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Queensland Review / Volume 20 / Issue 02 / December 2013, pp 237 - 238
DOI: 10.1017/qre.2013.28, Published online: 30 October 2013

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S1321816613000287

How to cite this article:

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library forced me online to spend too much of my meagre earnings on a dozen out-of-print Australian classics that I now need to read: Williamson’s book critiques the bright smouldering trunks left from a bushfire, waiting for the breath of curiosity to fan the fires of his consuming passion for Australian writers.

Patrick Condliffe


Offering a broad scope of viewpoints on issues ranging from public transport to community housing, A climate for growth: planning South-East Queensland awakens yet infuriates. Despite its optimistic title, this collection of essays does nothing to boost one’s confidence in state or local government, and also provides a bleak depiction of South-East Queensland’s population, which appears unwilling to address issues as significant as climate change. The authors do much to highlight the planning shortfalls of successive governments in the wider South-East Queensland region. In doing so, each contribution to this collection presents — either directly or by historical review — alternatives to what has already detrimentally scarred the region. Each section adds to an overall picture of what may have occurred in South-East Queensland had a little more forethought been applied.

There are fourteen well-crafted and accessible sections to this book, and all contributors are obviously hoping to elucidate and educate. The last section of the book, entitled ‘Planning and community’, emphasises the strength of community action when a government sets out to make yet another archaic planning decision. While the authors value lifestyle choices that appear to be socially and environmentally rigorous, these choices — as they note — are out of kilter with the majority of South-East Queensland’s growing population. The region is strongly car-orientated: a pragmatic lifestyle choice that has metamorphosed into an ideology.

Read in its entirety, A climate for growth is a great starting point for conversation, for there is much to ponder when considering past mistakes. Such reflection, I feel, needs to be accompanied by proactive solutions. The contributors are willing to judge, but not so ready to incite large-scale — even radical — measures to mend past wrongs. If solutions are offered, they are tepid or not extreme enough to combat the far-reaching problems presented by an ever-growing, car-loving community. I suspect that those interested in the book’s content are like-minded individuals who advocate similar core principles. These individuals are already riding bicycles to work and using public transport, and are conscious of the environment and community well-being.

If there are two dominant motifs to this volume of essays, the first is that governments — both past and present — are not always sensible or visionary in their decision-making. The second is that the general public wishes to remain ignorant of its role in our ever-changing environment. Whether this ignorance stems from, for example, acres of bitumen and/or the ever-increasing desire to air-condition homes,
the public will remain ignorant for as long as they are either able, or permitted, to do so. The potency and potential of *A climate for growth* may therefore be somewhat lost on individuals who need to change their way of life, and equally on governments that look to this car-loving majority for support. This is a book that should be read by many, yet I imagine will only be read by an already-converted few.

Kirril Shields

doi 10.1017/qre.2013.32

*The Central Queensland project* (Powerhouse Brisbane, from 22 July to 18 August 2013).

Queensland, its society and its natural resources, has been the source of investigation by photographers for over 150 years. In the 1860s, surveyor and photographer Richard Daintree created a quantitative analysis of the region’s potential for development. Associated with this record was a significant visual document in the form of photographs. In the lead-up to Australia’s Bicentennial celebrations of white settlement, the Queensland Art Gallery commissioned six photographers to travel the state under the title *Journeys north*, to ‘produce a portfolio of photographs on the theme of community life in Queensland’ (Williamson 1988: 5).

Now, nearly 25 years after this latest project, two photographers, Kelly Hussey-Smith and Alan Hill, have travelled north with cameras to document the current life and situations of people far away from the urbanised south-east corner. The products of this latest documentary coverage were presented as the exhibition *The Central Queensland project: a region in transition* at the Powerhouse in Brisbane from 22 July to 18 August 2013. In exhibition material, the photographers claim that:

Given the complexity of the modern economy, and the insularity of city life, many of us are blind to what lies beyond the city limits. Through this project we seek to gain insight into the lives, values and experiences of Central Queenslanders. (Hill and Hussey-Smith 2013)

Art communicates conceptual and intellectual information through the senses to solicit and perhaps evoke an emotional response in the viewer. A project of this nature, investigating highly topical and potentially divisive themes, could easily have tapped into the angst of the contemporary critique of mining. Instead, these artists have utilised the stilled moment of the photograph to create a reflective, melancholic and ironic view of this region. As viewers engage with the exhibition, they are drawn into decoding and interpreting the visual narratives within each image and series. Rather than taking a conventional or standardised approach, the exhibition conveys its message or ‘insight’ through a variety of aesthetic choices and arrangements of the visual elements of the images and their installation.

Perhaps as a response to capture the attention of a visually literate audience, the contemporary documentary photographer has developed creative devices to present their work. This show employs many of these: the Martin Parr pastiche;