of meeting in the open. There is no landscape of people: people do not have to actively engage in the public open spaces. The 'vessel' of open space is disconnected from the activities of daily life.

The Role of Parks in the Suburbs

The design of park in the suburbs must anticipate a future public life. In doing so, perhaps a new model of urban form for the suburbs is needed. The existing model promotes private spaces (by providing everyone with their own backyard), but robs neighbourhoods of the potential for communal interaction, because suburbs do not have traditional town centres or a shared central public realm.

Parks in this context should form types of centres, where housing, shops and community activities would in varying proportions provide the people, who are the essential ingredient for community life. This asks suburb designers and planners to place parks and open space in central and key locations. Whether hardscape or softscape, these open spaces will then function as vessels for human activity and social well-being, in the way that Italian villages so robustly exemplify.

The parks and open spaces that will capture the imagination and feelings of Australians in the twenty-first century are ones which will be built on their own desires, dreams and imaginations.

John Mongard is a principle of Terrain Landscape Architects in Brisbane and a lecturer in Landscape Architecture at Q.U.T.

Auckland Waterfront Development

The Viaduct Basin & the America's Cup

Auckland's CBD has an even more immediate relationship with the waterfront than does Sydney. However, public pressure for access and use of the waterfront has been resisted by the Auckland Harbour Board. Control of much former Harbour Board land was vested in the Auckland City Council when the former body was replaced by Ports of Auckland Limited, as required by the new Local Government legislation.

The Viaduct Basin continues to serve the Auckland fishing Fleet and some Harbour Board activities, the other major use in the Basin area is the Auckland produce markets.

The remainder of the 6.5 hectares is in mainly low intensity warehousing or processing uses.

The Planning impetus for potential redevelopment and increased public use of the Viaduct Basin came from an unlikely source: the enthusiasm for the America's Cup. The "Big Boat" versus catamaran mismatch in San Diego took the urgency out of the proposal to redevelop the Basin. But the Applications already before the Planning Authority continued and their decision on the Viaduct Basin application was finally made in August 1991.

This followed an initial study of the area by the Auckland Civic Trust in October 1986. The Harbour Board then produced its own study "A Future for the Viaduct Basin".

The urban design concept started with the allocation of several prime locations around the basin edge as public plazas, and the linking of these by a continuous

pedestrian route along the water's edge. Once these relationships were established, the form that development of the remaining land could take was tackled. The urban design intention has been to create an urban character for the area which would complement the existing CBD from which it is separated by the Fanshawe Street cliff edge - the original waterfront before successive reclamations of the last hundred years enclosed the Basin. The shape of the Basin itself is also to be improved, enlarging the inner basin and further reclaiming the western edge.

The hoped-for urban development character is spelled in detail in the Auckland City Council's bulk and location requirements, which set minimum as well as maximum building envelopes, backed up by maximum floor areas in each of the four major sub zones which the existing street pattern has prompted.

Perimeter block development is encouraged by these controls, to promote street edges defined by more or less continuous building. Disincentives to stray from this morphology are provided by reductions in maximum achievable floor area if the minimum building envelope is not met. The product of these controls should be a street character compatible with much of the existing development in the basin, and marked contrast to the podium and tower form which has resulted from the bonus floor area provisions of the CBD zones adjacent.

Design guidelines are currently being drawn up to support these urban design intentions.

Almost all the land in the Viaduct Basin Area is owned by the parties to the joint venture: Fletchers, Turners and Growers, and the Ports of Auckland. The latter's assets are in turn jointly owned by the City Council and the Regional Council. Achievement of specified amounts of floor

space triggers requirements for the provision of public places, dredging and reclamation works in the various zones.

The process is expected to get underway soon in two ways. firstly, the gradual change of use and refurbishment of some of the existing buildings in the north east of the area. This has already started in a low key way as the vaguely Art Deco old Harbour Board Workshops building is colonised by various short term tenants, and is expected to continue as restaurants and bars infiltrate the collection of buildings on Customs Street West presently occupied by small fish processors and warehouses.

The second is the "big bang" theory, which will see a casino and hotel complex rise on the site of the New City Markets and Fletcher's former fish processing plant - if the application currently the Casino Control Authority is successful. If the Fletcher/Conrad proposal gets the nod later this year, the chain of events set in motion will allow the produce markets to move to more efficient premises in South Auckland, simultaneously providing the Casino/Hotel site by demolition of the uninspiring New City Markets and freeing up the elegant 1912 Old City Markets on the other side of Market Place for refurbishment as a retail market.

These two developments, together with the construction of the major public place in front of the casino, and the provision of berthage for tourist and ferry boat operators, is hoped to provide the impetus for further development of the area. Much needed dredging and provision of better boat access by removing part of the western viaduct and replacing it with a rotating pedestrian bridge will also assist in drawing people to the area.

An important part of the development philosophy is to maintain existing uses: the Auckland fishing fleet will be provided

with more berthage space than they currently enjoy and the reclamation intended for western edge of the basin will provide new commercial light industrial opportunities. Thus although the trust of new development will be in entertainment and tourism, including hotels, restaurants, live theatre and cinemas, markets and shops, the continuation of port activities should avoid the artificial atmosphere of some recent waterfront developments in other parts of the world.

CONFERENCE

C A L E N D A R

28 to 31 May 1992, Broken Hill Liveability and the Suburbs

This seminar has been designed to be structured training program under s.27(2) of the Training Guarantee (Administration) Act 1990. Organisations with an 'annual national payroll' turnover over \$214,000 in the 1991/92 financial year must spend 1% of gross wages and salaries on eligible training activities by June 30 1992. Expenditure on training activities is tax deductible, but payment of the levy is not.

For further information please contact Stephen Axford Manager, Urban design Branch, Department of Planning And Housing, GPO Box 2240T Melbourne Vic. 3001. Ph 628 5470.

Conference Secretariat:

Urban Design Branch, Department of Planning and Housing, 4th floor 477 Collins Street, Melbourne, 3000

Registration:

Includes attendance at the conference and morning and afternoon teas. Lunch is not included.

Fees: \$195 by 14 April
\$225 from 15 April

3rd April 1992 Melbourne Sprawlusting - New Communities for the Urban Fringe

A one day seminar on innovative approaches to residential design, covering social, environmental, transport and housing alternatives. The Victorian Code for Residential Development, the Greenhouse Neighbourhood Project, Traditional Neighbourhood Development and Transit-Oriented Development will be covered.

Contact John Heard, Institution of Surveyors, 191 Royal Parade, Parkville 3052, Ph (03) 347 2822

7th April 1992 Geelong 10th April 1992 Cranbourne Residential Design Workshops

Two separate one day workshops where participants are introduced to a range of new residential design concepts, and to a site. Participants spend the day in syndicates exploring design options.

Contact Yvonne Rust, Urban Design Unit, Department of Planning and Housing, PO Box 2240T, Melbourne 3001 Ph. (03) 628 5791

S Q U A R E & I N T E R V E N T I O N

A Landscape Installation In Auckland's Aotea Square

Auckland's new civic centre, the Aotea Centre, completes the city's major formal open space - Aotea Square. The Square borders main (Queen) street and sits near the head of the shallow valley that falls to the Waitemata harbour and which is Auckland's CBD. A recent fountain constructed as part of the Aotea Centre's art installation programme attempts to engage the square.

The Aotea landscape installation is described by its designers, Architectus: Bowes Clifford Thompson Ltd, as "a mediating element between square and building". The square and building have each been subject of considerable debate in both the popular and design press. Criticism has variously focused on location (away from the water's edge), appearance (bleak open square/drab squat building), cost, and a host of more complex but no less vociferously argued issues (acoustics, artwork, utility of auditoria etc.).

The tenor of such criticism is, to some extent, standard fare for civic projects yet it remains difficult, even among the Aotea Centre's strongest supporters to find unqualified praise for the building and its physical setting.

The Architectus project resulted from a competition among a limited number of architects for a commission under the aegis of the Centre's art installation programme. The original brief called for a landscape garden that would transform a rather daunting lozenge shaped light well squeezed below grade between the Centre's subterranean conference centre and

the existing city car-park below the square. It was hoped to produce a work that would "reflect the natural landscape of New Zealand".

This brief expanded as the project developed with water features being incorporated and the work extending beyond the bounds of the original light well. The installation (now formally known as the Freightways Fountain) generates an inverted partial cone from the pre existing geometry and uses this conic section to support a variety of water features fed by a watercourse running some forty meters along the terraced front of the building. This in turn is linked to a font constructed atop existing stairs to the car park.

The cone is developed by reference to particular geophysical motifs- the volcanic cones which dot the Auckland isthmus (both slope-sided and terraced by human intervention) and by reference to the wider New Zealand condition- river boulders, igneous rock work, and semi precious stone tiling. The cone is viewed from within the conference centre and from the square, a storey above. Both are visually linked by the passage of water, the staircase formed by the terracing of the conic section and, more metaphorically, by the cone's amphitheatre shape. This suggests the conference centre as 'theatre', while placing the square's fountain viewers in formal relationship with the performance below.

The piece can thus be seen as two distinct elements, - the constructions contained within the below grade conic section, and

those elements (watercourse and font) which engage the city's pre-eminent square. These latter aspects have all been well received and are successful in making an addition to the square (an opportunity which may well have been lost if Architecture had contained itself to the nominated site). They provide delight and gentle succour in a tough physical environment. The abstract rhetoric of the work within the cone has, however, proven a more awkward notion for the both the body politic and the art pundits to accept. The reason for the works exclusion from discussion of the Aotea Centre's formidable collection of commissioned artwork probably reflects confusion that a work of such unabashed abstraction is the product of architects, a profession whose more recent forays into the public realm are invariably as agents of large scale destruction.

The architects' point to the work of Carlo Scarpa and others for precedents for the project. The work's reception to date, however, might indicate that a shift in the expectations held of architects operating at this level of (relatively) small scale intervention in the public arena is yet required in this town. This is further borne out by the containment of the project to the legal perimeter of the Aotea Centre, a restraint which led to the abandonment of additional elements of the work within the square amid a welter of pragmatic difficulties (who pays maintenance etc.). Given the success of those few elements that manage to be both 'of the square' and 'of the legal site', it is a shame that the will and the politicking skill was not available to realise the scheme as originally conceived.