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# The Trouble with Harry: Seidler's Tall Urban Design Legacy in Melbourne

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## **Abstract**

*Despite the wealth of publications on Harry Seidler's life and works, some aspects of the architect's career remain relatively unknown or under-appreciated. This paper points the architect's contribution to urban design through lesser-known high-rise projects designed for the inner city of Melbourne.*

*The chronicle of Seidler's jobs in Melbourne speaks more of an unsuccessful office unable to convert major prospects into realised outcomes than of the commercial projects and landmarks for which his work is widely acclaimed. Over 40 years, Seidler conceived several high-rise projects for Melbourne's Central Business District, but apart from the notable exception of the heritage-listed Shell House, those projects remained unbuilt.*

*At the core of Seidler's scarce professional success in the second-largest Australian city, there was a problematic relationship that developed with local culture and city planning authorities. Seidler's conflict with Melbourne erupted on the occasion of the planning approval of Shell House, surging in contrast to the rise of an overreaching and somewhat still pervasive post-modern urban design culture in the Victorian city.*

## **Introduction**

Harry Seidler (1923-2006) is one of the most celebrated Australian architects. Almost everything has been said or written about his work and the prolific longevity of his practice. From an international perspective, Seidler represents the pinnacle of the Australian variant of high modernism,<sup>1</sup> and there is plenty of coverage of his remarkable personal and professional life as an Austrian-born immigrant and pupil of the late Bauhaus culture that spread to the New World.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the ample literature available, some aspects of Seidler's career still deserve attention. Following the trail of Seidler's acquaintance with Oscar Niemeyer and journey to Brazil, Philip Goad has shown how current interest among academic scholars is far from exhausted.<sup>3</sup>

More avenues may be found by approaching Seidler's work from disciplinary angles that expand from the cult of the personality or the Bauhaus lineage of modern architecture. A fruitful approach could follow the ramifications of Seidler's work in allied disciplines, as shown by Paolo Stracchi for the construction and engineering aspects of Sydney's Australia Square and MLC Centre.<sup>4</sup> Another avenue may insist on aspects of urban history, which I propose to explore here through the case of high-rise projects designed by Seidler for Melbourne, outside of his Sydney home ground.

Seidler's tall buildings flourished from a remarkable capacity to integrate commercial design with contextualism, a skill that, as Gevork Hartoonian puts it, earned him the position of a "towering architect" in the collective memory of Australian architects,<sup>5</sup> a position undoubtedly due, above all, to the tectonically articulated and uniquely site-sensitive landmark tall buildings that Seidler designed in Sydney.<sup>6</sup>

But Seidler proved to have considerable skill in winning and delivering tall commercial buildings across Australia and overseas, and the results, for such a typologically restrained class of buildings, are remarkably consistent and on par with the Sydney examples.<sup>7</sup> Seidler's approach to high-rise was singular and unconventional but never eccentric nor arbitrary to the point of compromising commercial efficacy. It combined functional compliance with contextualism, formal invention with structural expression, and the creation of public space with the integration of passive environmental design. Design qualities of this kind are not easy to find among the countless commercial towers of the twentieth century – and one could easily show how such lack of variety and inventiveness extends to those of present day.

In 2017, because of such rare design qualities, Shell House, the old headquarters that Seidler designed for the oil multinational in Melbourne in the 1980s, was awarded Victorian heritage significance. The curved commercial tower of Shell House is a fitting counterpoint to Melbourne's otherwise predictably orthogonal streetscape. On the grounds of such formal exceptionalism, the building is recognised by local architects, the media, the public and heritage authorities as a city landmark.



**Figure 1.** Shell House, 1 Spring Street, Melbourne (1985-88).  
Architect: Harry Seidler and Associates  
(Photographs by Giorgio Marfella).

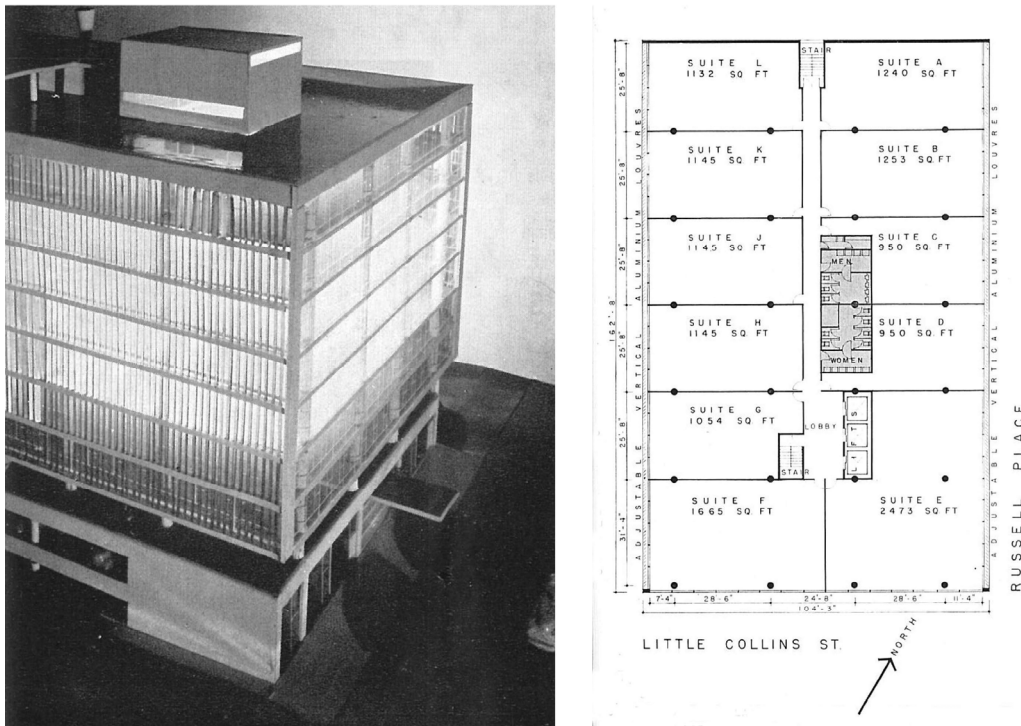
Although Seidler's office has left other built works in Victoria,<sup>8</sup> Shell House is the most significant one and the only commercial project that the Sydney-based architect was able to build in Melbourne's city grid.

In such context, Shell House is a remarkably precocious and somewhat odd example of heritage success. Historical records show that the project was, in fact, opposed by planning authorities for the same reasons that, three decades later, would underpin its heritage recognition.

Some Melbournians may find it tempting to misconstrue Shell House as the romantic anachronism of a Sydney architect rivalling against Melbourne's *genius loci* and *Zeitgeist* of the 1980s, a narcissistic last hurrah of modernism shouted at the zenith of the collective city-rejuvenating mood set in motion by local postmodern circles. However, leaving aside *a posteriori* speculations, the original vicissitudes of Shell House are engrained in a more substantial and prolonged history of conflict between the Sydney architect and the Victorian city.

The planning dispute between Seidler and the City of Melbourne for Shell House was not an isolated incident. The dispute was a chapter in a series of episodes in which Seidler was drawn, at times unwillingly, into Melbourne's urban history via polemics, planning challenges, and plans remained on paper.

A telling sequence of mishaps transpires from the planning records of major tall building projects that Seidler designed over 40 years in Melbourne's Central Business District. Although not necessarily comprehensive, an abridged chronicle is significant enough to confirm the existence of a troubled relationship. With the benefit of hindsight, the struggles of the modern architect in the Victorian capital expose some idiosyncrasies of postmodern urbanism, casting an opportunity to reflect on trends of high-rise development and attitudes towards modern heritage that persist in contemporary Australian cities.



**Figure 2.** Model view and plan of Fuller House, 200 Little Collins Street, Melbourne (1955; unbuilt). Architect: Harry Seidler (*Architecture and Arts*, September 1955, copyright Penelope Seidler).

### Debut on the Grid: Fuller House

Seidler's first significant project in Melbourne dates to 1955, when he was commissioned, in collaboration with University of Sydney lecturer and engineer Peter

Miller, to design Fuller House, a ten-storey office block at 200 Little Collins Street. The periodical *Architecture and Arts* described the project as “revolutionary” for placing elevated office space over three podium levels of parking space.<sup>9</sup> Office floors were served by a central core of lifts and services, an innovative configuration for a Melbourne office block of the times, and the glass facades on the eastern and western elevations were protected by adjustable aluminium sunshades. The all-concrete fire-resisting structure, furthermore, proposed an unconventional – and somewhat optimistic – “top-down” construction approach, by which the client would have been able let the top commercial floors whilst the podium car park was still under construction.<sup>10</sup>

Fuller House was ahead of its time. The project had to challenge the local built-form controls of the Victorian Uniform Building Regulations (UBR), which prescribed a height limit of “one and one third times the width of the street.”<sup>11</sup> Seidler asked permission to erect the building to a height of 99 feet, seeking an additional height justified for lift machinery and stair canopy above a flat roof. Despite receiving consent from the City of Melbourne to proceed with the scheme, Seidler’s project of Fuller House never went ahead.

The design of Fuller House was a precursor of design features bound to become part of Seidler’s future signature high-rise offices and possibly a source of influence on innovative commercial office building trends that some Melbourne architects incorporated soon after. One year later, Bates Smart & McCutcheon (BSM) submitted a planning application for a speculative building owned by the Australian Mutual Provident Society located at 406 Lonsdale Street that, when completed in 1958, was the first building in Melbourne to be built with elevated floors entirely devoted to car parking. Soon after, BSM also designed the RACV Building in Queen Street, completed in 1961, which was the first office development in Melbourne to combine a mixed program of office space and hotel accommodation with a tower sitting on a podium of public facilities.<sup>12</sup>

Facades with adjustable sunshades found scanty fortune in Melbourne’s post-war office boom, although fixed aluminium sunshades were ostensibly used in Melbourne by BSM for ICI House (1956-58) and by Stephenson and Turner for the Electrolytic Zinc Company Building at 390 Lonsdale Street (1957-59).

### **Freestanding Visions**

In the following two decades, Seidler had more job opportunities in Melbourne that remained unbuilt. In the meanwhile, the built form controls of the inner-city had changed, overriding the height-limit prescription of the UBR. Melbourne had adopted its first planning scheme, based on the principle of site density development, also known as plot ratio.<sup>13</sup>

In March 1965, at the annual conference of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA), Seidler intervened directly in the debate that accompanied this moment of regulatory transition. He took the opportunity to state his staunch support for modern planning principles, like plot ratio controls, that encouraged freestanding high-rise developments:

In our cities, individual pieces of real estate, however unfortunately located or shaped, are considered sacrosanct. Multi-storey buildings are erected, covering entirely such sites. ... The result of the usual restrictive rules is almost invariably grotesque building bulk. ... There surely can be no worse nightmare than so called modern buildings glued up against each other along a canyon street.<sup>14</sup>

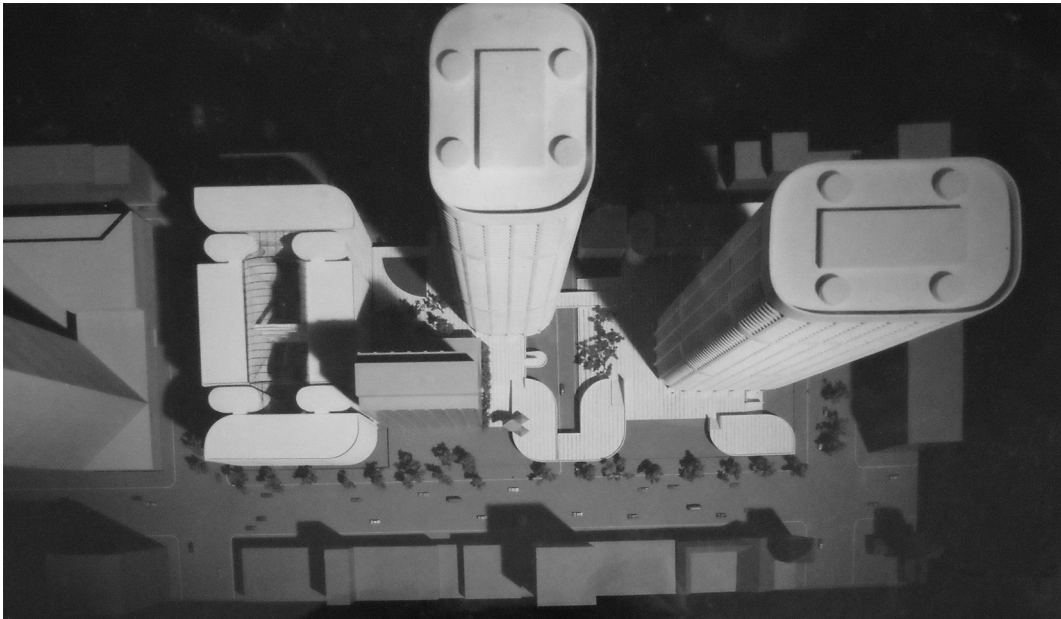
According to Seidler, the urban design principles that best suited modern architecture were site consolidation, freestanding sculptural forms and generous public open space. It was only through the large-scale project that a coherently modern view of the city could be envisioned, in contrast to the traditional approach of 'piecemeal' urban development of the historical city:

Both from a rational and aesthetic viewpoint, modern architecture can only begin to express itself in the freestanding building, which affords logical planning and structure. Above all, true architecture can be born as freestanding sculpture in space, with the relationship of individual buildings and the spaces created between them of equal if not higher, aesthetic importance than the building themselves.<sup>15</sup>

Seidler faced two significant opportunities to realise his urban design manifesto in Melbourne, but in both instances, plans remained unbuilt. In the late 1960s, he designed a complex with two freestanding towers for the Chevron Hotel and Offices in

St Kilda Road, one of his earliest projects to incorporate an assembly of curvilinear and quadrant shapes.<sup>16</sup>

In the early 1970s, Conzinc Riotinto of Australasia (CRA) engaged his office to design a major redevelopment on the southern side of Collins Street, in a site bounded by Exhibition Street, Flinders Lane and George Parade. The CRA project contemplated the erection of several free-standing buildings and public open spaces, planning to expand and surround the existing tower of the CRA Building – originally designed by Melbourne-based architect Bernard Evans and completed in 1961. After one year of difficult negotiations with the city's authorities, a first stage of the CRA scheme for the erection of a 55 storey-high office tower was approved in 1974.<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 3.** CRA Redevelopment Project, 200 Collins Street, Melbourne (1971-74; unbuilt).  
Architect: Harry Seidler and Associates  
(Pier Luigi Nervi Archives, Rome, photographer Max Dupain, January 1972, copyright Penelope Seidler).

Seidler's CRA project, however, never proceeded. A profitable justification must have been difficult to justify for such a large project in the uncertain economy of the mid-1970s. Making matters worse, proximity with the delayed project of Collins Place (I.M Pei with BSM, 1971-81) must have dampened optimism for success with a new blockbuster in Collins Street.



### The Nauru House Polemic

The prospects of realising Seidler's urban design vision of free-standing sculptural high-rise redevelopments diminished significantly in Melbourne after the mid-1970s once the obstacle of stagnant economic conditions compounded with the local cultural change that nursed public opposition against tall building developments. The new public sentiment coalesced in Melbourne with organisations such as the Collins Street Defence Movement,<sup>18</sup> and resonated with some local architects who were not shy to voice fierce antagonism towards modern high-rise developments.<sup>19</sup>

In the debate that developed between modernist versus postmodernist architectural circles in the 1970s, a polemic was sparked in Melbourne concerning the design of one tall building project: Nauru House. Despite having no role in the design of Melbourne's Nauru House, Harry Seidler was unjustly hauled into a controversy that incorrectly questioned the authorship of one of his most noteworthy tall building projects in Sydney, the MLC Centre.



**Figure 4.** Left: MLC Centre, Sydney (1972-78). Architect: Harry Seidler and Associates. Right: Nauru House, Melbourne (1972-77). Designers: Civil and Civic with Perrott Lyon Timlock and Kesa (Photographs by Giorgio Marfella).

Nauru House was a 50-storey high office tower commissioned for a site on the eastern end of Collins Street owned by the Nauruan Government's Phosphate Royalties Trust.

The project was developed by Lend Lease and built by Civil and Civic on the design and documentation of Melbourne-based architects Perrott, Lyon, Timlock and Kesa. Nauru House was a centre-core square office tower built with precast concrete construction methods, planned in an octagonal floor plate with single-span edge beams supported by large columns on chamfered corners. Melbourne's Nauru House presents some similarities with the general arrangement of the Sydney MLC Centre, although at close observation differences of detail and structural configuration between the two buildings become apparent.

In 1976, the official journal of the Victorian RAIA Chapter, *Architect*, published a scathing review of Nauru House, describing it as a “monster building,” a “hunk” that was simply extruded from an “octagonal (or hexagonal) plan that just keeps rising.” According to the anonymous reviewer, the tower was like an unsought “gift” that gave “nothing to [Melbourne] save a large immutable blob, unnecessary extra accommodation.”<sup>20</sup>

In September 1977, the harsh criticism voiced by the Victorian Chapter journal escalated further, this time drawing Seidler's MLC Centre into question. Architect and former RAIA president Neil Clerehan questioned the attribution of Nauru House's design, remarking on its resemblance to Seidler's MLC Centre project in Sydney. Clerehan, however, did not merely criticise Nauru House for its apparent lack of originality. He went as far as claiming that both buildings, including the MLC Centre, were in fact two versions of one identical concept conceived by the draftsmen of Lend Lease / Civil and Civic. Both buildings, Clerehan argued, came into existence without any input worthy of architectural authorship.<sup>21</sup>

The polemic soon spilled outside the Victorian reading circle of architectural periodicals. One month later, Melbourne's local newspaper, *The Age*, published an article picturing Nauru House and MLC Centre side-by-side under the headline “Who's the father of these twins?” The article amplified the allegations expressed by Clerehan in *Architect*, suggesting that the real architect of both buildings was in fact Christopher Kludicki, a former employee of Civil and Civic.<sup>22</sup>

Two months later, following the righteous indignation expressed by Seidler, the Victorian Chapter of RAIA was forced to distance itself from Clerehan's disparaging commentary given through the official journal of the Institute. In the following issue of

*Architect*, the Chapter gave a public apology to Seidler, accepting “unreservedly” and “unconditionally” that the MLC Centre in Sydney was “solely designed by, and constructed under the supervision” of Harry Seidler and his Associates.<sup>23</sup>



**Figure 5.** Shell House, Melbourne (1985-88), views from Spring Street and Flinders Lane. Architect: Harry Seidler and Associates (Photographs by Giorgio Marfella).

### **A Blank Canvas for Shell**

These unsettling polemics anticipated a trail of difficulties that Seidler continued to face in Melbourne through the 1980s, culminating in publicly voiced polemics and disagreements with the City of Melbourne.

In the early 1980s, the Victorian planning authorities had implemented a new set of postmodern-inspired built-form controls.<sup>24</sup> The new controls promoted street alignments, towers setback on podiums, infill of residual open spaces, elimination of blank walls and the addition of compositional features introduced with the scope of preventing façade monotony.

The new controls were inevitably at odds with Seidler’s resolve to continue designing sculptural towers in public open space. Seidler refused to accept and align with the rising postmodern ethos, and disputes surfaced immediately with the planning application of the project for the Shell headquarters in Spring Street.

The design of the S-shaped building was officially commissioned to Seidler by Gegana, a developer company controlled by the Grollo Group.<sup>25</sup> The building was, however, a custom-designed response to a brief explicitly developed by Shell, the prospective anchor tenant. At the time, Shell needed new and larger headquarters after the company vacated the small owner-built block of Shell Corner, a building designed by the San Francisco office of Skidmore Owings Merrill and erected in 1960 at the corner of Bourke and William Streets.

Harsh opposition to the planning application for Shell House came from the City of Melbourne, specifically from the Urban Design Consultant and the Aesthetics Advisory Panel (AAP). Due to the site's prominence at the corner of the Hoddle grid, the assessors of the application found that the curved slab with a side core and ground floor open plaza was unsatisfactory and in need of a major redesign. The Panel acknowledged the necessary curved form imposed by the subterranean presence of Melbourne's railway loop below the site, but attacked the project on subjective aesthetic grounds, describing it as "selfish in concept" and "ungainly" for erecting tall blank walls along boundaries.<sup>26</sup>

Following such negative feedback, the project underwent some modifications. Notably, a built-up landscape platform along Flinders Street was included to address pedestrian comfort issues raised by the wind engineer.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, Seidler's design for Shell survived essentially intact after the Victorian Planning Minister exercised power to overrule opposition from the City of Melbourne, thus allowing the tower to be built in line with the initial vision of its designer.

### **Sunset Clause: Grand Central**

Galvanised by the success with Shell House, Seidler unleashed a public polemic against postmodern-inspired planning controls. In 1988, Seidler even took the local polemic to an international audience at the World Conference of the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, where he specifically criticised those of the City of Melbourne, which he considered reactionary and anachronistic:<sup>28</sup>

... authorities in Melbourne, Australia, in their objections to a large city building ... quote, verbatim, the recently implemented San Francisco plan and insist that this incredibly reactionary set of new rules imported from the

United States be adopted, such as, prohibiting buildings with flat roofs or any blank walls, and calling for “a generous use of decorative embellishments.” To demonstrate what benefits are offered in return, these decorations are even allowed to protrude outside the zoning envelope!<sup>29</sup>

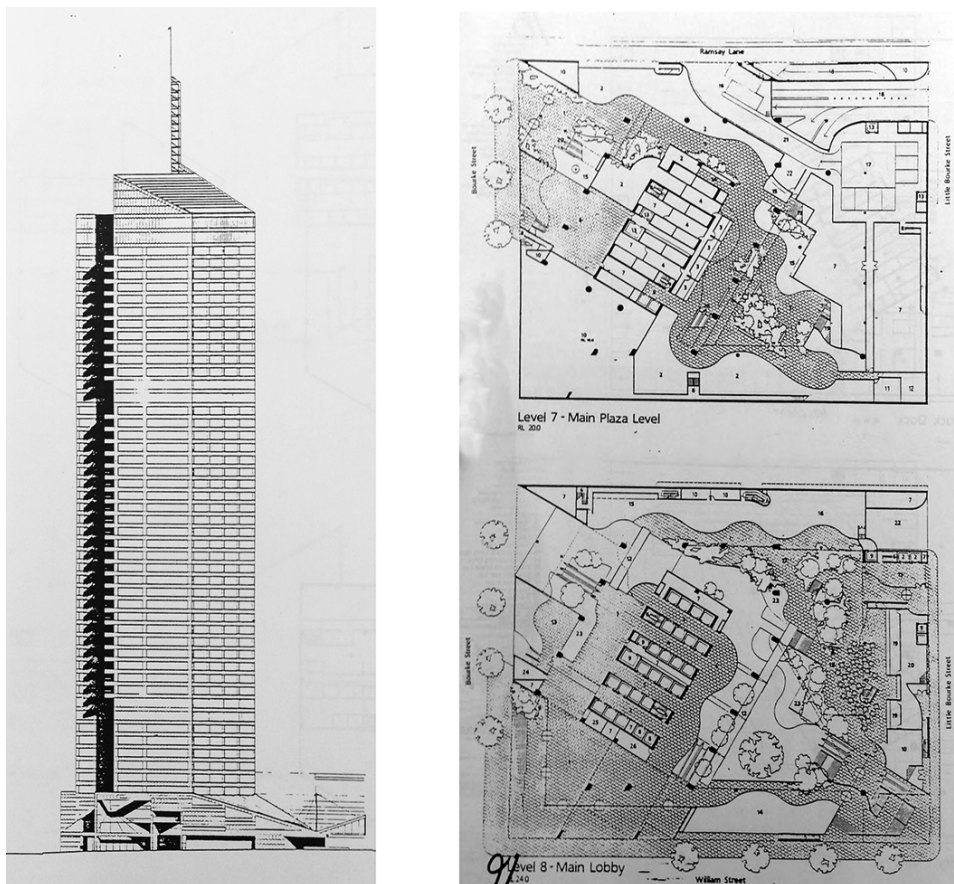
Soon after its completion, Shell House received public acclaim and peer recognition,<sup>30</sup> but Seidler could not repeat a similar success for his next Melbourne project: Grand Central.

Grand Central was one of the largest tall building developments conceived in the city during the 1980s. It was commissioned by Lend Lease and contemplated redesigning an entire block at the corner of Bourke and William Streets. The brief required an office tower that would surpass in height and size any other surrounding tall structure, namely the nearby towers of BHP House, AMP Square, NAB House, Marland House and Bourke Place. The proposal for Grand Central was presented to city authorities in 1989. The site was to be developed with a planning-compliant plot ratio of 12, equalling over 90,000 square metres of gross floor area. The program included 68,000 square metres of net lettable office space in a tower and 7,000 square metres of public space, which included retail, restaurants, a theatre, video conferencing facilities and professional suites in a five-level podium building. The tower of 57 floors was 213 metres high and terminated with a spire reaching 250 metres at the tip. The plan of the tower was an irregular parallelogram ostensibly rotated in relation to the city grid. The typical floor plate was formed by two staggered trapezoids linked by a central service core with four lift groups.<sup>31</sup>

In many regards, the project was in line for size and ambition with the ensemble of high-rise commercial buildings completed in Melbourne in the early 1990s, also known as the ‘Big Six’, and a general trend of urban rejuvenation with ‘mega-buildings’ that is typical of global commercial trends that spread in most Australian and North American cities in the 1980s.

While the large development of Grand Central was never seen as a problem per se by local planning authorities, the architectural design features and compositional repertoire proposed by Seidler became the target of fierce opposition from local authorities.

The design was vehemently opposed by the Urban Design Unit (UDU) of the City of Melbourne, and primarily so on mere aesthetic grounds. While Seidler had taken steps to prevent the nuisance of highly reflective surfaces from the tower with low-reflective polished grey granite, the UDU dismissed the outcome by defining the tower as “dull” and “sinister.” In response to the architect’s incorporation of a podium in line with the City’s planning desiderata, the local authority responded with a lengthy list of concerns about the design of the podium façades on Bourke and William Streets.



**Figure 6.** Grand Central, Corner of Bourke and William Streets, Melbourne (1989). Architect: Harry Seidler and Associates (City of Melbourne Archives, Public Record Office Victoria. Copyright Penelope Seidler).

Objections were raised as a deliberate attempt to guide Seidler into a reappraisal of his modern compositional vocabulary. According to the commentary of the Urban Design Unit, parapets should have been stepped rather than sloped, and “greater definition” should have been brought on elevations, suggesting features foreign to Seidler’s commercial city design language, such as “corner treatments,” “use of

punched windows,” inclusion of “vertical elements to break up” and “detailing around openings ... to provide greater interest.”

Among these and other recommendations to the office of the Planning Minister, the Urban Design Unit proposed a “sunset clause” that was motivated as an “incentive for [the developer] and their architects to move quickly to finalise.” The clause was intended to act as a conditional trigger for the release of the permit “on the understanding that these issues will be addressed and if they are not addressed within a period of two months, the permit automatically lapses.”<sup>32</sup>

Notwithstanding their reluctance to support Seidler’s design, the UDU expressed explicit support “in principle” for the entire redevelopment on the site with a “landmark” project. In that context, the same authorities did not object to the demolition of several existing modern office buildings on the site, namely ACI House, Shell Corner and Hume House.<sup>33</sup> Ironically, one of these three modern buildings had remained vacant once Shell moved into Seidler’s new building in Spring Street.

SOM’s Shell Corner and the other structures on the block were consequently demolished in 1989 in the hurried preparations for a development that never followed. In 1992, during the real estate bust and recession that followed a frantic bull-market period of redevelopments in the city, commercial vacancy rates soared in Melbourne. Lend Lease decided to defer Grand Central, leaving an empty city block in the core of the CBD and causing the loss of some of the best modernist office block exemplars of the post-war period.<sup>34</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In retrospect, Seidler’s career, if measured by the projects commissioned for Melbourne’s inner-city, is at odds with the prolific success of built works for which the Austrian-born architect is well known in Australia and overseas. Ultimately, the troubled relationship between Seidler and Melbourne derived from a clash about built-form controls. Significantly, this problematic relationship exploded above all in the 1980s for Shell House, becoming a quintessential example of the culture wars that accompanied the passage from modernity and postmodernity.

Furthermore, Seidler’s projects for Melbourne allow us to reflect critically on the value of the alternative urban outcomes envisaged by his unbuilt visions. Although Seidler

conceived several unbuilt projects in different cities,<sup>35</sup> Melbourne was possibly the most significant ground of his unrealised dreams. This imaginary Melbourne would have been sealed by Seidler's proposal for Grollo Tower, the non-plus-ultra unbuilt Australian skyscraper, a 600-metre-tall skyscraper sited over the eastern railway yards.<sup>36</sup>

Some contemporary commentators may find the missed outcomes as regret, others as relief, like "bullets gratefully dodged" as Elizabeth Farrelly puts it for several late twentieth-century unbuilt proposals for Sydney and curated as exhibits by Robert Freestone for the exhibition *Unrealised Sydney* at Sydney Living Museums.<sup>37</sup>



**Figure 7.** Grollo Tower, Melbourne (1995), photomontage of model. Architect: Harry Seidler and Associates (Reproduced from Sharp, *Harry Seidler: Selected and Current Works*, 121. Photomontage by Eric Sierins, April 1995. Copyright Penelope Seidler).

Nevertheless, the conflictual story of Seidler's in Melbourne brings to light another facet of significance. It allows us to expose some idiosyncrasies that characterised the passage from modernity to postmodernity in the government of Australian cities. In particular, Seidler's vicissitudes in Melbourne show how that passage was implemented quite destructively by some postmodern planning authorities, who mistook the prospect of a city-wide rejuvenation project also as pretext to unleash an anti-modernist aesthetic bias.



The case of Grand Central is the most eloquent in this sense. Some Melbournians may rejoice for dodging the bullet of a block-busting tower misaligned with Melbourne's city grid. Others may be relieved to discover that they averted the more sinister bullet shot by the poor taste of planners who wished to force faux historic features at the foot of a Seidler-designed landmark. At any rate, most will anguish for losing some of the best post-war office buildings in the process.



**Figure 8.** Shell House, Melbourne, view from parapet over Flinders Lane public open space. Architect: Harry Seidler and Associates (Photograph by Giorgio Marfella).

Such a formalist argument might seem moot today if it was not for some lingering implications for the present. The implications support an ongoing viewpoint that still condemns the destructive mechanisms of inner urban development as a problem inherited primarily from the modern phase of Australian urban history. This viewpoint, I argue, is a useful pretext for those who endorse piecemeal infills with the jamming of skinny or closely packed towers in the leftover interstitial open spaces of inner cities, like in the case of the Flinders Lane concourse that Seidler envisaged for Melbourne at the rear of Shell House.<sup>38</sup>

Notwithstanding the limitations of modern city planning inherited in the last century, the urban design hostility that lingers on against Seidler's modernist legacy of sculptural towers surrounded by public open space is a convenient alibi that distracts from a much more troublesome task. The task of calling into question how the mechanisms of destruction commenced in modern times were only amplified once they fell into the hands of the still-flourishing postmodern generation of urban designers engaged to fix the mistakes of their antecedents.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> The monographs on Harry Seidler are numerous. Here I refer above all to Peter Blake, *Architecture For The New World: The Work Of Harry Seidler* (Sydney, New York, Stuttgart: Horwitz - Wittenborn - Karl Kraemer, 1973); and Philip Drew and Kenneth Frampton, *Harry Seidler: Four Decades of Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992).
- <sup>2</sup> Alice Spigelman, *Almost Full Circle: the Life of Harry Seidler* (Blackheath, NSW: Brandl & Schlesinger, 2001); and Helen O'Neill, *A Singular Vision: Harry Seidler* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2013).
- <sup>3</sup> Philip Goad, "New World: Harry Seidler, Brazil and the Australian City," *Fabrications: The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand*, 31, no. 1, (2021): 54-84.
- <sup>4</sup> Paolo Stracchi, "Pier Luigi Nervi and Harry Seidler's Australia Square Tower: Italian Structure, Australian Design," *Construction History*, 34, no. 1, (2019): 103-28; and "The Ghost of Pier Luigi Nervi in Martin Place: the Italian Contribution to the Design and Construction of the MLC Centre and CTA Building in Sydney," *Construction History*, 36, no. 2 (2021): 165-88.
- <sup>5</sup> Gevork Hartoonian, "Harry Seidler: A Towering Architect," *Architectural Theory Review*, 11, no 1, (2006): Editorial, VI-VII.
- <sup>6</sup> Gevork Hartoonian, "Harry Seidler: Revisiting Modernism," *Fabrications: The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand*, 20, no. 1, (2011): 30-53.
- <sup>7</sup> A selection of tall building projects is contained in Peter Murray (ed.), *Harry Seidler and Associates: Towers in the City* (Milan: Tecno, 1988).
- <sup>8</sup> Seidler also designed two civic buildings that still stand in Melbourne's outskirts: the Waverley (now Monash) Civic Centre, Glen Waverley (1982-84), the Ringwood Cultural Centre, Ringwood (1978-80) and the Monash Gallery of Art (Waverley Art Gallery, Wheelers Hill, 1990).
- <sup>9</sup> "Revolutionary Office for Melbourne," *Architecture and Arts*, 25 (September 1955): 38-39.
- <sup>10</sup> "Revolutionary Office for Melbourne," 38.
- <sup>11</sup> Public Record Office of Victoria (PROV), City of Melbourne, VPRS 8945/P2, unit 191, Building and Town Planning Committee, minute no. 55/4176.
- <sup>12</sup> "Royal Automobile Club of Victoria," *Architecture in Australia*, 50, no. 3 (September 1961): 92-93; and "Club Premises and Offices," *Architecture Today* 3, no. 7 (May 1961): 17-20.
- <sup>13</sup> PROV, City of Melbourne, VPRS 8945/P2, unit 196, Building and Town Planning Committee, memorandum of the Town Planner, subject: Central Area Planning Scheme 1964, 27 September 1965.
- <sup>14</sup> Harry Seidler, "The Problem of Piecemeal Development," *The Age*, March 29, 1965, 17.
- <sup>15</sup> Seidler, "The Problem of Piecemeal Development," 17.
- <sup>16</sup> Dennis Sharp (ed.), *Harry Seidler: Selected and Current Works* (Mulgrave, Vic; North Ryde, NSW: Images – Craftsman House, 1997), 238.
- <sup>17</sup> PROV, City of Melbourne, VPRS 8945, unit 204, Building and Town Planning Committee, Application no. M.C.C. 2314, 1974.
- <sup>18</sup> National Trust of Australia (Victoria), *Collins Street Report: A Report by the Urban Conservation Committee of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) on Suggested Planning*

*Policies and Guidelines for Collins Street* (Melbourne: National Trust of Australia (Victoria), 1978).

<sup>19</sup> The articles and reviews of Norman Day, the architectural critic of *The Age*, are representative of the antagonism against modern tall buildings in Melbourne of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

<sup>20</sup> "Nauru House: A Gift," *Architect* 4, n. 40 (March 1976): 15.

<sup>21</sup> Neil Clerehan. "A Tale of Two Houses: Nauru and Wood and MLC too," *Architect* 4, no. 49, (September 1977): 7, 9.

<sup>22</sup> "Who is the Father of these Twins?" *The Age*, October 21, 1977, 17.

<sup>23</sup> "Correction and Apology to Mr Harry Seidler," *Architect*, 4, no. 50 (November 1977): 7.

<sup>24</sup> City of Melbourne and Victorian Department of Planning, "Interim Central City Planning and Design Guidelines," in *Melbourne Central City Development Manual* (Melbourne: Victorian Department of Planning, 1982), part C.

<sup>25</sup> PROV, City of Melbourne, VPRS 8945/P2, unit 218, Building and Land Use Committee, application no. DP83/0074, 14 April 1983.

<sup>26</sup> PROV, DP85/0303, 16 September 1985.

<sup>27</sup> Dr William H. Melbourne, wind engineer, in conversation with the author.

<sup>28</sup> "Architect Opposes City Planning Edict," *The Age*, April 6, 1989.

<sup>29</sup> Harry Seidler, "A Perspective on Architectural Directions," in *Second Century of the Skyscraper*, edited by Lynn S. Beedle (New York: Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, 1988), 165.

<sup>30</sup> Shell House received several awards soon after completion: the BOMA Award for Design in 1989, ASHRAE and ACEA awards for mechanical design and the RAIA Commercial Architecture Award in 1991.

<sup>31</sup> PROV, City of Melbourne, VPRS 8945, unit 244, City Development Applications Committee, application n. DP/002, 6 February 1989.

<sup>32</sup> PROV, DP/002, 6 February 1989.

<sup>33</sup> PROV, DP/002, 6 February 1989.

<sup>34</sup> The parcels consolidated at corner of Bourke and Williams Streets were then left in a state of underdevelopment and underuse until the early 2000s. RP Data, Melbourne Cityscope, map 19, properties 50-55 [1987-1999].

<sup>35</sup> See for example Landmark Tower, Brisbane (1985) in *Towers in the City*, ed. Murray.

<sup>36</sup> Harry Seidler and Associates, "Grollo Tower (Project)," 1995-2000. Available at <https://www.seidler.net.au/?id=31>.

<sup>37</sup> Elisabeth Farrelly, "'Bullet Gratefully Dodged': Failed Proposals that Saved Sydney from an Even Worse Fate," 31 August 2022. Available at <https://architectureau.com/articles/unrealised-sydney/>.

<sup>38</sup> Several online and newspaper articles give coverage of the controversial proposed redevelopment of the rear of Shell House with an additional 32-storey office tower. See, for example, Clay Lucas, "'Plonked on a Plaza': Skyscraper Plan puts Spotlight on Heritage Laws," *The Age*, 5 April 2021. See also letters by citizens in "Planning Minister, Admit you have Made a Mistake," *The Age*, 18 December 2021. Available at [www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/planning-minister-admit-you-have-made-a-mistake-20211217-p59ii9.html](http://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/planning-minister-admit-you-have-made-a-mistake-20211217-p59ii9.html).