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SHOPPING TOWNS AUSTRALIA, 1957-67: FROM REFORMIST FIGURE OF COLLECTIVITY TO PROFIT-DRIVEN BOX OF GOLD

Between May 1957 and early October 1967 fifteen regional shopping centres opened in Australia. Together, these added nearly 7 million square feet – or more than half a square foot per inhabitant – of commercial area into the nation. Eight shopping centres were constructed in New South Wales, two each in Victoria, Queensland and South Australia and one in the Australian Capital Territory. Strongly indebted to its American ancestor, the regional shopping centre concept assumed an uneasy role when it was first introduced into Australia. Promoted by developers such as Lend Lease Corporation and Westfield, or department stores, most notably the Myer Emporium, the Australian regional shopping centre was to perform three diverging functions at once. It not only had to encourage consumption, which was arguably its raison d'être, but was also expected to instil modernity in citizens and create community in Australia's expanding suburbs. Referencing the discourse in the popular press, this text examines the development of the first fifteen regional shopping centres in Australia. Apart from critical journalistic pieces and interviews with citizens and elected officials, these newspaper articles often echoed shopping centre press releases, thereby offering a keen insight into developers' intentions, hopes and dreams – and the difficult task presented to architects. The paper is subdivided into two parts. 'From Building Community to Building Disney' emphasizes the role that the shopping centre assumed as a new figure of collectivity in the Australian suburbs while 'In-between Crafting Modern Citizens and Constructing Consumers' draws out its reformist underpinnings. Documenting the typology's changes between 1957 and 1967, both sections highlight how the Australian regional shopping centre evolved from reformist figure of collectivity to profit-driven box of gold.

Introduction

Between May 1957 and early October 1967 fifteen regional shopping centres opened in Australia. Together, these added nearly 7 million square feet - or more than half a square foot per inhabitant – of commercial area into the nation.¹ Eight shopping centres were constructed in New South Wales,² two each in Victoria, Queensland and South Australia and one in the Australian Capital Territory.³ Strongly indebted to its American ancestor,⁴ the regional shopping centre concept assumed an uneasy role when it was first introduced into Australia. Promoted by developers such as Lend Lease Corporation and Westfield, or department stores, most notably the Myer Emporium, the Australian regional shopping centre was to perform three diverging functions at once. It not only had to encourage consumption, which was arguably its *raison d'être*, but was also expected to instil modernity in citizens and create community in Australia's expanding suburbs. Referencing the discourse in the popular press, this text examines the development of the first fifteen regional shopping centres in Australia. Apart from critical journalistic pieces and interviews with citizens and elected officials, these newspaper articles often echoed shopping centre press releases, thereby offering a keen insight into developers' intentions, hopes and dreams - and the difficult task presented to architects. The paper is subdivided into two parts. 'From Building Community to Building Disney' emphasizes the role that the shopping centre assumed as a new figure of collectivity in the Australian suburbs while 'In-between Crafting Modern Citizens and Constructing Consumers' draws out its reformist underpinnings. Documenting the typology's changes between 1957 and 1967, both sections highlight how the Australian regional shopping centre evolved from reformist figure of collectivity to profit-driven box of gold.⁵

Part 1: From Building Community to Building Disney

In 1960 Victor Gruen and economist Larry Smith authored *Shopping Towns USA*,⁶ which soon became an influential guide for many shopping centre planners and architects. As an émigré observer of the suburban tracts of post-war America, Gruen, who is often called the father of the shopping centre, argued that this commercial figure should be more than a group of shops satisfying consumer needs. By providing social facilities and services in suburban areas that expanded ahead of public infrastructure, he suggested that the regional shopping centre could become an anchor for modern community life.⁷ Four years after *Shopping Towns USA* Gruen authored *The Heart of Our Cities*, which cast the shopping centre in the role of 'suburban crystallization'.⁸ In this publication, he explained that shopping centres should develop into a network of nodes, creating both a structure for decentralization and a safeguard for the commercial viability of the city centre. These regional centres, he wrote, "will by no means decrease the importance of the downtown business district but ... alleviate the unbearable traffic and parking conditions in the downtown area, thus improving shopping conditions".⁹

In post-war Australia, increasing economic security, rapid population growth and rising numbers in home ownership led to a general public embrace of suburban development. Many planners, however, viewed suburban living as unregulated and searched for rational solutions to structural expansion. Created within a rhetoric of modern progress and controlled decentralisation, the American shopping centre concept was thus - upon its arrival in Australia - rapidly promoted (by developers, architects and politicians alike) as a community-focused retail space; a vehicle for the delivery of community values.¹⁰

Equipping the Suburb/Decompressing the City

Modest beginnings were made in Queensland, where the first regional shopping centre in Australia opened on 30 May 1957. Ahead of its opening, the *Courier-Mail* published an interview with R.D. McLuckie, then president of the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce, who commended the developers for their pioneering initiative and noted: "This move for decentralisation must grow in Brisbane, as it is now a big city - obviously bigger than planned by our city forefathers."¹¹ Located eight kilometres north of Brisbane's CBD, Chermiside shopping centre not only housed thirty shops and 700 parking spaces, but also offered various services, including a doctor's office, a dentist, a child-minding centre, a bank and an optometrist. Designer Ken G. Cowan¹² placed these services at the end of a central spine running east-west, which housed a cafeteria and effectively divided the complex into two 'lobes': the Allan & Stark department store to the south, and speciality stores lining both sides of an open-air mall to the north. "In a garden setting with room for people to walk to and fro without fear of traffic",¹³ this mall soon became the heart of not just the shopping centre, but of the entire suburb. (Fig. 1)



FIGURE 1

Six months later New South Wales's first regional shopping centre, Top Ryde, designed by architects Whitehead and Payne opened. The *Sydney Morning Herald* labelled it "a new concept in 'neighbourhood' shopping" designed to "recapture the carnival atmosphere of the old European market places".¹⁴ Simultaneously signifying centrality, commerce and community, references to (European) marketplaces abounded in the rhetoric of shopping centre development. Also in Ryde a clear desire to make the shopping centre the heart of the suburb became obvious. It not only offered several ancillary functions, but also acted as a catalyst for Ryde Municipal Council to approve plans in 1961 for a new municipal administrative block, town hall, ballroom and concert hall on a two-acre island site opposite the shopping centre.¹⁵ The administrative block was built in 1962, the town hall and library in 1968 but the ballroom and concert hall were never realised.¹⁶

When Westfield developed its first regional shopping centre in Hornsby in August 1961, it took a different approach. Instead of facilitating an isotropic car-oriented suburb, Westfield Plaza was aggregated onto an existing centrality: a railway station fifteen miles north of Sydney, which ensured a daily flow of commuters.¹⁷ During the opening ceremony the Hornsby Shire Clerk, F.A. Crighton, praised the centre as "a big asset", given the shire's "predominantly residential" character.¹⁸ Citing the variety of civic and professional services offered by Westfield Plaza, a recognisable rhetoric about the shopping centre's ability to strengthen the local community was used in the popular press: "In designing the centre", the *Sydney Morning Herald* observed, "the architect, Mr E.G. Nemes, conceived the idea that a community with a population of 10,000 could make shopping a pleasant interlude; a relaxation; a source of pleasure in itself. ... Professional chambers for a dentist, doctor, accountant, physiotherapist, and optician are on the first floor section of the main block of the building, including the ladies' hairdressing salon."¹⁹ Explaining that he wanted "to create a market-place that would make shopping a gayer, more interesting experience set in sprightly good-natured attractive surroundings",²⁰ Nemes structured Westfield Plaza around an open-air L-shaped pedestrian mall, which was shaded with pergolas of steel and timber. (Fig. 2)



FIGURE 2

On 17 March 1964 Miranda Fair opened in Sydney's southern suburb of Miranda. Designed by Melbourne architects Tompkins, Shaw and Evans, the complex was a cluster of three hexagonal buildings, which apart from a department store, a supermarket and twenty different shops, hosted a few community services, including a council library. Although the shopping centre could not claim to be the largest in New South Wales,²¹ it did lay claim to being "New South Wales' biggest one-stop shopping centre under-one-roof",²² as advertisements promised that in Miranda Fair you will "feel as if you're in a vast enclosed 'city'".²³ By the mid-1960s, urban analogies in which the shopping centre was referred to as a 'city' or a 'town' became increasingly prevalent. By then, it seemed, a critical shift had occurred in the thinking about 'community': while the early shopping centres defined community as the suburb in which they were situated, by the mid 1960s, the term was loosened and came to denote the 'community' of shoppers that gathered inside the new 'shoppingtowns'. This ontological shift was accompanied by a spatial interiorization and an increase in the scale of the shopping centre, which allowed these suburban leviathans to cast their nets far beyond the suburb in which they were located.

Chadstone, Australia's fourth regional shopping centre and Victoria's first, presents an early example of this shift.²⁴ Opened on 4 October 1960, it walked a fine line between servicing the local community and desiring to cater to a larger 'shopping community'. "Stand on the roof of the Myer store and look at the shopping centre – huge buildings. ... Then look a little further and see developing, spreading Melbourne in mile-long ripples of ugly red tiles. Consider the families living beneath the tiles and consider the possibilities. Chadstone Shopping Centre ... represents much more than 'one stop, and shop'".²⁵ Chadstone offered numerous facilities to local residents. Apart from a medical clinic, legal and accounting offices, an exhibition area, a child-minding centre, and a zoo,²⁶ it had an auditorium that seated 300, where local repertory and drama groups could perform.²⁷ Chadstone's influence, however, extended well beyond its host suburb, as advertisements spoke of "a humming suburban city"²⁸ and anticipated the formation of "a whole new self-contained shopping community".²⁹ For example, the 'Strawberry Room', a café located next to the central Garden Plaza was cast in the role of community hub for shoppers. Here waitresses wore blouses embroidered with strawberry motifs and strawberry-shaped and coloured lights hung from a woven ceiling representing the weave of a strawberry box. "Meet me in the Strawberry Room", *The Herald* predicted, would be frequently uttered at Chadstone.³⁰ Like many of their colleagues, Chadstone's architects, commentators, and developers believed that the purchase of an ever-increasing range of new products would give suburban families (and their pets³¹) a sense of belonging to a broader shopping community.

Building a self-contained 'city' in the suburb

From the mid-1960s on, as emphasis on 'community' in the discourse surrounding the development of regional shopping centres increased, the understanding of what precisely constituted this 'community' shifted. Suburban shopping centres came to be thought of as self-contained, autonomous towns - thus seeking to reproduce the single element missing in suburbia: the city³² - and the community it sought to bolster were the shoppers gathered inside these 'towns'. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, for instance, contended that Roselands, which opened on 12 October 1965 in Wiley Park in south-west Sydney, was "[n]ot just 'another shopping centre'," but a fully-fledged "garden city"³³ and "the biggest shopping and community centre in the southern hemisphere".³⁴ This conceptual shift was reflected in its design. Architects Whitehead and Payne organised the shops in one inward-looking, three-storey building, grouped around a spacious Centre Court,³⁵ which was likened to a market square, and described as "the pulse of Roselands, capturing ... the colour and excitement, the lure and bustle of a bazaar in a twentieth-century setting".³⁶ In "air-conditioned comfort" readers of the *Sydney Morning Herald* were told, "Roselands has ... the services and amenities of a complete city".³⁷ Apart from a 'town hall' and a theatre with 400 seats, it comprised various services for the shopping community:³⁸ a child minding centre, a medical centre, a mini-golf course on the roof, a post office, banks and a rendezvous room adjoining the theatre. During its official opening Premier Askin proclaimed: "It is noteworthy that about one-third of the capital cost of Roselands has been spent on public amenities and community services."³⁹

Bankstown Square, which opened on 21 September 1966 in south-west Sydney less than one year after Roselands,⁴⁰ was similarly advertised as "a retailing city under one roof" and "a shopping metropolis", which according to its developers could "supply the retail shopping needs of a city the size of Perth".⁴¹ Costing £17 million, it comprised banks, insurance offices, medical and dental suites, a post-office and an auditorium.⁴² The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that architects Hely, Bell and Horne had given "considerable thought ... to the benefits of a truly introverted shopping centre" and had deliberately excluded daylight.⁴³ The fact that Bankstown had its own power station, which was reportedly able to generate enough electricity to supply the needs of an average sized country town, reinforced the perception of the shopping centre as an urban organism in its own right.⁴⁴

On 4 October 1966 Northland Shopping Centre opened in East Preston, a northern suburb of Melbourne. "Under the impetus of the immigration program", *The Herald* wrote, "the north [is] pushing back its boundaries towards the wide plains which are destined soon to become the site of new communities. More than ever before, the North will look to itself to provide its own great services, its own vital focal points, and it is against this picture that the advent of Northland Shopping Centre in the municipality of Preston can be seen as a key development".⁴⁵ Hot on the heels of Bankstown, Northland was marketed as "the largest and most modern regional shopping centre south of the equator"⁴⁶ and - similar to Roselands and Bankstown - said to be "a complete air-conditioned shopping city"⁴⁷ and "a city of shops".⁴⁸ Designed by Tompkins, Shaw and Evans at a cost of £18 million, Northland followed the dumb-bell principle - albeit duplicated and placed at right angles - and offered various services, including a child-minding centre, a 'public hall', an art gallery, medical and dental services and a radio station.⁴⁹ *The Herald* explicitly cast this new shopping centre in the role of civic centre: "Northland is a civic centre in many ways", readers were told: "There's a public hall that is available to mothers clubs, dancing classes, charity groups for a fee that just covers lights and cleaning. Within yards, there are the offices of a dentist, solicitor, pathologist, radiologist, and the local newspaper, the Leader."⁵⁰ What this 'shoppingtown' in East Preston effectively sought to do was to create a 'city' in the suburbs, albeit devoid of the city's negative aspects. Such a repackaging of the city in a safe, clean, and controlled form, Margaret Crawford has argued, "gave the mall greater importance as a community and social center".⁵¹

Building a Shopping(town) Paradise

On 11 October 1966, Burwood, the first one-stop shopping centre on the western suburbs railway line between Sydney and Paramatta, opened its doors. Developed by Westfield, Burwood was - similar to Roselands, Bankstown and Northland - advertised as a 'shoppingtown'. But a few things were different. Structured around an indoor brook, Burwood for the first time introduced the inclined mall principle to Australia.⁵² A more important point of distinction, however, was its departure from stark modernist lines and large glass shopfronts toward what Brian Woolstone, Chief Architect of the Westfield Development Corporation and B.E. Sabolch, Design Architect of Burwood, described as "a little ... carnival excitement", "gaiety" and "magic".⁵³ A fish shop had a 'ship' shop front of a matt-finish wood inset with brass portholes; a 'Tudor' coffee tavern had clinker brick walls, bay windows and a shingle roof; the front of a shop selling bread resembled a rough brick-backing hearth; and a delicatessen, the Pickle Barrel, had a ceiling motif

of barrels of hogshead size in hooped timber.⁵⁴ The *Sydney Morning Herald* suggested that these imbued the centre with “Old World Charm”.⁵⁵

Almost one year to the day after Burwood, Toombul shoppingtown opened. Located in the north-eastern suburbs of Brisbane, “[e]verything about the new shopping town ... [was] town-size.”⁵⁶ Equivalent in size to six blocks of Brisbane’s city centre, Toombul followed the Westfield logic of attaching itself to a public transport hub.⁵⁷ The *Courier-Mail* enthused: “The northern suburbs are fortunate in their new amenity.”⁵⁸ However, more than an amenity for the community living in the northern suburbs, J.J. Biro, manager of the centre, hoped that Toombul would be an experience for shoppers from the wider Brisbane region. To make it function as a true town, he said, “[it] needs people, and to attract people, Toombul has its share of gimmicks”.⁵⁹ These included a ‘magical mistfall fountain’ and ‘King Arthur’s Clock’, which featured the world’s most-rescued damsel-in-distress: “Every hour, without fail, this animated clock face acts out a story with the White Knight rescuing the aforementioned damsels from the evil clutches of the Black Knight.”⁶⁰ The design of architects Bligh Jessup Bretnall departed from the stark modernist language of earlier shopping centres and introduced ornament and formal references. The main entrance facing Sandgate Road was, for instance, demarcated by a row of six, slender over-sized arches, as a gigantic ‘T’ along the road was to attract passing motorists. Nearing the end of the first decade of regional shopping centre construction in Australia, a final shift had occurred. Having been inverted to serve a community of suburban shoppers, and having assumed the dimension of a ‘town’, the ‘disneyfication’ of the shopping centre was evident. Although this final shift detracted somewhat from the earlier emphasis on community, the many services and climate-controlled environment did continue to attract growing numbers of suburbanites into a shopping community.

Part 2: In-between Crafting Modern Citizens and Constructing Consumers

From their beginnings before World War I, department stores introduced customers to new merchandise, thereby creating an essential link between the inventor-manufacturer and the consumer. In doing so they helped shape contemporary consumer culture.⁶¹ Throughout the twentieth century, as economic and retail conditions changed, the department store was continuously reconfigured and became a principal agent in “bringing a modernist environment into the mainstream of middle class life”.⁶² In the Depression and after World War II, modernism became the distinguishing feature of department stores;⁶³ it was the expression of their claims to newness and a dedication to elevating public taste.⁶⁴ With their expertise in display and promotion, department stores – an important player in Australia was David Jones – were ideally situated to use a modernist agenda to develop new markets in modern consumer goods. The education of consumers through mass media advertising and the hosting of exhibitions or staged events reinforced a store’s reputation as an arbiter of the modern.

In 1950s and 1960s Australia, this dedication to elevating public taste and the desire to educate citizens in modern design was incorporated in the development of regional shopping centres as they became patrons of modern art and architecture. Numerous excursions to the United States strengthened Australian developers’ belief that this was a beneficial initiative, as educating suburbanites in modern design increased their predisposition to purchase the modern goods on offer. This belief was reinforced by the writings of Gruen and Smith:

A relaxed leisurely atmosphere in courts, malls and lane allows the shopper to observe and contemplate. The opportunity tragically absent in our traffic-filled streets, to bring works of art into direct contact with the people, as an integral part of architecture and landscape, is thus created. The developer is given the function of a supporter and encourager of the arts. The architects should urge him to accept this role as an extension of his civic responsibility. He can do so with the conviction that this further enrichment of the environment will contribute to the attracting power of the center, and because of it, to the business volume.⁶⁵

Art Galleries of the Suburbs

When commissioned to design a regional shopping centre, most Australian architects paid close attention to the use of colour and materials to create “a relaxed leisurely atmosphere”,⁶⁶ while many shopping centre developers invited artists to create art-pieces – thereby revealing their civic aspirations. In Chermshire modern architecture and art went hand in hand, resulting in a *gesamtkunstwerk*. “Colour, design, material, lighting, and the surprising free use of plate-glass are a revelation”, the *Courier-Mail* wrote, continuing: “[e]verything is designed to give a warm, up-to-the-minute, yet dignified setting.”⁶⁷ When it came to the design of the centre’s colour scheme, architect Cowan gave Mr Zanuttini, an Italian émigré and colour consultant, a free hand. The result: an integrated work of art, which was “not confined to the painting of walls and ceilings”, but extended to “stone, pebbles, cement, glass, pillars, tiles, and a distinctive mural”.⁶⁸ The mural, a large Mondrianesque chrome cement tableau in white, black, red, yellow, blue and grey was the shopping centre’s most striking feature. Applied to the southern façade of the rectangular entry portico facing Gympie Road, Zanuttini claimed it was “the first of its type in the world”, as the *Courier-Mail* commended Chermshire’s drive-in-shopping-centre for its “educational” use of colour.⁶⁹

When Top Ryde opened, newspapers did not emphasize the shopping centre’s modern architecture and art. Its rapid construction, the *Sydney Morning Herald* alleged, had resulted in a “fairly orthodox and straightforward” building.⁷⁰ Nonetheless developer Regional Centres Ltd. did commission a 4.6 metre high fibreglass abstract figure encrusted with chips of coloured glass from Sydney artist Gordon Andrews to be placed at the centre of the mall.⁷¹ In Chadstone, conversely, art assumed a pivotal role. In parallel to the shopping centre’s design, Kenneth Myer, director of the Myer Emporium, invited ten sculptors to submit maquette-proposals, responding to tree themes: ‘the family’, ‘world merchandise’ and ‘Australian Flora’. As a limited competition was unusual, all of the submitted maquettes were exhibited at the National Gallery of Victoria in February 1960, seven months ahead of the shopping centre’s opening. Of the ten entries two were commissioned: a concrete sculpture by Stanley Hammond representing ‘commerce’ and a welded steel figure by Lenton Parr.⁷² Hammond’s work was installed in the Garden Plaza, and Parr’s ‘Plantforms’ adorned the entrance of the Myer Department store. When Chadstone opened, these artworks were probably the only pieces of publicly accessible contemporary sculpture in the suburbs and among the first in Melbourne.⁷³ (Fig. 3)



FIGURE 3

The up-to-date architecture and art of Roselands was one of its key selling points: “Every advanced architectural trend of the ‘sixties’, every artistic rendition of its vast thirty acres makes ROSELANDS the luxurious shopping showplace you’ll want to be, with your friends, every day. All around you is beauty, brilliance and bounteous colour”.⁷⁴ Similar to Chermshire, various artworks were incorporated into the architecture of the centre proper: “Exterior features of Roselands are the ceramic strip in the tower and the huge tiled flower boxes” which, the *Sydney Morning Herald* claimed, “artistically blended” with the special face bricks.⁷⁵ These brightly coloured ceramic murals were heavily carved - up to 75 millimetres deep - so shadows cast by the depth of the pattern would change constantly during the day with the movement of the sun.⁷⁶ They were the work of Gerard Havekes, a Dutch sculptor, who also designed one

of Roselands' water features: 'The Brook'. Dominating the Market Place in the Centre Court, this irregular shaped pool contained a hand-carved Aboriginal design animal motif, which in some places rose above the water level. Another water feature was the Rose Fountain, designed by Peter Stone: a six-foot rose sculpture in hand-beaten copper with fifteen petals in full bloom, which rose from its copper, green and white mosaic bowl into the recessed ceiling and slowly revolved as six 'thorny' water jets spray the turning leaves.⁷⁷ (Fig. 5)



FIGURE 5

As the notion of 'community' shifted in the mid-1960s, the artworks incorporated into the shopping centres also changed: abstract sculptures and Mondrianesque murals, examples of civic good taste, educating shoppers increasingly made way for revolving fountains and figurative sculptures to appeal to shoppers' pleasure and excitement.

Spectacles of Consumption

The major feature of Bankstown Square was a brightly coloured 30 feet tall clock tower. Located in the West Court, it had four faces under which six figures represented shopping women in the traditional dress of Holland, Germany, Italy, India, Japan and Britain. Beneath each of these was a 24-hour clock, showing the time in the capital city of the country represented by the figure above. Thirty seconds before every hour a recording of the chimes of Big Ben was broadcast from twelve speakers placed around the clock, and played throughout the centre. As one of the figures was illuminated and revolved, a folk tune of the country represented was subsequently played. Architect Hely explained that "it has been conceived ... as an international timepiece, related to the wares from many parts of the world that are on sale in the many shops of the centre".⁷⁸ Bankstown's architects had thus learned from the experiences of the department stores, which supported the desire to sell goods through art initiatives. The international theme, however, also responded to socio-cultural shifts caused by Australia's migration programme and was continued in the Fountain Court. Here the names of several capital cities were set in brass strips in the base of a fountain, listing the distance to these respective cities. Bankstown's developers suggested that "the timeless attraction of fountains and falling water [would] bring back memories for many migrant shoppers to the Square".⁷⁹ (Fig. 6)

Following the trend to make shopping more exciting the Myer Emporium placed a peculiar centrepiece, a waterless fountain, at the heart of its Northland shopping centre in East Preston. "Made of luminous plastic discs", the *Herald* announced, "the 'fountain' will shimmer and revolve when a light is played on it, giving the impression of falling water".⁸⁰ (Fig. 7) Northland's shopping 'walks' - the North Walk, West Walk and Gallery Walk - also comprised a set



FIGURE 6

of play sculptures for children.⁸¹ This shift in the art of shopping centres (from education to spectacle) was however not echoed in the press, which still claimed the shopping centre aspired to contribute to the civic education of its (predominantly female) shopping community: “She [the housewife] can stroll down the Gallery Walk looking at the paintings and sculpture that will be displayed there, and do her shopping at her leisure. She can leave her children at the child-minding centre ... go to a mother’s club meeting or take in a concert at the public hall...”⁸² Also Burwood shoppingtown, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported, featured a ‘legitimate’ artwork in its entry hall: a panoramic international history of shopping in timber marquetry, which the newspaper admiringly labelled “an unusual and little-known form of art”.⁸³ Composed of six wood inlay murals, the tableau depicted different market places throughout the ages and was specially designed for Westfield by local artist Leslie Senty. Measuring 5 feet by 3 feet, it was believed to represent the largest inlaid wood mural anywhere in the world, and was expected to become a major attraction of the centre “not only because of the originality of the art but because of the attractiveness and delicacy of the workmanship”.⁸⁴

However, when Toombul opened, advertisements made little reference to the educational capacities of its art and ornament: “Come and discover a wonderful shoppingtown adventure”,⁸⁵ they enthusiastically proclaimed as newspaper articles described the many attractions that could be found inside - from changing rooms in the shape of windmills⁸⁶ to specially-imported Venetian crystal chandeliers⁸⁷ to the damsel-in-distress clock and the ‘magical mistfall mountain’ - in great detail: “It is really three fountains, merged into a pattern”, the *Courier-Mail* explained, “[t]he whole effect is one of misty rain, created by running a water-and-gelatine mixture down hundreds of nylon lines. Below the fountain is a sunken floor, with a bubbling stream running through it.”⁸⁸

Conclusion

Between the opening of Chermshire's 'drive-in shopping centre' and the inauguration of Toombul 'shoppingtown', the regional shopping centre typology thus slowly morphed from a locus of reform educating suburbanites in modern design, architecture and art into a climate-controlled spectacle of consumption. Instead of creating a civic place in the community, it increasingly catered to a 'community' of consumers within a place. However, the design of Melbourne's Southland shopping centre in Cheltenham, which opened less than one year after Toombul, did include important artworks that attest to its cultural ambitions and evidence the Australian regional shopping centre's struggle to remain a reformist figure of collectivity in the Australian suburbs.

(Endnotes)

- 1 This data is collected from the Directory of Shopping Centres prepared by the Modern Merchandising Methods Department of the National Cash Register Co. (1970); the number of inhabitants in 1967 was 11.8 million.
- 2 Top Ryde (11/1957), Warramong Regional Centre (05/1959), Westfield Plaza (08/1961), Warringah Mall (04/1963), Miranda Fair (03/1964), Roselands (10/1965), Bankstown Square (09/1966), and Westfield Burwood Shopping Town (10/1966).
- 3 In Victoria: Chadstone (10/1960) and Northland (10/1966); in Queensland: Chermshire (05/1957) and Toombul (10/1967); in South Australia: Elizabeth Town Centre (11/1960) and Kilkenny (11/1963); and in ACT: Monaro Mall (06/1963).
- 4 The international (American) influences on Australian shopping centres have been examined in detail in: Peter Vernon, "Shopping Towns Australia", *Fabrications* 22, 1 (2012): 103-21 and Andrew Hutson, "'I Dream of Jeannie'? – The American Origins of the Chadstone Shopping Centre", *Fabrications* 9 (May 1999): 17-33.
- 5 Although three shopping centres were built in South Australia and Canberra in the period under examination, emphasis in this chapter has been placed on Australia's east coast.
- 6 Victor Gruen and Larry Smith, *Shopping Towns USA: The Planning of Shopping Centers* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1960).
- 7 Gruen and Smith, 24.
- 8 Victor Gruen, *The Heart of Our Cities: The Urban Crisis, Diagnosis and Cure* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964).
- 9 David Smiley, *Pedestrian Modern: Shopping and American Architecture, 1925-1956* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 191; Timothy Mennel, "Victor Gruen and the Construction of Cold War Utopias", *Journal of Planning History* 3, No. 2 (May 2004): 137.
- 10 This argument builds upon Shirley Daborn's doctoral dissertation, which posits that its accessibility and everyday use positioned the shopping space as an important site of social mediation that negotiated cultural change in Australia on a level of everyday practice. See: Shirley Daborn, 'A City within the Suburbs: Gender, Modernity and the Suburban Shopping Centre,' PhD Thesis, University of New South Wales, 2009. See also: Shirley Daborn, "The Suburban Shoppingscape and the Reconfiguration of Urban Ideals," *Lusofona Journal of Architecture and Education*, 8-9 (2013): 185-204; Shirley Daborn, "'Big, Bright, Beautiful': The New Shopping Centres," in Paul Hogben and Judith O'Callaghan eds., *Leisure Space: The Transformation of Sydney 1945-1970* (Sydney: U.N.S.W. Press: 2014): 129-43.
- 11 "Drive-in Centre is Pioneering," *Courier-Mail*, 29 May 1957, 29.
- 12 "Designer Big Man," *Courier-Mail*, 29 May 1957, 24.
- 13 "New Shop Centre is a Housewife's Dream," *Sunday Mail*, 17 February 1957, 10.
- 14 "Top Ryde Feature," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 November 1957, 19.
- 15 This site was already owned by the council when Top Ryde opened.
- 16 "The Island Block," *City of Ryde*, 12 February 2016, <http://www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/Design-our-Ryde/History>, accessed 25 February 2016.
- 17 Scott Colman, "Westfield's Architecture from the Antipodes to London," in Janina Gosseye and Tom Avermaete eds., *The Shopping Centre 1943-2013*, conference proceedings (TUDelft, 2015), 56-69.
- 18 "Largest single project in Hornsby District," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 August 1961, 17.
- 19 "£350,000 Shopping Centre to Open at Hornsby", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 August 1961, 16.
- 20 "£350,000 Shopping Centre to Open at Hornsby", 16.
- 21 Warringah Mall, ten miles north of Sydney and designed by Alexander Kann, Finch and Associates as project architects, was the largest regional shopping centre in New South Wales when it opened on 5 April 1963.
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