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Angry Young Architects: Counterculture and the critique of modernism in Brisbane, 1967-72

By 1967, Brisbane architecture students had had enough. Disenchantment with their “out-dated” architectural education and the rigidity of the Australian architectural establishment opened out onto the wider context of the Moratorium opposing the Vietnam War, and the peculiarly conservative and reactionary Queensland Government of Johannes Bjelke-Petersen. In the decade between 1967, when the 6th National Architecture Student Conference was held in Brisbane to the infamous Art Experience Week of 1972, led by artists Tim Johnson and Albie Thoms, students and progressive teachers set up a series of dissenting events. These were symptomatic of the emergence of an Australian ‘New Left’, which was characterized by a concern with culture as well as with the staples of the ‘Old Left’ politics. Through theatrical performances (the “Architecture Revues”, directed by William Yang), films (“Happiness is a Three-Legged Dog” is particularly noteworthy), art exhibitions and performance art events or ‘happenings’, Brisbane’s architecture students questioned their architectural education and subverted the tenets of modernism while satirizing their socio-political environment and challenging the authority of their peers and ultimately the State.

Based largely on oral history interviews, this paper describes how this generation of Brisbane architects began a critique of architecture’s modernist orthodoxy as an intrinsic part of a wider reaction to global events and the politics of the State of Queensland. The events they organized confronted ‘the establishment’ - and in doing so conceived of an architecture with new social and cultural values.

Introduction

One of the largest protest marches in Queensland's history took place on 8 September 1967, when students marched some five kilometres from the University of Queensland to Brisbane's city centre, demanding an end to conscription for the Vietnam war and wider civil liberties.¹ The march was marshalled alphabetically by faculty, and then by year cohorts, which meant that the Architecture faculty was in front and the first-year students at the head of the line. As a result, when protesters met a wall of police in the city centre, almost all architecture students were arrested. For many of them their radicalisation began on that day. Paul Memmott, then first-year architecture student at UQ recalls: "[...] in our first year [...] 5000 people [...] marched into the city [...] and the police watched us the whole way and we all got into Roma Street and the police had paddy wagons on both sides of the road and they attacked everybody and arrested as many people as they could."² This march marked the first of a series of intersections between architecture student culture and the increasingly radical opposition to the conservative government of Queensland.

Although an early settlement of the British in Australia, Queensland developed more slowly than other Australian states. Well into the early twentieth century Queensland had a largely agricultural economy marked by brutal frontier warfare with local Aboriginal nations and spectacular short lived gold rushes. Throughout the twentieth century progressive and then conservative governments practiced a statist agrarian socialism that did not favour education or culture. Until 1964, compulsory education ended at age 14³ and the first university, the University of Queensland (UQ), was only established in 1909, half a century after Sydney and Melbourne inaugurated theirs. The state's capital, Brisbane, was relatively underdeveloped urbanistically and characterized by a local residential type of elevated timber detached houses and grand classical government buildings from before 1900. And so, by the mid-twentieth century Sydney and Melbourne had turned into cosmopolitan cities, while the national image of Brisbane remained that of a large country town.

In 1957 a centre-right coalition took government. In 1968 power within the coalition shifted to the more conservative National Party. Over the next two decades,⁴ under Johannes Bjelke-Petersen's leadership, Queensland became a police state in which democratic principles were trammelled to privilege the interests of a select and powerful minority; the electorate routinely manipulated; the media co-opted; parliamentary due process severely eroded; freedom of expression sacrificed

1 Carole Ferrier and Ken Mansell, "Student Revolt, 1960s and 1970s. The University of Queensland, St. Lucia," in: *Radical Brisbane. An Unruly History*, ed. Raymond Evans and Carole Ferrier (Carlton North: The Vulgar Press, 2004), 266-72.

2 Paul Memmott, Interview, 13 February 2013. Ferrier and Mansell describe this event as follows: "SDA [Students for Democratic Action] led 4000 students and staff members - approximately half the campus population - onto the road towards the metropolis. More supporters, less intrepid, marched alongside on the footpath. At the corner of Makerston and Roma streets, they were confronted by 250 police and ordered to disperse. About 1500 to 2000 sat down outside the present police headquarters. Police moved in and began making arrests, 114 in total.' See: Ferrier and Mansell, "Student Revolt," 270.

3 <http://education.qld.gov.au/library/edhistory/state>, consulted on 3 December 2013.

4 The Bjelke-Petersen regime fell in 1987 after an inquiry revealed endemic corruption, extending up to the Police Commissioner and cabinet.

to oppressive censorship; minority rights branded a risible intrusion and civil liberties derided as the dangerous ploy of extremists.⁵ And so, at the end of the 1960s, as the tectonic plates of the western socio-political landscape began to shift towards socially progressive causes, Queensland's Government took the opposite direction.

Social historian Raymond Evans however maintains that Bjelke-Petersen's oppressive totalitarian rule ultimately had a silver lining. By bitter experience, he writes, "it taught Queenslanders [...] what democratic principles, such as the separation of powers, majority rule, an objective media, an accountable government, a non-politicized public service, an uncorrupted police or judiciary, and respect for freedom of speech, minority justice and basic civil rights really meant."⁶ The stultifying socio-political conservatism maintained by Bjelke-Petersen's regime deepened the radical spirit in the state and transformed the University of Queensland into a focal point of socio-political dissent.⁷ Here, under the watchful eye of student leaders Brian Laver and Dan O'Neill, a 'New Left' emerged, which was characterised by a concern with culture as well as with the staples of the 'Old Left' politics - a combination that appealed to many young (aspiring) architects, who were not only irritated by Queensland's oppressive socio-political climate, but also peeved by their out-dated architectural training leading them towards a largely conformist architectural establishment.

Those who wanted to study architecture in Queensland had two options. The Queensland Institute of Technology (QIT, formerly known as the Central Technical College or CTC) had been offering evening courses in architecture since the early 1920s that were still halfway an articulated form of training, but from 1937 the University of Queensland began to develop a more academic full-time course in architecture. Robert Cummings became the university's first lecturer in architecture and - along with his partner in practice, Bruce Lucas, the Austrian émigré architect Karl Langer, and Charles Fulton at the CTC - introduced modern architecture to Queensland. Initially UQ offered courses in Building Construction and History of Architecture and in 1939 added Materials and Testing, Freehand Drawing, Advanced Building and Construction and Specification to the curriculum.⁸ From the onset, Cummings taught History of Architecture. According to former student of architecture Rex Addison, who studied under Cummings, "he had [...] a penchant for a softer form of modernism" and "Dudok was his pin up boy".⁹ Cummings indeed placed the architecture of pre-War Dutch architect Willem Marinus Dudok as the final development of an architectural truth first revealed to the ancient Egyptians. In his lectures he religiously followed Banister Fletcher's *A History of Architecture*, which

5 Raymond Evans, *A History of Queensland* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 219-48.

6 Raymond Evans, *A History of Queensland* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 219-48.

7 Julianne Schultz, "Disruptive Influences," *Griffith Review*, no. 21 (theme "Hidden Queensland"): 11-41.

8 By 1940 the course was being revised and offerings included: Architectural Drawing and Design, Descriptive Geometry, Specifications, Town Planning and Street Architecture, Surveying, Professional Practice, History of Art, History of Architecture, Architectural Drawing, Freehand Drawing, Building Construction and Materials Testing. Source: Ian Sinnamon and Michael Keniger, *Ideas in Practice: Queensland's University Department of Architecture, 1937-1987* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland, 1987), 6.

9 Rex Addison, Interview, 15 February 2013.

- according to his son Malcolm Cummings who studied architecture at UQ from 1954 to 1960 - he treated as 'the bible'.¹⁰ Until the 1960s Cummings and his colleagues continued to give sermons on a canon of architecture that they held to have been completed by their generation, but by then the architectural landscape had changed. The modernist dogmas of "form follows function" and *existenzminima* no longer corresponded to the needs of the mid-twentieth century society and the elusive character of the era instilled a sentiment of anxiety in architects who were more interested in the iconoclastic and avant-garde actions of modernist architects than in their buildings.¹¹ For students fascinated by *Art and Architecture's* Case Study Houses and Buckminster Fuller, the stereometric masonry forms of Lucas and Cummings' and Langer's buildings looked heavy and out of date.¹² Like cats on hot bricks, post-war architects veered off in different directions, challenging what previous generations had accepted as a given, and exploring the limits of the conceivable; their actions drew on issues and concerns emerging directly out of the social, cultural, economic and political changes of the post-war years. In Brisbane, these ruptures that were unfolding in architectural ideology met a climate of generalized dissent, which - aggravated by the complacency of the local professional architectural community - encouraged many young architects to express their discontent.¹³ Through theatrical performances, films, art exhibitions and performance art events, they questioned their architectural education and sought to subvert the tenets of modernism while satirizing their socio-political environment and challenging the authority of their peers and ultimately the State.

Clashes of the Conferences

The first time that the generation gap and the ideological differences that underlay it became starkly apparent was in May 1967, when the National Architecture Students conference and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects conference were both held in Brisbane. At the Institute conference, Professor Cummings and the principals of Queensland architecture firms hosted their interstate peers in dinner jackets and ceremonial chains of office. The official opening took place in the Legislative Council Chambers of Parliament House on Monday, 29 May and was followed by a Presidential Reception at Lennon's Hotel. The following day, invited speakers Paul Ritter, town

10 Malcolm Cummings, Interview, 20 December 2012.

11 Sarah Williams-Goldhagen and Réjean Legault, ed., *Anxious Modernisms. Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture* (Montréal and Cambridge, Mass.: Canadian Centre for Architecture and MIT Press, 2000), 13-22.

12 Statement by Barry Walduck, a student assistant to Langer, made at a symposium which was held at the University of Queensland on 22 September 2009, entitled "Working with Karl Langer."

13 This discontent was not only felt among students, but also among the younger lecturers who joined the older generation at UQ and QIT. Notable in this respect are the actions taken by John Dalton, a young lecturer at UQ who between 1966 and 1972 wrote, published and distributed handbill style pamphlets to students of architecture at the University of Queensland and the Queensland Institute of Technology. These pamphlets were intended to fuel student activism. See: Elizabeth Musgrave, "What's 'out'... what's 'in' Revolution versus Evolution: John Dalton Architect as Pamphleteer," in: *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand: 30*, Open, ed. Alexandra Brown and Andrew Leach (Gold Coast: SAHANZ, 2013), vol. 2, 461-71.

planner of the city of Perth, and Graham de Gruchy, lecturer at the School of Architecture at UQ reflected on the architect's role in society, while the speakers on Wednesday - all practicing architects and engineers - addressed the theme "Architect and building industry", bringing the conference back "down to earth" as the first speaker, Emery Balint, suggested: "I had the opportunity of listening in to your session yesterday and this made me very conscious of a division in the ranks. There are the theorists... who feel that the profession should have an image perhaps more than an ideal... and then there are the down-to-earth practitioners, the architects who feel very acutely the day to day problems and pressures of the practice of their profession [...]"¹⁴ On Wednesday evening delegates returned to Lennon's Hotel for the award ceremony and the conference ended on Thursday with an "Introspection" session, reflecting on the ethics of the architectural profession. As can be derived from the proceedings, which were published in full in *Architecture in Australia*, the event was very formal in nature and aimed predominantly at networking. It was very different from the student conference, which was set up as a seditious response to the Institute conference and was announced with an image of Ron Herron's 1964 design for a "Walking City", stalking across a ruined world in the aftermath of a nuclear war. Like Archigram, the students intended to "inject noise into the system".¹⁵

The conference, which preceded the RAlA conference, ran for a week, from 20 to 27 May and offered not only lectures and discussions, but also work sessions, exhibitions and site visits. For the event, the students invited (among others) the aging Gio Ponti, editor of *Domus*, and the young avant-gardist Tony Gwilliam from the AA School in London - two essentially antagonistic speakers. While Ponti pontificated about what constituted good architecture, addressing issues such as form, structure and the profession's relation to art, Gwilliam launched a plea to talk about "building" rather than "architecture", advocating the need for new building materials and new building methods to satisfy the increasing demand for human shelter. "In one generation", he said, "we have to build what it has taken 10 generations in the past to build... We simply cannot let millions of people go without shelter."¹⁶ In the work-session that followed his lecture, he invited the students to "create some sort of instant environment with various materials"¹⁷, following which several plastic and cardboard domes were constructed across the UQ campus. At a micro-scale, Ponti and Gwilliam epitomized the contemporary state of architectural culture; Ponti, the institutionalization of the

14 Emery Balint, "The Professional Builder?," *Architecture in Australia* 56, no. 4 (1967): 629.

15 The conference was announced in 1966 in the fourth issue of the student magazine ASM. Between May 1965 and May 1966, three issues of *Scarab* appeared. These three issues were edited by architecture students Haig Beck, Mike Hughes, Bob Martin, Phil McMaster, Barrie Reuter and Robert Riddel. Mid 1966, architecture students Haig Beck, Tom McKerrrell and Don Cunningham took over the publication and renamed it ASM, which stood for "Architecture Student Magazine". Seven issues of ASM appeared between 1967 and 1968. By 1970, the magazine changed name once more and became MK2, of which four issues appeared between May 1970 and March 1971.

16 "Building Ideas with Plastics," *Courier Mail*, 27 May 1967, 11.

17 "Gwilliam," *ASM*, no.5 (1967): np.

modernist idiom¹⁸ and Gwilliam an apostle of the phase of experimentation, ringing in the advent of post-modernism.



Fig. 1. Gwilliam: Photograph of Tony Gwilliam, talking to students during the 1967 Architecture Student Conference in Brisbane (source: photo by Derek Ellis)

Discussions during the conference were held in a very informal manner, with both students and speakers sitting on the ground, while the evenings were enlivened with barbeques and casual parties. On Thursday night, the students organized a 'happening' at the Rialto Theatre, entitled *Dorcus French - a naughty review*. Planned as a performance art event, a number of activities took place simultaneously; a rock band was playing in one corner of the room, someone was demolishing a car in another and a striptease was enacted. Proceedings however ended abruptly when - in an attempt to shock the audience - some students jumped up on stage, "armed" with a number of chickens and killed them by swinging the animals around in the air. Many of those present, among them Gio Ponti, left in disgust and the event came to an end.

High on a Hot Banana

The 'happening' at the Rialto Theatre fed a nascent tradition of architecture student revues that had been initiated two years earlier; in 1965 the architecture students at UQ - under the direction of William Yang (then known as Willy Young)¹⁹ - took over the production of the annual revue from the Arts and Law students. These "Archi Revues" as they became known from then on, were developed by architecture students of UQ and QIT conjointly and consisted of sketches, music and experimental theatre, satirizing not only architecture and urban planning but also politics and current affairs. Between 1965 and 1970, six reviews were held in the Avalon Theatre; *OWO* in 1965, *RINTH/TANG Son of OWO* in 1966, *High on a Hot Banana* in 1967 - this was the first revue to receive musical contributions from the newly minted *Architecture Revue Band - Young Robert Zimmerman* in 1968, *Classical Stuff* in 1969 and *Awopbopaloobopaloobamboom* in 1970.

18 Giò Ponti was one of Italy's most renowned modernists. Even though he was not a member of CIAM, his ideas, which were unambiguously expressed in the magazine *Domus* - Ponti founded *Domus* in 1928 and edited until his death in 1979 - were in line with those of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne. Like most of CIAM's founding members, Ponti strongly believed that architecture (and design in general) should strive for a harmonious relationship between a form and its function.

19 William Yang, the well-known, Sydney-based writer and visual and performance artist.



Fig. 2. Hot Banana: Poster announcing the 1967 Archi Revue "High on a Hot Banana" (source: private collection Neville Twidale)

That year, Yang graduated and moved to Sydney, leaving his protégés to carry on the productions, which subsequently relocated to the new Schonell Theatre on the UQ Campus. According to Jack Kershaw, who was a fifth year architecture student at UQ when the first show took place, there was initially a bit of conservatism about the revues. The subtitle "New, not too blue OWO revue", he says, hinted at its more subdued character - "not too blue" meaning "not too risqué."²⁰ Ralph Tyrell, who was a first-year student in 1965 and became heavily involved in the organization of the following revues, however claims that the show evolved and became more provocative over the years:

"There was a lot of iconoclastic behaviour and there was a lot of raw bawdy stuff. But, it was clever. [...] Nobody would have gone to a bloody review run by the communists, you know, some sort of dialectic, proselytising [event]. The architects managed to get this fine-tuned balance of maybe being irreverent [and] politically relevant."²¹

This change in demeanour was undoubtedly influenced by the changing atmosphere - globally as well as locally.²² The 1968 revue, for instance, started with a "Testimony of the March", referring to the September 1967 protest where many of the cast had been arrested, and comprised an act entitled "The Soldier" subtitled "Thou Shalt Take What Not Belongs To You." The Archi Revues also played a significant role in the development of live theatre in Queensland. In 1969 Bjelke-Petersen extended his censorship campaign from written publication into the theatre, which implied that people could be prosecuted not only for written prose, but also for on-stage utterances. The musical *Hair*, famous for its nude scenes, was banned in Brisbane after cabinet member Russ Hinze condemned the musical as being appealing to only the "sexually-depraved, or a group of homosexuals, lesbians, wifeswappers and spivs", and in April 1969 Brisbane actor Norman Stained was arrested by police, charged with having used an obscene expression during a performance of

²⁰ Jack Kershaw, Interview, 29 July 2013.

²¹ Ralph Tyrell & Neville Twidale, Interview, 15 January 2013.

²² In March 1966, the Government announced that National Servicemen would be sent to Vietnam.

the play *Norm and Ahmed*, presented by the Twelfth Night Theatre Company.²³ The Archi Revues thus not only offered talented aspiring architects a creative outlet, but also allowed them to - in an entertaining manner - chastise the oppressive socio-political environment they found themselves in.

Queensland Background

Taking place in Brisbane in the same year as the RAA and the National Architecture Student conference was a small photography exhibition organised by Richard Stringer, a young architecture graduate from Melbourne who had moved to Brisbane only four years earlier, in 1963. Upon his arrival, he says he was "struck [by] the silent buildings around from previous generations of architects"²⁴ which inspired him to start travelling around the state, visiting mining towns such as Ravenswood and Charters Towers, armed with his five by four inch Linhof camera.

By 1967, Stringer had already developed a substantial collection of photographs of Queensland's "silent buildings", which led him to belief that current architects were not matching up to the standard the past had set. And so, when the RAA conference came up, he decided to organize a photographic exhibition, entitled *Queensland Background* to present "another side of Queensland, besides the side that the Institute [was] presenting".²⁵



Fig. 3. Stringer: Poster announcing Richard Stringer's 1967 "Queensland Background" exhibition, held in Sutton House (source: reproduced from ASM 1, no.4 (May 1967): no page numbers given)

This exhibition was held in Sutton house, a small, private gallery located in George Street, and consisted of sixty black-and-white photographs, each 16 inch high by 20 inch wide. The poster that he designed for the exhibition is indicative of what was presented in the show. It contains a photograph of a traditional Queensland house, constructed on stumps, with single-skin timber walls (the structure on the outside) and a pitched tin roof. According to Stringer, this is not what most people would call an exemplary piece of Queensland architecture, but it was something that to him spoke a lot about the grassroots architecture in Queensland. The exhibition, Stringer hoped, would

23 Fitzgerald, Ross, "Censorship in Queensland 1954-83," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 30, no. 3 (1984): 348-62.

24 Richard Stringer, Interview, 10 December 2012.

25 Richard Stringer, Interview, 10 December 2012.

offer local architects “a little eloquent testament to the environment that they were operating in”²⁶ and potentially (positively) influence their appreciation of Queensland’s built heritage.

Two years prior to Stringer’s exhibition, in 1965, the Queensland Architectural Student Association launched a magazine called *Scarab*, of which three issues appeared between May 1965 and May 1966.²⁷ The first two articles of the inaugural issue, “Rude Forefathers and Non-Pedigree Architecture” and “The Influence of the 19th Century Vernacular Tradition on Contemporary Queensland Architecture”, both launch a plea for a simpler architecture that draws on vernacular building tradition. Bill Carr, author of the latter essay - and then one of the young lecturers at UQ - paints a rather negative picture of the architecture practice in Queensland.

“On thinking over the subject”, he writes, “I have been forced to conclude that the guts of this [vernacular building] tradition has had no influence on 20th century Queensland architecture. [...] The economy, the structural integrity, the pre-fabrication [and] the lack of pretention of the 19th century Queensland building vernacular have all been overlooked. These very qualities which would seem to be so important to our own picture of the 20th century have evaded us.”²⁸

Peter Newell, author of the opening text equally concludes that “[t]he challenge to the [contemporary] architect is to achieve an environment with qualities similar to those that were inherent in less prosperous and less technologically advanced civilizations.”²⁹



Fig. 4 Happiness: Stills from Happiness is a Three-Legged Dog (source: image produced by the authors based on the original copy of the film provided by Robert Riddel)

Both essays were clearly informed by the writings of authors such as Bernard Rudofsky and Steen Eiler Rasmussen. In Rudofsky’s 1964 publication *Architecture without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-pedigreed architecture*,³⁰ he introduces the concept of “communal architecture”, produced not by specialists but by the spontaneous and continuing activity of a community. Rudofsky points to the practical knowledge of the untutored builder as an untapped source of inspiration for the industrial man trapped in chaotic cities. Five years prior to Rudofsky’s publication, Rasmussen³¹ proffered a similar suggestion in his book *Experiencing Architecture*, in which he (famously) wrote:

26 Richard Stringer, Interview, 10 December 2012.

27 Emery Balint, “The Professional Builder?,” *Architecture in Australia* 56, no. 4 (1967): 629.

28 Bill Carr, “The Influence of the 19th Century Vernacular Tradition on Contemporary Queensland Architecture,” *Scarab* 1, no.1 (1965): np.

29 Peter Newell, “Rude Forefathers and Non Pedigree Architecture,” *Scarab* 1, no.1 (1965): np.

30 Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture Without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-pedigreed Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1964).

31 Rasmussen was a lecturer at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art; among his students were Jørn Utzon.

“At one time the entire community took part in forming the dwellings and implements they used. [...] houses were built with a natural feeling for place, materials and use [...]. Today, in our highly civilized society, the houses which ordinary people are doomed to live in and gaze upon are on the whole without quality. We cannot, however, go back to the old method of personally supervised handicrafts. We must strive to advance by arousing interest in and understanding of the work the architect does.”³²

Influenced by the writings of Rasmussen and Rudofsky, the new generation of post-war architects accordingly came to believe that architecture needed to reflect modern life while simultaneously contributing to a deeply needed sense of continuity and identity.

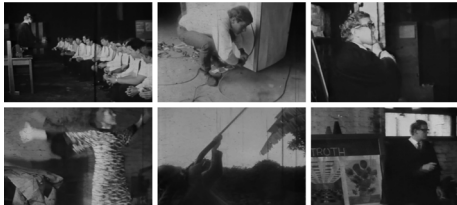


Fig. 5. Induction: Photograph showing UO's architecture students participating in Tim Johnson's "Induction Event" at the Masonic Hall during Art Experience Week in 1972 (source: photo by Tim Johnson)

This could be achieved through establishing contextualism in both time and space. Some architects tried to engender a harmonious relationship to architecture's history, while other attempted to take into consideration the character and constraints of the specific locale in which they were operating - a concern for place.

In Queensland, the concern for place and its history - *genius loci* - became a particularly poignant issue for a group of young architects whose training was taking them toward a professional establishment that was busily profiting from pro-development policies, which at times involved corrupt land rezoning and the destruction of Brisbane's built heritage. To Queensland-premier Bjelke-Petersen the number of cranes on the skyline were seen a measure of the state's prosperity, demolition became associated with economic growth and architectural heritage was - as his right hand man Richard Katter put it in a recent interview - conceived as the concern of a "[...] self-indulgent, citified sort of people that would be concerned about ridiculous things like that when people were going hungry."³³

Happiness is a Three-Legged Dog

Brisbane's angry young architects were certainly prolific. Shortly after organizing the National Student Conference - and while churning out editions of the Architecture Student magazine at a high pace - a group of architecture students produced a film entitled *Happiness is a Three-legged Dog*. Drawing on ideas put forth by the 1964 student revolt in Berkeley, the film melds critique of the

32 Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *Experiencing Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1959), preface.

33 Andrew Houghton, Peter Ross, Robyn Smith, *Bellevue Hotel*, documentary, first Broadcasted on 17 October 2004.

university under capitalism - factory education - and the oppressive socio-political climate with a critique of the retrograde architecture training. In one of the first scenes, a group of students, all wearing black trousers, white shirts and black ties are lined up in a classroom and brainwashed into repeating the words "truth, beauty, integrity" *ad infinitum*.

The lecturer addresses the students not by their name but with a number. One of the students, number LX 4152/6, escapes this oppressive classroom environment to join a group of dissidents. Upon his escape he unplugs an electricity chord, which results in the lecturer collapsing to the floor, revealing that he is not human but merely a mechanical component of the education 'machine'. Robert Riddel provided the script for the film. When asked what inspired him to write this story, he responds that at the time he felt that the education was appalling, as it was not in the least concerned with "how are we going to learn how to live".³⁴ Throughout the thirty-minute film voiceovers utter statements that express the desire of the students to be free. After a woman is heard saying: "Everyone is born with a degree of intuition and creativity and this is fostered or suppressed by education and environment", a short twenty-second sequence shows a young girl twirling around and chanting "I'm a bird; I'm a bird", followed by an image of soldier firing a shot into the air. The twirling girl is then seen falling to the ground. In less than half a minute, this sequence pithily conveys the contemporary state of mind of many young Brisbanites, distraught not only by the looming threat of conscription into fighting a war that they did not condone, but also restrained by a very oppressive local socio-political environment.

The film however not only criticizes the contemporary socio-political climate and education system, but also targets the architectural training and the discipline of architecture in general. In one scene, the 'android' lecturer holds up a large print with two images; one depicting an open, sterile office space with desks organized on a grid, the other a reproduction of van Gogh's sunflowers. When the lecturer asks student LX 4152/6 which of the images he believes is better, he points at the sunflowers causing the other students to erupt in laughter. The film thus clearly takes a stab at the modernist "form follows function" dogma, represented by the well-organized yet barren office area, and aligns itself with the growing criticism that was heard in the circles of the post-war architectural avant-garde, who believed that - in an attempt to develop a formal language based solely on physical needs - modernism had come to disregard architecture's ability to respond to people's emotional desires. This conviction also strongly comes to the fore in Riddel's explanation of the film's title:

"My memory of it is that happiness was [...] central to all of our endeavours and good architecture, good spatial experience gave you a feeling of well-being, but it didn't have to be perfect. [...] You could still have three legs and have that well-being. [...] And you know when you are present in a piece of architecture with qualities that it gives you - it affects you in a full way. And, you feel this well being feeling. It's your response to architecture."³⁵

34 Robert Riddel, Interview, 5 December 2012.

35 Robert Riddel, Interview, 5 December 2012.

Art week: Experiment

By the early 1970s change was imminent. In the Federal Election of December 1972, Australians voted for the Labour Party under Gough Whitlam, who immediately began a 'New-Left' program of reforms including withdrawing Australia from the war in Vietnam, regulating against racial and gender discrimination, introducing universal public health care, providing substantial support for the arts and abolishing university tuition fees. Queensland was, however, not entirely on-board with this 'New-Left' spirit. In 1971, the nationwide anti-apartheid protests against the touring South African rugby team - the racially selected Springboks - led to the Queensland government declaring a state of emergency and giving the police license to violently suppress protests. Twenty students were hospitalized, many others arrested and bundled into vans to the city's watch-house.³⁶ Friction was also felt in the School of Architecture which had been complemented by a group of young, energized lecturers, such as Bill Carr, Peter O'Gorman, John Hitch and Ian Sinnamon, who determinedly wrought the course away from its stale modernist grounding towards a more varied curriculum, which included a assortment of creative experiences. Bruce Wolfe, who started the course in 1971 recalls: "We were introduced to other things like pottery and life drawings classes and things like that in the first year [...] I think that was perhaps instigated by Peter O'Gorman wanting to get a more touchy feely approach to design."³⁷

In 1972, determined that the UQ architecture students were insufficiently appraised in contemporary art, Bill Carr devised "Art Experience Week". Intended to shock first, second and third-year students out of their familiar and parochial environment and force them to think creatively, Carr invited several renowned avant-garde artists, including well-known film-maker Albie Thoms, art editors of the magazine *Oz* Gary Shead and Peter Kingston and Sydney-based artists Franklin Johnson and Tim Johnson, one of the co-founders of the *Inhibodress* artists' atelier in Sydney (which provided a space for experimental performance art) to the event.³⁸ Art Week started on Monday, 31 July at the Masonic Hall in Alice Street with Tim Johnson's "Induction Event". Johnson had written the following instructions for students on a blackboard: "Lying on your back attempt to produce an erection (penile, clitoral) by directing your thoughts towards erotic subjects and attempting slight movement of your organ inside your under clothes."

Although this work was directed at making apparent the unbridgeable divide between body, socialized behaviour, and psyche, it was not recognized as such and much less appreciated in conservative Queensland of the time. As soon as Bill Greig, then Head of the School of Architecture, heard about this 'incident', he ordered Johnson to "cease the eroticism" and informed the Vice-Chancellor. Within days, the validity of Tim Johnson's work was questioned in State Parliament, the artist was dismissed, Art Week cancelled on grounds of immorality, and organizer Bill Carr brought

36 Schultz, "Disruptive Influences," 17.

37 Bruce Wolfe, Interview, 26 September 2013.

38 "The 'Art Week' Controversy of 1972 - FACT SHEET," *Turrbal-Jagera: The University of Queensland Art Projects 2006*, exhibition catalogue (Brisbane: University Art Museum, 2006), 38-39.

before the University's Dismissals Advisory Committee.³⁹ The Art Week controversy furthermore received echoes in *The Courier Mail*, which in September 1972 somewhat exaggeratedly reported "[...] recently some Queensland University academics and students [...] staged an erotica display before men, women and children. Everything conceivable was performed - masturbation, homosexuality, sodomy, and sex deviation - in full view of everyone there. [...] Only the filthiest and foulest things were performed."⁴⁰

Conclusion

The clampdown on experiments in architectural education was a fragment of a wider conservative reaction that led to the landslide victory of Bjelke-Petersen in the 1974 state election. Many architecture students, whether angry or simply aspirational, left for Britain, America or the more progressive southern Australian cities, while others chose to leave the architectural profession, and took up jobs in other creative industries. Nevertheless, change was inevitable and in the late 1970s critical regionalism flourished in Queensland architecture on ground already broken by the dissent of the Sixties and its initial exploration of autochthonous building culture, while the legends of the misbehaviour at the 1967 conference, the ArchiReviews and Art Week had a role in a new combination of architectural experimentation and punk rock.

The establishment reaction to Art Week and the earlier student 'happenings' failed to distinguish performance art from the sexual proclivities of youth, but rightly understood that a radical education, which emphasized a politics of the person and the body was on a continuum with the violent clashes between the students and the police that continued through the 1970s. Between the visits of Tony Gwilliam and Tim Johnson the project of building modernism as an orthodoxy, with an agreed body of concepts, techniques and a common comportment of the architect had been lost to a new kind of avant-gardism that would bring broader social and cultural agendas. When questioned recently for this research, only a few of the former students who recall Art Week, the Archi Revues and the 1967 conference could be said to have made a strong articulation between the politics of the UQ School and the changing culture of architecture, from opposition to the Bjelke-Petersen government and the Vietnam war. The strength of their opposition lay in their willingness to see that the radically generalized and contagious rebelliousness of their generation was a way to confront the norms that constrained them in quite different spheres of their lives.

³⁹ Senate of the University of Queensland, *Report of the Dismissals Advisory Committee*, February 1973.

⁴⁰ "Erotica Display at Uni. - MLA Claim", *Courier Mail*, 21 September 1972, 15.