

The Creative City

Jane Gilmour

The city as something dreamed. The city as a process of organic evolution. The city as being shaped by every act of every person who lives in it. This is in fact the creative city and these were the sorts of ideas that some 300 people were listening to, talking about and reflecting upon, for three days in early September at The Creative City seminar in Melbourne. It was an important event and one which will have continuing resonances for those who were there, as they continue their work as architects, artists, urban planners, developers or local government administrators.

What is the creative city?

But what is the creative city? Can a city be anything but creative, one of the speakers asked? A non-creative city is in fact a contradiction in terms. 'All cities are creative or they are dead. They are culturally alive or they are a cemetery. Culture is life.' (Graham Pitts)

That was what this seminar was about. It was about affirming the importance of the cultural life of cities and seeing how it may be given vitality or suppressed by the decision of planners and architects, city councillors or developers. It was about putting culture back into the equations of the city planners. And it was about what artists can do to reflect or give voice to that culture.

People from a number of different disciplines came together to talk about our cities and how we might make them more desirable places to live in. All are players in the game, but rarely have they got together to consider how they might work collaboratively towards a common end. One could possibly have wished for more people from a particular discipline, more town clerks perhaps or mayors, more architects. But what is important is that the seeds have been sown. The seminar has set a new agenda for future thinking about city development and planning. A new impetus that recognises the arts and the cultural life of the city.

Places for people

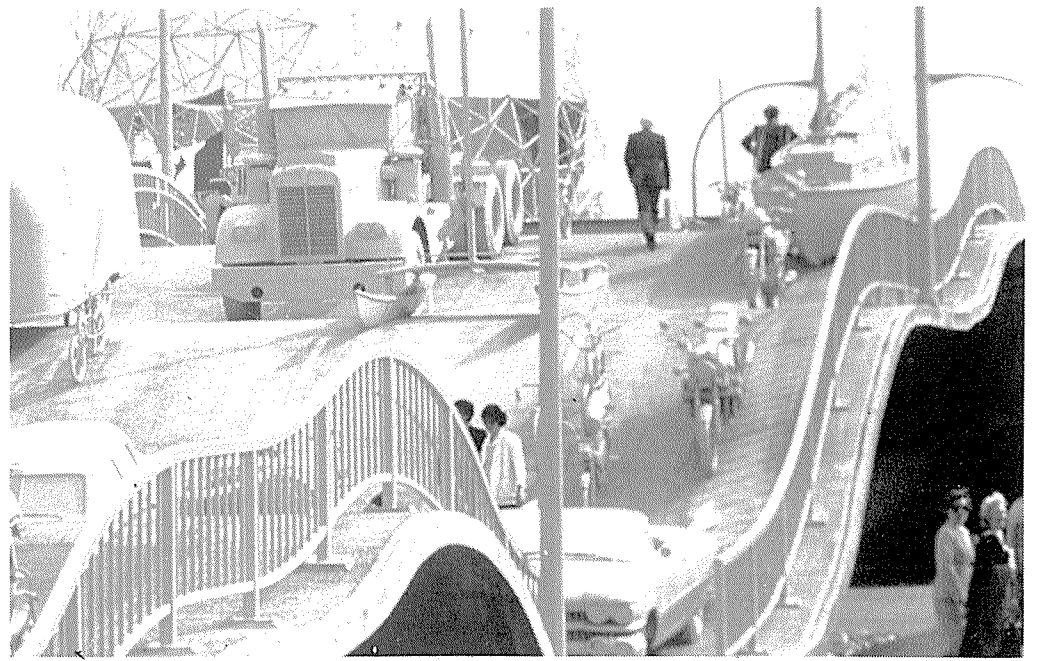
David Yenken, Professor of Landscape Architecture at Melbourne University and formerly Secretary of the Victorian Ministry for Planning and Environment, was the key note speaker on the first day. He set the context and mood for the three days with an eloquent and moving speech. His theme, the need for cities to be places for people, places which are emotionally satisfying, place which speak to the heart as well as to the mind - 'square words and round words' - was to recur throughout the following days. This was a powerful beginning to the seminar. It spoke of new ways of thinking and doing, holistic and intuitive ways, of breaking through the constraints of professional training. To approach poetry you must start somewhere.

In the evening of the first day, Jon Jerde, spoke in a session that was open to the public. Jon Jerde is the principal of a Los Angeles based architectural firm which

specialises in the planning, development and revitalisation of communities and commercial districts. His projects were awe-inspiring in their size. It was difficult to transpose them to our situation. And yet they were inspirational in many ways. His reflections on Melbourne were insightful: Melbourne as a Newtonian city, a city of balance, of the finite; but also a city of eccentric neighbourhoods.

The economics of amenity

There is insufficient space in this article to do justice to all the speakers. I would however like to refer briefly to Robert McNulty's talk. McNulty is President of Partners for Livable Places, a Washington-based organisation which is an advocacy and consulting agency promoting the value of the arts, cultural and recreational facilities to city managers and developers. He has implemented an advocacy strategy called the Economics of Amenity which proposes the arts and cultural activities as 'main investment strategies for re-tooling the job market in U.S. cities.' On the strength of the economic arguments, Partners has been able to advocate the need for cultural planning so that cultural planning becomes integrated into the



▲ "Highway 86" SITE project at Expo 86 in Vancouver, Canada (Photo credit: Andreas Sterzing special edition of "Architectural and Urbanism")

comprehensive planning process and has a voice within that process.

The other major international speakers were Sue Clifford, from Common Ground in the UK, which acts as a catalyst to inspire people to conserve the best of their local environments; Rashmi Myur, Director of the Urban Development Institute in Bombay, who spoke in a forum session on the future of cities; and Alison Sky who is an artist and founding Principal of SITE, a small New York based architectural design firm that focuses on the way artworks and buildings interact. Their buildings seem to communicate in the same way art does, reflecting the mythology, cultural heritage and political history of the city or individual or group for whom they are being built.

Professor Tong, a landscape artist and teacher at the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts, gave an exquisite presentation on traditional Chinese gardens and their relationship with nature and art. It was a

finely wrought gem - understated and brief focusing precisely to explore the way the landscape acts as a physical symbolic reference point to art, architecture and city planning.

A Watershed

The seminar was a watershed. It has provided us with a whole lot of new tools - language, ideas, strategies, contacts - and the conviction that we can make a difference to the future of our cities. The seminar papers will be published in the December issues of Meanjin which will be available in major book stores or which can be purchased by writing to Meanjin, University of Melbourne, Parkville 3052.

Dr Jane Gilmour is a consultant in arts and cultural policy and planning. She is a member of the Australian National Commission for Unesco and represented that organisation on the Steering Committee for the Creative City Seminar.

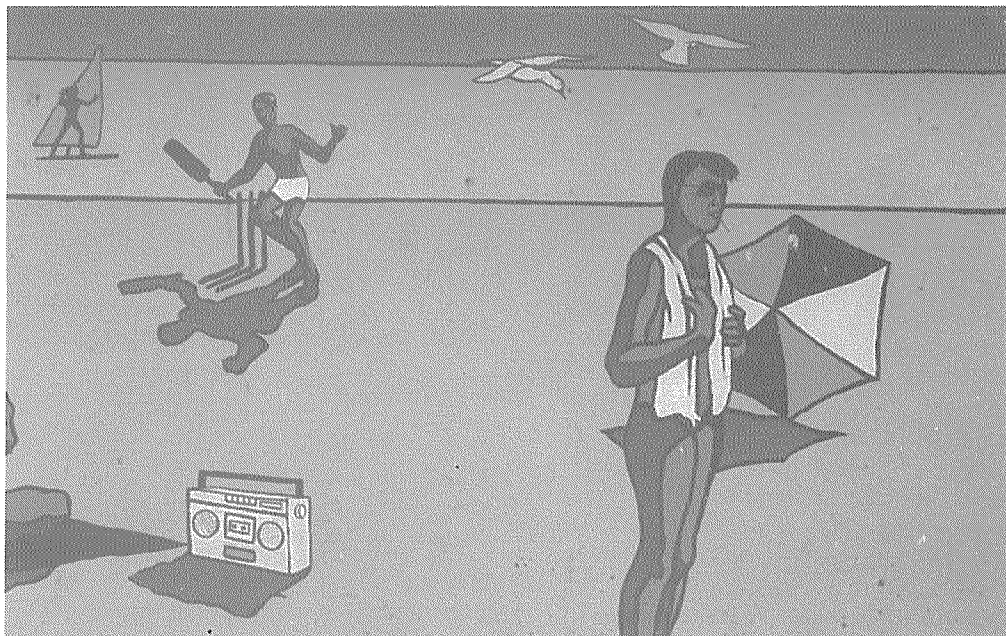
McCrae Street Mall

The suspense for 23 entrants ended on Sunday, 6th November when the Victorian Minister for Planning and Environment, The Hon. Tom Roper opened the sealed envelopes with the names of the winners in the McCrae Street Dandenong Mall competition. They are:

First Prize \$10,000 -
Tract Consultants Australia Pty Ltd

Two Equal Second Prizes each \$2000 -
Urban Initiatives Pty Ltd, and Green Dale and Wright Pty Ltd in association with Bill Williams Pty Ltd and Landsystems Pty Ltd
Two Commendations were:
Norman Day Pty Ltd, and Graeme Bentley Pty Ltd

▼ On the beach - a mural on Frankston's foreshore, painted by local artist Steve Prictor and local young people as part of a community project (Photo credit: Ian Wight)



The Jury reports states that:
"It is confident that the winning design is:
- practical to build
- economically feasible
- competent professionally
- a good design aesthetically"

The Jury was impressed by the quality of several entries. The competition was successful in attracting interest from a broad spectrum of the architectural profession and from other disciplines".

The success of the competition, judging by the number of entries and the quality of several works, justifies the amount of work that went into planning, preparation of the brief and organisation.

In contrast with many European countries, in Australia competitions are often seen as an appropriate form of design selection only for the major buildings because of the organisational problems and uncertain results in some cases. This attitude should be changed in order to achieve better quality designs by broadening the range of designers. Open professional competitions generate publicity and are instrumental in raising public awareness in regard to urban design issues.

In Dandenong's case the range and depth of analysis provided by entries exceeds by far a possible input from conventional commissions. Ultimately, the people of Dandenong are the winners.

Contributed by Andrew Olszewski
(more comments on page 3.)

U.D.F.

Urban Design Forum was initiated by a diverse group of professionals who share a concern for and interest in better urban design. The main aim of UDF is to provide an ongoing forum for information, ideas and views about urban design.

The UDF group meets on the second Tuesday of every month in Melbourne. All interested persons are welcome. Contributions for this broadsheet should be sent directly to:

Urban Design Forum
c/o Bill Chandler, Convenor
Loder & Bayly, 79 Power Street, Hawthorn
Victoria 3122. Phone (03) 819 1144

Deadline for UDF 6 (March) is
1st February, 1989

◆
Access or Alienation

Buildings and parks with rivers of traffic flowing between them are common in our cities. Opportunities to integrate the two are being presented and frequently missed. The resulting benefits for local office workers, shoppers, tourists and daytrippers are obvious, as are the economic benefits of increased amenity of the buildings, increased local business and, most certainly, of tourism. Great cities are innovative; they take hold of opportunities. It is an absolute requirement that dialogue between developer, planning authority and city council be entered into to resolve technical problems and costing.

To exit a building and walk across a safe and engagingly designed pedestrian priority area at ground level to a park or, to exit at first floor level onto a superbly integrated above-road plaza / pedestrian bridge leading across to an adjacent park is a much more attractive proposition than dodging traffic to get to a park or (because the flow of traffic isolates it so much conceptually) avoiding it altogether.

The latter is the current case, for example, with Batman Park in Melbourne. As in a number of other areas there is a chance to link this Park more effectively with the life of the city and with the World Congress Centre and hotel currently under construction. Will this be done as an innovative step, or just be another lost opportunity?

William Kelly, urban artist.

•URBAN DESIGN & MENTAL WELL-BEING.

A case for participatory design.

Recent articles in Urban Design Forum suggest the desirability of input into urban design by that nebulous but oft-mentioned group, the users. Johnson and Morris described a programme of participatory urban design in the Pilbara, and Evan Walker states that, "Its a community's right to have a say." While these seem to be generally accepted views, perhaps the real value of these participatory processes in terms of improving human well-being is worth elaborating upon.

It has been known that psychologically healthy individuals possess feelings of control and competence over most aspects of their lives. Such individuals are described as having an 'internal locus of control' in that they perceive that the outcomes of much of their activities are under their personal control. Feelings of control in part of one's life can flow over into other areas, leading to generally healthier and happier individuals who are able to deal with the challenges of daily life.

Feeling helpless

In contrast, people who think that their lives are controlled by others are described as having an 'external locus of control'. Many externals are caught in a vicious circle of failure, feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, incompetence and lack of control over their lives. Taken to an extreme one finds the phenomenon of learned helplessness which is characterised by feelings of helplessness (usually due to repeated failures), an inability to effect changes in one's life, to influence others, to cope with stress or challenges. A milder form might be seen in people who are simply demoralized about the (seeming) impossibility of having a say in creation of modern environments might be one such



▲ Participatory design. (Photo credit: "New Milestones - sculpture community and land", Common Ground, UK)

situation, and that the alienation so frequently described between urban development and average people merely reflects that demoralization.

Interventions like participatory design which encourage ordinary people to gain some control over aspects of lives, eg. their physical environment, therefore contribute positively to the mental well-being of individuals and communities.

Healthy interventions

Such interventions are in fact regarded as primary preventive health care by community health workers. The payoffs when individuals and communities succeed in gaining some control over environmental outcomes are not inconsiderable. At a psychological level, an internal locus of control is enhanced, and so these people are more likely to respond positively to future challenges in daily life and succeed. At a physical level, one is less likely to see the creation of socially

alienating and dysfunctional environments.

In summary, actions like participatory design which promote and sustain psychological well-being, and the individual's ability to deal competently with daily life should be encouraged at every possible opportunity, regardless of the likely inconvenience to bureaucratic processes. The role of participation within urban design cannot be understated since it truly is capable of giving 'power to the people', and in doing so can promote community cohesion and well-being and (hopefully) help create better environments for people.

Recommended further reading: Wandersman, A., and Hess, R., (Eds), 1985 "Beyond the individual: Environmental approaches and prevention." The Haworth Press: London.

Contributed by Sandy Smith, Lecturer in Environmental Psychology, Faculty of the Built Environment, Queensland Institute of Technology.

The Creative City Conference A Students Perspective

The Creative City Conference, I felt, was an opportunity to promote positive communication between, the decision makers, the designers and most importantly, the public. I feel that as designers our fundamental premise for choosing our professions is a basic concern for humanity, not humanity separated from nature, but humanity as part of nature.

I arrived on the morning of day one, was colour coded, received my information package, enrolled in my workshops, and then took the time to look and see who was there, and more importantly, who was not

there. The faces in the crowd that I looked for were not the David Yenckens, the Susan Cliffords or the Alison Skys. I was looking for the city engineers, the city and town clerks, council representatives and councillors. No matter how high the standard of the lectures given, without the people who are making the decisions in the public arena present, then we are only preaching to the converted.

The conference was riddled with attacks on the Architecture profession I am the first to agree that Architects (as a profession) have been responsible for some horrendously

bad 'creations', but at the same time they have been the profession that has been willing to take the risk, cop the flack and occasionally produce work that is beautiful. For other designers to attack and ostracize them as a profession is a totally negative approach; designers need very much to develop a closer working relationship and discourse, not disharmony.

I would like to quote from a landscape writer J.B. Jackson:
"A city where we everywhere feel at home: it reminds us everywhere and at all times, that we are in an environment no less natural, no less stimulating than the environment of the country dweller. Its trees and parks and lawns are more than agents of health they tell us of the passage of the seasons, and its open places tell the time of day If it cannot provide us with

the sounds of the remoter landscape, it at least provides us with areas where the sounds of human voices and footsteps are not drowned out by mechanical noises, it provides us with quiet. It cannot imitate all of nature, but it gives us archways and pools of daylight, and flights of steps and views; the splash of water in fountains, echoes and music; the breath of damp cool air, the harmony of colours and the unpolluted sun; indeed it gives us so much that our excursions into the countryside cease to be headlong flights from a sterile environment and become a conscious searching for the missing ingredients; solitude in the presence of other forms of life, space and mystery."

Contributed by Peter Brennan, a final year landscape architecture student at RMIT.

Rumours & Snippets

Sometimes issues are just emerging and we can't wait for all the details. So, in this column, we provide news items as they come. More details to follow.

Australia Council back on track

The forced demise of the Design Arts Board of the Australia Council, which was committed to improving urban design, came as a shock to many people. But now the spurious argument that urban design is not "art", and therefore not a valid part of the AC, has been laid to rest.

The about-face has been made possible by having Prof. David Yencken appointed as the chairman of the Design Committee (successor to the DAB). He has around him Sally Brown, John Andrews and Dianna Gribble, with other creative people still to be appointed.

Does Urban design matter?

Development projects continue at boom pace in the central area of Melbourne, but some people are starting to have doubts about the quality of the urban design that will result. It is understood that the Planning amendment for the large Carlton & United Brewery site at the top of Swanston Street is likely to be further amended by the Minister for Planning without public consultation. This further amendment would allow many of the important urban design considerations to

be put aside in favour of a free standing office building similar in principle to Nauru House and other such developments of the 1960's. This will mean the loss of a major opportunity to integrate the new development into the established urban fabric of Melbourne.

It also raises the broader issue of the relationship between political pragmatism and good urban design.

Citizen lobby group proposal

The recent "Creative City" conference (see articles elsewhere) has a very stimulating effect on many people. One outcome is a proposal to form a citizens lobby group in support of achieving higher quality man-made environments.

Like many people, the working group is very concerned about the overall quality of

many current developments but its aim is to improve the quality, not stop the development. It is similar in intent to Partners for Livable Place (US) and Civic Trust (UK).

The lobby would be broad-based, interested in urban and rural areas (eg the coast), and would complement groups such as the National Trust and Urban Design Forum. Contact with the working group can be made through Sue Clark (649 8888) or David Yencken (344 6417).

Tall Buildings

The conference on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat will be held in Brisbane October 17-19, 1989. The conference will address a wide range of technical, economic and social issues relating to the design, operation and impact of tall buildings. (Further details Wayne Petrie (07) 8314188).



A CITY VISION FOR PERTH

by Ralph Stanton

City Vision comprises a group of interested Perth citizens who came together to discuss concerns about Central Perth. Following six months of voluntary effort, a slim document has been published (with the assistance of Mr Pearce, the Minister for Planning and Transport) setting out these concerns, together with a range of objectives, policies and actions to deal with them.

Publication of the document followed John Mant's report dealing with similar issues, and there has been wide media and public response to the group's work.

A City in Need of Vision

City Vision's message is basically this: Perth is a charming city in a beautiful setting; but it is also spiritless, lacking depth of character and sense of history or place. Its natural setting is a diversion; it has seriously declined in character due to lack of leadership, no unified urban philosophy, no ambition, no grand plan and above all, no collective understanding of how the "good city" can work. Only radical changes in attitude and policy will rescue Perth from mediocrity.

What is the "Good City"?

Good cities have spirit and a clear self-image that their citizens can take pride in. They offer:

- A variety of activities and experiences, an interplay of activities: living, working, shopping and play;
- Accessibility to these activities;
- Shelter, comfort, protection and security;



▲ cover illustration on City Vision report

- Visual coherence and stimulation;
- Fulfilment of the potential inherent in their physical setting;
- Active involvement of the citizens in the life of the city and in the processes of change.

Perth lacks too many of these characteristics; but it has the potential to become the "good city".

City Vision's Agenda

It is vital to focus on the central city and its immediate surroundings, but the State capital should offer to all citizens its unique

pleasures, stimulation and experiences. A wide range of actions is proposed, to achieve the following aims:

- Restoring diversity and vitality to the city; avoiding the separation of city activities;
- Restoring residents to the city - essential to its well being and vitality;
- Making the city enjoyable, day and night;
- Making the city pleasant and stimulating, particularly for pedestrians;
- Making the city accessible to all people, particularly the "transport poor";
- Seeking excellence in urban design and in heritage preservation: our architecture should relate better to our streets and

- public spaces;
- Bringing the city and the Swan River back together;
- Involving people in the future of their city, reflecting the growing public awareness;
- Establishing a new planning and development system, recognising Perth's potential and reconciling differing perceptions held by State and Local Government and the Community.

Specific Recommendations

In the City Vision report recommendations are made with regard to zoning and development control; the allocation of plot ratio bonuses; fiscal policies; government-owned land; subsidised and co-operative housing; traffic parameters and recommendations; heritage provision; awareness and education; architectural competitions; major public spaces and parks; public involvement and finally, a new planning and development control structure.

City Vision also nominates a range of sites and individual projects which should be pursued, with the context of the "Vision" it has defined.

What Next?

A recent AIUS seminar on City Vision has led to the adoption of the city foreshore as a specific item for the group to explore, as well as the area of housing provision and practicality. The enthusiasm generated by City Vision, both in the group and in the wider community, has ensured that further activity will proceed.

Copies of the publication can be obtained by phoning Ralph Stanton on (09) 382 1069.

Ralph Stanton is a consultant urban designer and member of City Vision.

Mall Competition - a critique

The following comments and observations are contributed by Bruce Echberg, George Gallagher, and Stuart Green, successful entrants in this competition, on its organisation. They are offered in the hope that they may assist the organisation of future competitions.

Design competitions are a double edged sword from the point of view of professional offices entering them. On one hand they offer a great opportunity for professional development recognition, and in some cases can lead to important commissions. On the other hand they can be a severe drain on office energy and resources. Entrants are open to being exploited by feeling pressed to do excessive amounts of unrewarded work in order to be competitive and meet the requirements of the brief. This aspect of vulnerability of entrants is the reason why professional bodies try to regulate competitions.

The McCrae Mall competition is to be commended because of it was run quite strictly in accordance with the RAIA guidelines. Comments about its organisation should be seen against this background and the fact that all competitions are imperfect from the viewpoint of entrants, particularly those who are unsuccessful!

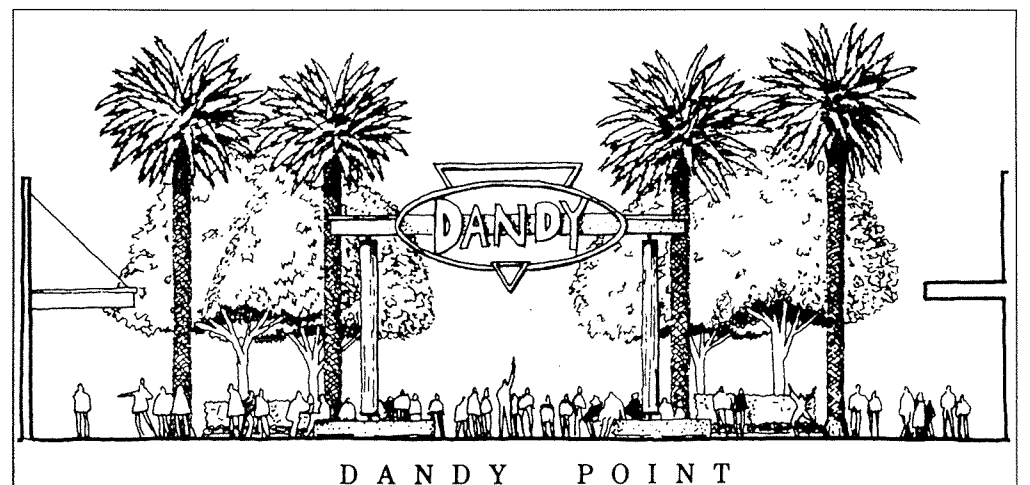
- The brief was imperfect in a few respects:
- Little information was included about planning and development matters in the local area of the Mall and it was left to competitors to research this themselves, which takes time and effort.
- It is arguable whether a one stage competition should expect competitors to

provide costs because unless they are based on reasonably detailed design drawings they are of questionable validity. This may suggest that a two stage competition where second stage entrants are paid to develop their designs and prepare cost estimates may have been a fairer approach.

- The requirement of a report is a good idea but very strict restrictions on use of illustrations/diagrams and size seemed unnecessarily limiting.
- The size of the prizes appeared generous but when compared to the extent of work required they are relatively small. To illustrate this point the average cost of each of the three prize winning entries, using standard time charge costs, was about \$14,000 per entry. The average prize for these successful entrants by comparison was about \$4,300. Of course these entrants are still far better compensated than the other fourteen professional entries many of whom would have put similar effort in.

The notion that the winner's prize should somehow replace the sketch design stage fee for their commission (which would be significantly more for a project of this size), seems quite unreasonable. More design work will be inevitably required after the competition.

There is still also much to be learned by many others through reviewing the work produced by all entrants. A well illustrated publication of the competition material would benefit the entrants, students of urban design, the sponsors and Councils contemplating similar projects. This is common practice overseas. Publishing and exhibiting is an important part of the sponsor's responsibility.



▲ The diagram shows the entry structure to the Mall incorporating the former neon "Dandy" Ham and Bacon logo - an industry long associated with Dandenong.

THE WINNER

Tract Consultants' winning entry in the McCrae Street Mall Competition was the result of a combined effort and commitment by the various disciplines in the firm including, Landscape Architects, Urban Designers, Architects, Engineers and Planners. The strength of the solution lay in the range of skills and techniques applied to the project. It really was a team effort.

The principal design challenge presented by the brief was to offer a solution that created a place eagerly sought by pedestrian, shoppers and visitors alike, as a respite from the "hard edged" built environment, within the tight budgeting constraints of the brief. Sounds familiar?

A consistent thread running through the early sketch ideas and the final design response was the need to create an urban space relevant to Dandenong, in the context of Dandenong's beginnings as a market

town and more recently a centre for industrial and commercial development.

Design Concept

The design concept incorporated generous plantings of deciduous canopy trees that together with triangular shaped planting beds and rectangular paving design seek to unify the disparate building elements of McCrae Street and significantly enhance an otherwise "harsh" urban street environment. The entry structure or "Dandy Point" which will face west onto the Princes Highway, is intended to identify the junction of the visual, physical and functional precincts, as well as the entry way into the Mall and the "decision point" to cross Clow Street into the municipal market area.

A central tenet to the design philosophy is that the strong design consistency proposed for the purposes of unifying the existing streetscape is best achieved with planting and other landscape elements, rather than architectural forms.

A New Theory of Urban Design

by Kim Dovey

I recently attended a conference in Delft, a well conserved old town in the southern Netherlands. The architecture is predominantly in 3 to 4 storey rows with great variety of height, width, form, color and roofline, yet always designed within an implicitly rule-governed system. Each building is but an increment in a long urban design process, yet each contributes to a powerful urban experience of the whole. The formal patterns at Delft are different from those of other cities with such a powerful urban experience, but there is something which links them. So many of the details - the rhythm of windows, the street paving, the roof gables - as well as the larger street forms all contribute somehow to the experience of the whole city.

"A New Theory of Urban Design", recently published by Christopher Alexander and his colleagues, is based on the notion that good urban design of the kind that produced such cities in the past is more a matter of process rather than of form. Good urban design is seen as embodying a concern for 'wholeness', an organic quality that is not generated overnight but rather grows piecemeal, unpredictably, yet is coherent and embodies the power to move us emotionally. The authors argue that the master planning of modern urban development produces only contrived 'wholes', that can impress us but not move us.

Principles of urban process

The overriding principle of the theory is that every increment of construction must be made in such a way as to 'heal' (make 'whole') the city. The theory is composed of a series of principles of urban process which are very briefly summarised below.

The principle of *piecemeal* growth argues for a small grain of urban development (up to about 10,000 sq.m.) on the basis that the organic 'whole' is too complex to build in large lumps. The *growth of larger wholes* is a principle directed at ensuring that every buildings increment helps to develop a larger 'whole' such as a street, plaza or precinct. The character of each increment is to be driven by a socially negotiated vision of what is needed to 'heal' the existing structure of the area. The principle of *positive urban space* is that buildings sequence is to be inverted, with pedestrian space first, buildings second and the street built incrementally to service buildings. The *layout of large buildings* principle aims to ensure that each building will have a quality of 'wholeness' which contributes to the larger 'whole'. Further the integrity of the 'whole' is enhanced by principles of *construction* including materials, structural bay sizes and percentages of window to wall area.

Shortcomings

The theory has a number of shortcomings. First, and most importantly, it assumes an urban context which rarely exists - a world where the imperatives of profit and large scale development do not dominate, and where the urban design process is not used for political legitimisation. Thus anyone trying to implement the theory is immediately thrown into battles with prevailing power structures. Second, the theory relies upon a high level of agreement and cohesion amongst the participants. In the simulation process used, there is not real conflict. In a real context the theory would require a cohesiveness of vision for a whole city which does not exist, even between architects and planners. Finally, the book suffers from the evangelical tone which has dogged Alexander's writings for some time.

Despite the explicit claim that the theory is a tentative first step, it comes across as a single right way and may alienate many of the pragmatists who have most to learn from it. Its importance, however, will be in stimulating the debate. Lined up against the paucity and superficiality of competing theories, it is a refreshing contribution.

For those who believe that the urban design task is largely one of reclaiming lost knowledge, here is an heroic attempt to explore and explicate what that might be. Unfortunately, if Alexander and his colleagues are even roughly right, then the news is not good because the forces lined up against such as a change of process are formidable.

Alexander, C., Neis, H., Annihou, A. & King, I. A New Theory of Urban Design, New York: O. U.P., 1987.

Kim Dovey is a lecturer in the School of Architecture and Building at Melbourne University.

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ADELAIDE

The Debate (a serial)

by Jan Martin

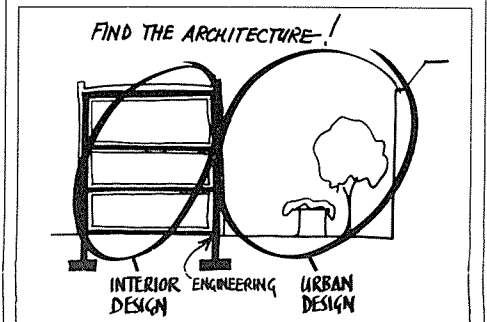
In the beginning was Colonel Light (or Kingston); a simple grid, a ring of parks

The City's recent Urban Design Guidelines Manual rekindled a long-raging quarrel between let-us-get-on-with-being-creative private architects and let's-emphasise-the-whole-not-the-parts public design planners. The following quotations are paraphrased from August's "Building and Architecture" where five Adelaide architectural academics respond to the manual, 4:1 against; through Hamnett in his introduction expresses "considerable personal sympathy."

The guidelines propose faithful street level adherence to the grid and are rather challengingly prescriptive about building form. Michael Tawa's critique goes to the nub:

"Urban quality depends on the quality of its citizens, not on guidelines. The most sublime urban settings touch the heart because they are born of the heart; of an inner wisdom not imposed but wholly lived. Urban guidelines only appear when that wisdom is lost; when life is partially lived, when we no longer know, what, or how to build."

In other words; if you have to preserve something its dead already.



▲ Cartoon by Paul Downton

Concerning the Adelaide manual we read: "This document will do no more than regulate the growing urban mediocrity that threatens this city ... It is exclusively formal ... does not address the construction of a multivalent society (Tawa). "The principles is in an imposed aesthetic order." (Rick Atkinson) "The principles behind the guidelines are alien to the spirit of Australia ... they suit classicist centrist image making. Haussman of Paris would be familiar with their underlying authoritarian cultural impulse." (Downton)

Perhaps the trouble is not that the guidelines seek to guide but the particular aesthetic that they promote. They include example designs which it is feared, might become "stereotypical pattern books". But; "To talk about compatibility of form, scale, texture etc. is difficult without setting envelopes and giving illustrations". Pity then that a key illustration is "a superficial smear of patterns on a plain box (John Schenck, the supporter!)

My comment: Give no examples and your intent is unclear. Give an example and the bastards will jump on you. Solution: Give at least two alternative examples (and risk confusion).

Finally, Damien Mugavin's left-field criticisms will strike a chord with UDF readers: "Urban Design is concerned with the quality of urban places as much as with building design ... the guidelines concentrate on buildings public places have been neglected."

All in all its a fascinating dialogue suggesting that Adelaide is either more advanced in the sophistication of its urban design debate than the rest of us or that they don't have much work to do. Or both.

CITY SQUARE - UPDATE

The Panel hearing for the Regent/City Square development proposal of the City of Melbourne was held during the first two weeks of October. It continued for five days.

About 25 submissions were received, including those of the Chase Corporation and Melbourne City Council in support of the project.

Critical aspects

Several submissions were made which were critical of aspects of the proposal, including the following:

- The National Trust was concerned about conservation aspects of existing buildings in Collins Street.
- The RAIA questioned the need for the building extension into the space of the existing square, and management aspects of the proposal.
- A petition of some 5000 signatures was presented in support of retention of "the cascades", arguing that there is wide public support for them.
- The AILA (Landscape Architects) submission supported the notion of retention and re-use of the Regent Theatre but made the following comments about the City Square.
 - The square has been badly managed and maintained by the Council over its 8 years of operation and this, rather than the much criticised design brief, is the main reason for its poor public image.
 - Despite this, the square as an urban open space is quite well used by community groups, Melbournians and tourists.

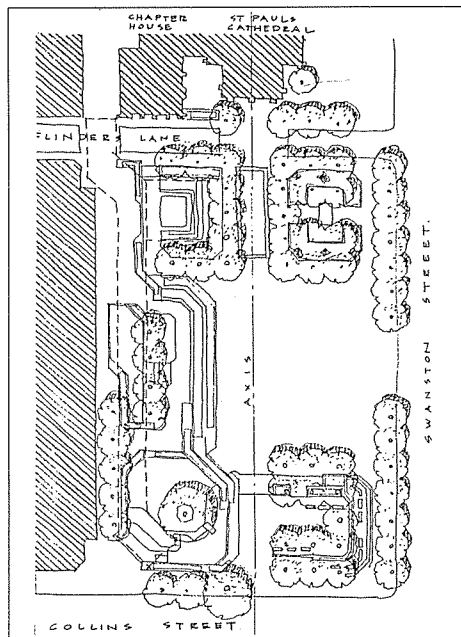
- The re-development proposals will devalue the size, proportion and quality of the square as urban openspace.
- Nearly fifty mature trees will be lost from the space as will the amphitheatre, fountains and comfortable seating areas.
- The AILA requests a series of specified changes to the design of the re-development proposal to ensure that the qualities of the existing openspace are retained and enhanced rather than replaced with a much inferior public open space.
- The AILA's policy on alienation of public openspace requires wide public consultation on matters of this nature and the Victorian Group is not happy with the level of public consultation which has occurred in the case of this important civic project.

The group believes that if major changes are to occur, including the demolition of an urban open space which is worth about \$20 million at current construction costs, then the replacement design must be the right one and widely understood by the community.

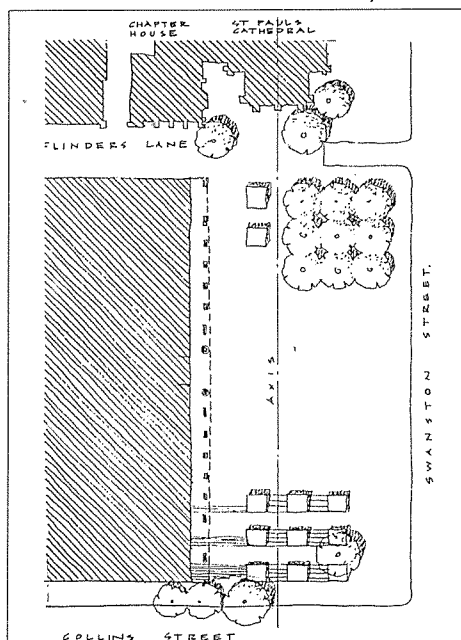
- A submission was also made by Glass Creek Pty Ltd which detailed the feasibility of restoration and re-use of the Regent Theatre without the need for major modification of the City Square.

The Panel was due to submit a draft report to the Minister by mid November and publication of the final report is expected by about mid December.

The next step is for the Minister to make a determination on whether the application is to be granted, and what if any changes should be made to the design proposal.



▲ Existing



▼ Proposed