

# ULTRA

## Positions and Polarities Beyond Crisis

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Image: Michaelmore, Roeger & Russell, *Chester House*, Belair 1966, State Library of South Australia BRG 346/28/6/2.

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# ***Four Melbourne Architects (1979): The Creation of Contemporary Perceptions for Australian Architecture***

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## **Abstract**

In 1979, Peter Corrigan conceived the idea for the 'Four Melbourne Architects' exhibition to be held at South Yarra's Powell Street Gallery. Corrigan led the charge to draw a line between a new generation of architectural practitioners with a fresh design agenda and the conservative practices represented by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA). This exhibition, along with the establishment of the Half Time Club and the launch of Transition Magazine, provided platforms for a lively and vigorous profession.

The 'Four Melbourne Architects'—Greg Burgess, Peter Crone, Norman Day and Edmond & Corrigan—were diverse in their approach to architectural design yet shared common concerns of the post-Whitlam generation. The research for this paper examines the documentation between the four architects as they prepared their exhibition, recording the projects exhibited, along with critical reviews of the exhibition. Interviews have been undertaken with the surviving architects involved and people who attended the exhibition. *Four Melbourne Architects* was the first of many exhibitions during that period, which became one of many vehicles for public engagement with early postmodernism and those creating it, where collaboration, inclusion, and connectivity informed designers. That process activated a search for a contemporary Australian identity leading to the development of the 'Melbourne School'.

## Introduction

1. Day, *Four Melbourne Architects Exhibition*.

At a night football match on 20 June 1978 Peter Corrigan proposed for the first time the idea for a limited public exhibition to showcase the changes in architecture that were occurring at that time. Corrigan discussed with Norman Day that it was time for a line to be drawn to distinguish the new generation of architects with a different design agenda to the conservative practices represented by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA).<sup>1</sup> A previous challenge to the authority of the RAIA had evaporated when Corrigan threw a carafe of wine across the room at the Last Laugh Theatre Restaurant in March 1978. That occasion was an ambitious but ultimately vain attempt at discussion and theoretical debate surrounding new architectural education and practices. The subsequent exhibition, *Four Melbourne Architects*, held at South Yarra's Powell Street Gallery in September 1979, coincided with the establishment of the Half Time Club and the launch of *Transition: Discourse on Architecture* magazine, both of which became vehicles for a younger generation to develop a lively and critical analysis which would invigorate the profession.

2. Corrigan, 'Letter to Greg Burgess: 10 May 1979', 10 May 1979.

3. Corrigan.

4. Corrigan, 'Minutes of Meeting Held on Monday June 18th, 1979, at 6.00pm at Offices of Edmond and Corrigan'.

5. Corrigan, 'Minutes of Meeting Held on Monday July 16th, 1979, at 6.00pm at Office of Edmond & Corrigan'.

6. Corrigan, 'Minutes of Meeting Held on Monday July 21st, 1979, at 6.00pm at Office of Edmond & Corrigan'.

The idea which developed into the *Four Melbourne Architects* exhibition included the work and ideas of nascent practising architects—Greg Burgess, Peter Crone, Norman Day, and Edmond & Corrigan. Other architects, Graeme Gunn, and Max May had been invited to participate but their involvement did not eventuate.<sup>2</sup> The creative work of the four was diverse but their underlying approach to architecture shared common concerns of a new generation,<sup>3</sup> representative of the Baby Boomers cohort and the significant societal changes of that period (post-Vietnam war, black rights, feminist movement, growing concerns about the environment, failed Internationalism culture, and the Whitlam experiment). Once the four were established, the name of the exhibition was discussed, initially as "B.C.D.E." – Four Melbourne Architecture Firms,<sup>4</sup> Alphabet Soup,<sup>5</sup> then "no further advance on alphabet idea".<sup>6</sup> In all correspondence this was referred to as the Powell Street Exhibition. The research for this paper was conducted using the RMIT's Edmond and Corrigan Collection, the Greg Burgess Archive, and the Norman Day Archive. This also includes reviews of the exhibition, interviews with Greg Burgess and Norman Day, and written correspondence with photographer John Gollings. Gollings kindly provided further details and restoration of some original images. This paper examined the documentation in preparation for the exhibition, images of, and critical reviews of the exhibition.

*Four Melbourne Architects* was the first of many exhibitions that followed during the period 1980-2000, which together contributed to an increasing public engagement around Australia and an awareness of contemporary architecture and those creating it. Many younger architects were associated with the four practices as employees, students, and friends, and involved in assembling the exhibition and became part a creative body of thought which became the strength of architecture in Melbourne in following years. In Corrigan's invitation letter he refers to the emerging Half Time Club:

This is a group of disgruntled recent graduates who have banded together in order to keep their minds alive and their ideals

7. Corrigan, 'Letter to Greg Burgess: 10 May 1979', 10 May 1979.

afloat. I have approached them with a view to passing over some of the responsibility for the publicity, mounting and administration of the show. It would be of assistance to them in establishing their independent identity as an ideas group.<sup>7</sup>

8. Corrigan, 'Letter to Greg Burgess: 19 May 1979', 19 May 1979; Corrigan, 'Minutes of Meeting Held on Monday July 21st, 1979, at 6.00pm at Office of Edmond & Corrigan'.

'Interoffice liaison' for the exhibition was carried out by Michael Ross for Peter Crone, Howard Raggart for Norman Day, Grant Marani for Edmond & Corrigan, and Richard Munday for Greg Burgess.<sup>8</sup> The majority of this group were embedded in the development of Half Time Club and Transition magazine. While outside of the scope of this research, there developed a specific and vigorous debate about Australian identity and its representation in architecture amongst the participants leading to the manifestation of the 'Melbourne School' as described by Andrew Metcalf in *Architecture Australia*.<sup>9</sup>

9. Metcalf, 'Melbourne: Some Notes of Recent Melbourne Architecture'.

10. Cheng and Harris, 'Eminent Modernist Architect Peter Crone Dies'.

In the years since the 1979 Powell Street exhibition, the Four Melbourne Architects' practices developed significantly, not as a cogent group but individually, while maintaining shared visions and values. Peter Crone (1944-2021), a Life Fellow of the Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) (2001), Crone won numerous awards including the 1993 Victorian Architecture Medal for the Chapel at Trinity Grammar School,<sup>10</sup> and the RAIA National Award for the Stage 1 Restoration of Chadwick House in Eaglemont Victoria designed by Desbrowe-Anneer.<sup>11</sup>

11. 'National Award for Heritage. Harold Desbrowe-Anneer's Chadwick House, Stage 1, Peter Crone Architects: Jury Citation'.

Greg Burgess (1945-) was awarded the RAIA Gold Medal in 2004, and a Life Fellowship of that Institute in 2005. Also, in 2005 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Melbourne. Significant awards for Burgess's buildings including the RAIA National Sir Zelman Cohen National Awards for Brambuk Living Cultural Centre (winner 1990) and Uluru Kata-Tjuta National Park Cultural Centre (High Commended 1996), and the RAIA National Walter Burley Griffin Award, RAIA (VIC) Melbourne Prize for the refurbishment of the Sidney Myer Music Bowl (2002).

12. Day resigned his membership of the RAIA because his role as a commentator and architectural correspondent for the Age conflicted with the rules of the RAIA

Norman Day (1947-) maintained his role as an architect and architectural critic and is not a member of the RAIA.<sup>12</sup> He was architecture critic for the Age (1976-2011), author of *Modern Houses* (1977), invited keynote for *Emerging Voices* (1987) for the Architecture League New York. Day was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in 2000 by RMIT University and won the RAIA (Victorian Chapter) Bates Smart Award for Media in 2004. He is a Board Member of Architects without Frontiers. Significant projects include heritage-listed Mowbray College, Melton (1983-1997).<sup>13</sup>

13. Victorian Heritage Register, 'Former Mowbray College Patterson Campus'.

14. Corrigan and Edmond, building 8, 1996; Corrigan and Edmond, building 8, 1996; Corrigan and Edmond, Building 8, 1996.

Edmond & Corrigan's most notable project is Building 8 at RMIT University, Melbourne.<sup>14</sup> Their practice was documented in *Cities of Hope*<sup>15</sup> and *Cities of Hope Remembered, Cities of Hope Rehearsed*.<sup>16</sup> Maggie Edmond (1946-) is a Life Member of the RAIA (2001) and awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Melbourne in 2015. Peter Corrigan (1939-2016) was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from RMIT University in 1989, and the Gold Medal by the RAIA in 2003. The architects maintained annual get-togethers to celebrate the exhibition and their friendship (See Figure 1). In an interview, Greg Burgess described the comradeship as "... a moment in time, like war, or life ... the exhibition. We will all have our own stories about it. Mine was very intense because it was crisis and the threshold and the things opened up because I stepped into it, stepped forward and said 'yes'. And so, I'm

15. Hamann, Anderson, and Callister, *Cities of Hope*.

16. Hamann et al., *Cities of Hope Remembered*.

very grateful for the other three".<sup>17</sup>



Figure 1: Melbourne Four lunch Carlton 1980s. L-R Waiter unknown, Peter Corrigan, Norman Day, Peter Crone, Maggie Edmond, Greg Burgess (Photographer unknown).

## The Exhibition

The concept of an exhibition came about because it was one of the few legitimate methods to 'advertise' to the public what architects do. In Corrigan's invitation letter he describes the inspiration for the exhibition as:

### 1.0 THE IDEA

Back in the dim distant past (the early 60's [sic] the Australian Museum of Modern Art, with John Read [sic] at the helm, held a prophetic exhibition of seaside domestic. This is the first serious attempt to show contemporary work since then. It has taken so long to come around, this show needs to have a little class.<sup>18</sup>

The idea that this was the first exhibition since Tavistock Place was introduced by Corrigan in the invitation to participants and in his letter to Jill Graham, Visual Arts Advisor to the Ministry for the Arts in section B:2:

This application is related to the costs of publishing a catalogue and a set of posters, It was intended that the catalogue be serious and of some historic interest, as the last local Architectural Exhibition was 26 years ago, at the Museum for Modern Art in Tavistock Place, the posters would be for publicity purposes and something of a collector's item.<sup>19</sup>

The exhibition at Tavistock Place that influenced Corrigan's thinking was *'Beach houses and a beach motel, a summer exhibition'* (December 1963), which included the work of Peter Burns, Chancellor and Patrick, Graeme Gunn, McGlashan Everist, Guildford Bell & Neil Clerehan, Brine

18. Corrigan, 'Letter to Greg Burgess: 10 May 1979', 10 May 1979.

19. Corrigan, 'Letter to Jill Graham Re: Powell Street Gallery Exhibition', 10 July 1979.

20. Hamann, Anderson, and Callister, *Cities of Hope*, 31–35.

21. Serle, *Robin Boyd*, 321.

Wierzbowski Associates and Robin Boyd (Grounds, Romberg, and Boyd). Corrigan was in the USA between 1967–1974,<sup>20</sup> and missed other exhibitions such as the retrospective exhibition of the architecture of Robin Boyd organised the year after his passing at the University of Melbourne Fine Arts Department (sponsored by Stegbar Windowalls) in June 1972.<sup>21</sup> The idea that this is the ‘first exhibition in 26 years’, that was carried through in documentation and reviews of the exhibition is therefore not completely accurate.

22. Day, *Four Melbourne Architects Exhibition*.

In the preparation for the exhibition, meetings were held to discuss content, cost, organisation, venue, catalogue, publicity, and invitations to participate were discussed. These were minuted and distributed to all participants. According to Day, there was agreement that the venue should not be linked specifically to a particular institution (such as a school of architecture), that it should be publicly available with no entry fee, and importantly inexpensive to establish.<sup>22</sup> Powell Street Gallery in South Yarra was offered as an option because the owners—Harry Curtis, Christine Abrahams, Jenny Heathcote, and David Rosenthal—provided a generous deal with the entire gallery available for two weeks. The gallery was a simple Victorian terrace house located on a street corner with the original rooms generally intact and a contemporary gallery space attached to the rear (east) end of the ground floor.

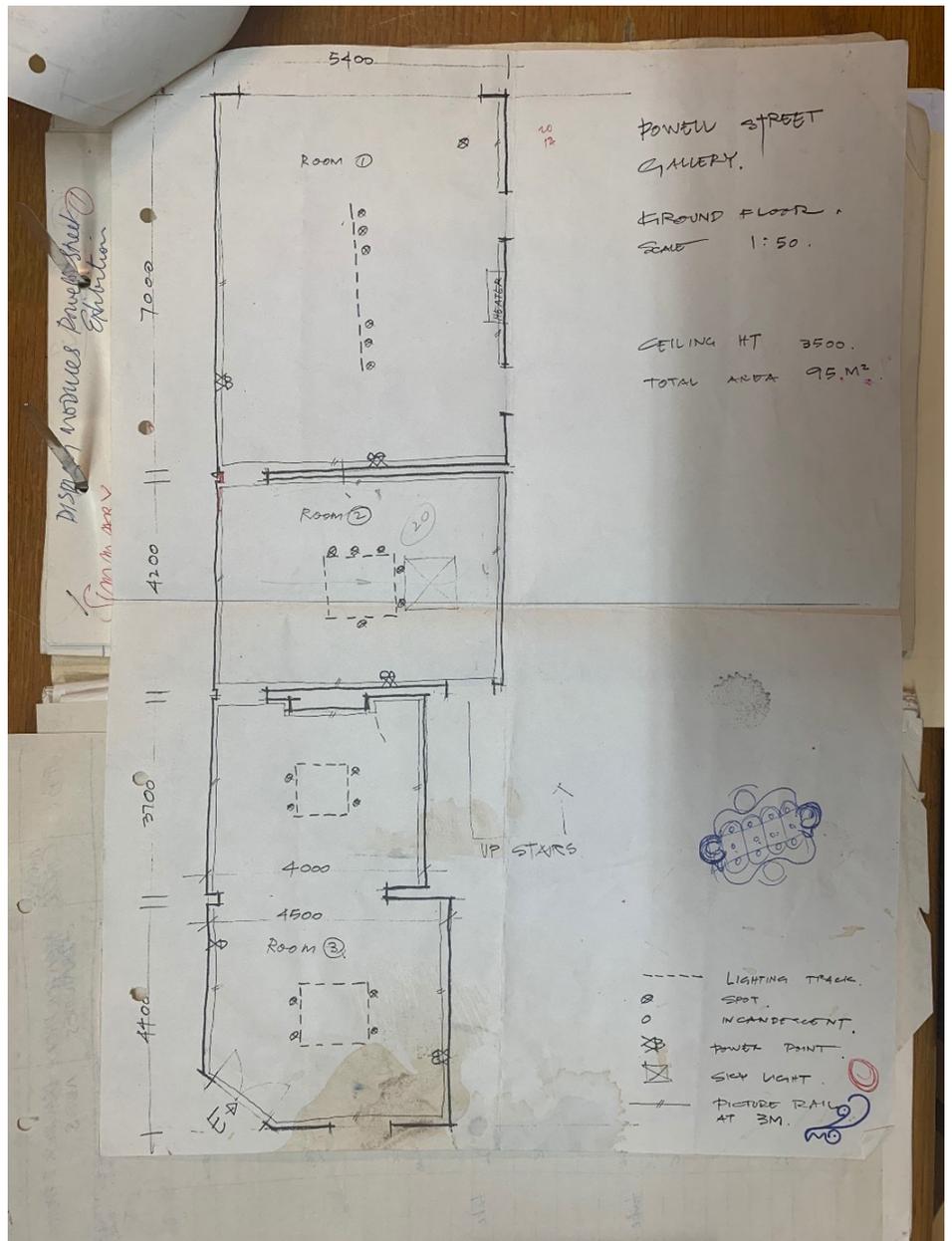


Figure 2: Plan of the Powell Street Gallery. Greg Burgess Archive

Minutes describe progress towards the exhibition—much of which was aspirational (such as audio-visual recordings) and did not eventuate, except for Crone who designed and built a fully structured installation into the gallery rooms on the ground floor.



Figure 3: Peter Crone's exhibition. Peter Crone (standing left) with architecture students © Edmond and Corrigan, School of Architecture and Design RMIT University

Each architect and their teams worked overnight to bump the exhibition into the gallery on the one available night before opening day on 9 September 1979.



Figure 4: Greg Burgess standing in the exhibition space. Greg Burgess Archive



Figure 5: (left) Installation of work in the Edmond & Corrigan room, (right) detail from the Edmond & Corrigan exhibit © Edmond and Corrigan, School of Architecture and Design RMIT University

## The Exhibition and Reviews

23. McCaughey, 'Architects Throw off the Greyness and Add Humor'.

24. Ward, 'The Urban Vernacular?'

25. Peake, Drew, and Anderson, 'An Exhibition by Four Melbourne Architects: Three Reviews'.

There were three major reviews of the exhibition. *Architects throw off the greyness and add humor* by Patrick McCaughey's in *The Age*,<sup>23</sup> *The Urban Vernacular?* By Peter Ward in the *Australian*,<sup>24</sup> and *An Exhibition by Four Melbourne Architects: Three Reviews* by Cathy Peake, Philip Drew, and Michael Anderson in *Transition*.<sup>25</sup>

McCaughey's review of the exhibition celebrated this new generation of architects. McCaughey had also been involved with the Last Laugh.

26. McCaughey, 'Architects Throw off the Greyness and Add Humor'.

There is no doubt that these architects and their ilk (and they have a sizeable but undefined group of colleagues of similar right hands and right minds) are expanding the range and versatility of Australian architecture. The corporation architects may have looked more prominent in the 70s, but they have wrecked cities and demoralised our only old precincts. Their number and time are up. We cannot, literally or spiritually, afford them anymore.<sup>26</sup>

27. Ward, 'The Urban Vernacular?'

Ward was also enthusiastic in his descriptions, leaving the readers with notion "Is this then to be the new Australian architecture, and Aussie Post-Modernism?"<sup>27</sup> While Michael Anderson wrote

28. Peake, Drew, and Anderson, 'An Exhibition by Four Melbourne Architects: Three Reviews', 14.

The uniqueness of this exhibition is not in its existence – every backstreet in London hides another architectural retrospective – but in the varied scope, abilities and approaches of the four architects on display. It affords a rare glimpse into the world of style, with the exhibited explorations of at least three discernible extremities. Melbourne is fortunate to contain these architects, who, like weeds, stick out in the flowerbed, thrive on the same fertilizer, and bring forth their own strange blooms. Where would we be without weeds?"<sup>28</sup>

## Peter Crone

Peter Crone started his own practice in 1977. While he worked with Edgard Perrotta he has won numerous awards including the RAIA/ Robert & Ada Haddon Design Scholarship (1971), AGE/RAIA House of the Year Bronze Medal in 1975 and citations for projects in 1972 and 1976-77; and the RAIA/ACI/ Gas and Fuel Low Energy House Design

Competition Equal First Prize in 1977.

The projects on display were the Briggs House, Lancefield (1979); Porritt House, Mt. Martha (1978); Hoy House, Hawthorn (1978); Charge House, Mt. Dandenong (1977); McGubbin House, East Ringwood (1977); Mater Christi College Administrative Building, Belgrave (1977); Green House, Williamstown (1979); Kiss House, Hawthorn (1978); Coakley House, Hampton (1978) – AGE/RAIA House of the Year – Citation 1976; Hood House, Benalla (1976); Hueber House, Olinda (1974) – AGE/RAIA House of the Year 'Bronze Medal' 1975.

29. Ward, 'The Urban Vernacular?'

Ward describes Crone as 'an architect's architect, everything is perfect'.<sup>29</sup> His review also noted the opportunity provided by the Haddon Scholarship for Crone to an extensive Le Corbusier pilgrimage.

### Greg Burgess

30. Drew, 'Listen Aborigine: The two regional axes of Australian architecture', 113.

"Greg Burgess may well belong to Melbourne, but he is much more modest and not typical of aggressive Melbourne architecture".<sup>30</sup> After graduation, Greg Burgess works with Edgard Pirrotta and Daryl Jackson and Evan Walker before starting his own practice in 1972. In his rooms, Burgess assembled and composed his story using a collection of models, drawings, prints and layouts which were distributed on the gallery walls and floors. Projects on exhibition were the Barlow House, Mc Crae (1972); Grant House, Blackburn (1972); Hawkins House, Gisborne (1972); McLeod House, Glen Waverly (1972); Perteasy Housing developments, Frankston (1972); Baldc House, Emerald (1973); Perteasy Housing Development, Frankston (1973); Renovation and Additions Rockman House, Yanakie (1973); Bob Fields Housing Development, Frankston (1974); Richards House, Riddell's Creek (1974); Centre for the Wimble Street Child Care Co-operative (with Deborah White), Parkville (1974); Renovations and additions Athorne House, Hawthorn (1975); Renovations and Additions to Bus Depot for Heidelberg Repertory Group, Rosanna (1975); Child Care Centre for the Italo-Australian Education Foundation (with Deborah White), Carlton (1975); Coxhell House, Mt. Martha (1975); Renovations and additions Jones House, Beaumaris (1975); Heath House, Warrandyte (1975); Hunter House, Park Orchards (1975); Renovation and additions Manie House, The Basin (1975); Client brief and Schematic design for the new School of Art and Design, Preston Institute of Technology, Preston (1975); Fritsch House, Shoreham (1976); Scott House, Eltham (1976); Stutterd House, Eltham (1977); Antonello House, Wonga Park (1978); Carlton Community Health Service, Carlton (1978); Feasibility Report for Community Arts Activities Centre - Ministry of the Arts, Swan Hill (1978); Holden House, Strath Creek (1978); Renovations and additions Marshall House, Carlton (1978); May House, Kangaroo Ground (1978); Restaurant for Farley Nominees, Melbourne (1978); Prahran High School Library, Prahran (1978); Becker House, Eltham (1979); Renovations and additions Cameron House, Beaumaris (1979); Renovations and additions Lovett House, Richmond (1979); Renovations and additions Sandler House, Mornington (1979)

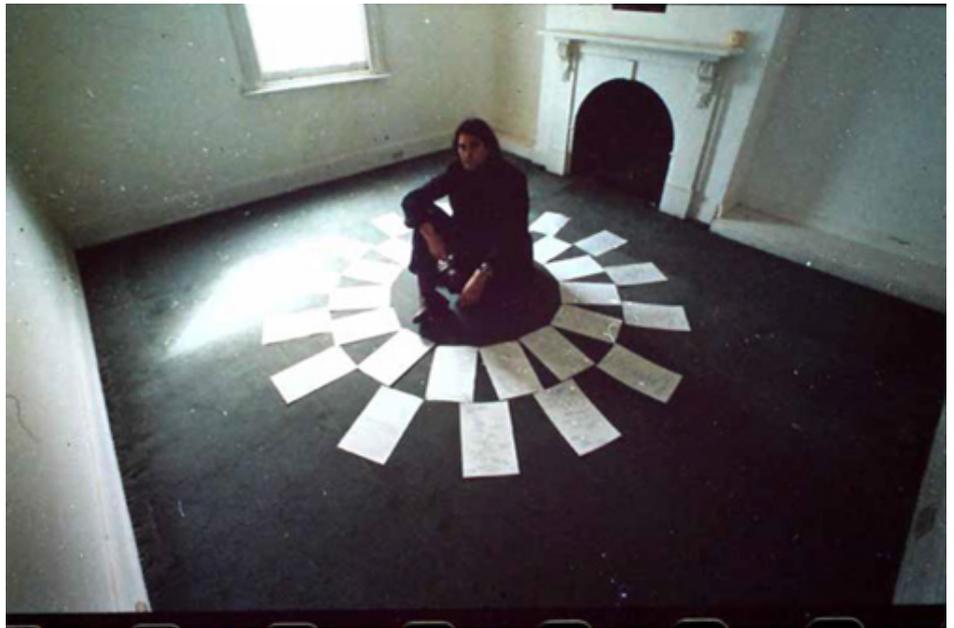


Figure 6: Greg Burgess with text circle - Greg Burgess Archive



Figure 7: Greg Burgess Models - Greg Burgess Archive

### Norman Day (1947-)

31. Ward, 'The Urban Vernacular?'

Located on the first floor Ward describes Day's exhibition as "ironic" in terms of presentation.<sup>31</sup>

32. Peake, Drew, and Anderson, 'An Exhibition by Four Melbourne Architects: Three Reviews'.

Upstairs Day presented a more cheeky, more casual landscape, where nothing was fully argued or closed for discussion. His drawings were not labelled at all, one photo was cut to emphasize the curves in the road and, perhaps, to deemphasize the regimentation and tyranny of regular frames, while his models were tacky and precariously mounted on coloured boards and cornices.<sup>32</sup>

Prior to establishing his own practice, Day worked with Romberg & Boyd

since 1967 and was a director at the time of Boyd's death in 1971. He had a brief architectural partnership with John Davey (1971-1973) in parallel with this own practice. Day commissioned John Gollings to photograph several recent buildings, some unfinished, to be framed as per a traditional artist's display to be hung on the gallery walls. Other parts of the exhibition were models of his buildings mounted on fabricated classical plaster columns as if providing gravitas despite their cardboard fabrication. Other frames contained reprints of some of his writings. The catch had been his late request to Gollings for photographs, which was generously agreed to but required that they be taken at night as Gollings was busy all day on commercial duties.

33. Gollings to Day, 'Melb 4 Again', 19 July 2021.

Gollings and Day spent nights touring recent projects. The photographic process involved Gollings using his large format camera with an open lens while Day 'washed' the building façades with a high-powered, hand-held photographer's lamp, moving across the façade on instruction, constructing a 'painted' image (See Figure 8). According to Gollings, the buildings were photographed on 5 September 1979 using this different lighting aesthetic than the earlier images of Edmond & Corrigan's Resurrection Church (1976) and Freedom Club Child Care (1977) in Keysborough.<sup>33</sup>



Figure 8: Burfurd House Hawthorn (1979). Architect Norman Day. Photographer John Gollings. Norman Day Archive.

34. Day, *Modern Houses Melbourne*.

While Day included architectural projects as per other members of the Melbourne Four, there were several more opaque, cryptic, and handwritten inclusions in his catalogue poster. The first is a hand scrawled question mark next to Day's membership of the RAI and a series of RAI membership associations that ended in 1977-78. Day had edited *Architect Magazine* for the Victorian Chapter of the RAI 1976-77 under the management of Brian Zouch, who also published *Architecture Australia* (for the single-issue Day was editor, and Zouch also published *Modern Houses*).<sup>34</sup> Day was controversial in his editorial post for *Architect* by not adhering to what Hogben eloquently refers to as "positivistic treatment" of architectural content established by the

34. Day, *Modern Houses Melbourne*.

35. Hogben, 'MAINTAINING AN IMAGE OF OBJECTIVITY'.

36. Lumsdaine, 'RAIA Notice of Reprimand'.

37. Day, 'How an Architect Charges 1 1/2% and Lives'.

38. Corrigan, 'Letters'.

39. Day, 'Collins Street Conservation'.

federal council of the RAIA in 1963.<sup>35</sup>

Interestingly *Architecture Australia* was to include a reference to the *Four Melbourne Architects* in the edition of *Architecture Australia* following the exhibition. Instead, Day was issued with a Notice of Reprimand and fined,<sup>36</sup> for his report on architectural practices that undercut the recommended fee scale (at that time) of 6% to win commissions.<sup>37</sup>

In response Corrigan wrote in support to the objections of the article in *Architect 45*:

Several articles, particularly the 1 per cent article, give our critics ammunition to shoot at us. Well, we can be certain that no one was hit ... A final word on the issuing of high calibre ammunition to our critics. Is it true that the Council has a contract out on Mr N Day? There are rumours of disqualification from the Institute membership, de-registration, the whole box, and dice. Has HQ noticed he is the only full-time architectural journalist in Australia? ... If our side had a little more "live" ammunition, there might be less apathy and defection from the ranks.<sup>38</sup>

Day was a leading participant in the Collins Street Defence Movement established by Evan Walker, who used this as a move from architectural practice (with Jackson Walker) to politics.<sup>39</sup> Hence the inclusion of the 'I care about Collins Street' sticker (See figure 12). Finally, the image of Micky Conlan from the Fitzroy Football Club. Day was/is a passionate supporter of the Fitzroy Football Club. Conlan was included in this because Fitzroy had won the Amco-Herald VFL Cup at Waverly Park on 20 June 1978 where the idea of the exhibition was first discussed with Day and Corrigan in attendance. Day describes this event as the first time the exhibition was discussed between them. Projects on the poster were Day House Hawthorn (1971), Gunner House, Rowland Flat, South Australia (1971), Rowland Flat, Roet House, Red Hill South (1978), and the Day House Armadale (1978), included in the exhibition were Pizzey House, Kew (1977); Milne House, Malvern (1978), and the Burfurd House, Hawthorn (1979).



Figure 9: Images of the signage to Day and Burgess (left) and images from the Norman Day exhibit. © Edmond and Corrigan, School of Architecture and Design RMIT University

## Edmond & Corrigan

McCaughey wrote of Edmond & Corrigan's contribution as:

40. McCaughey, 'Architects Throw off the Greyness and Add Humor'.

Autobiography can shape an architecture, and so Edmond & Corrigan paper their rooms with their cuttings and clippings to make an anti-exhibit exhibition. (Andy Warhol design his retrospective in New York to be seen in nine-minutes. You can see Corrigan's in one). Yale gossip and their entry for the National Archives Building uneasily rub shoulders with each other.<sup>40</sup>

Edmond & Corrigan papered their gallery rooms with photocopies and drawings of text, plans, images, and memorabilia and showered a set of images on a projector loop of their projects. Architectural works on display included the Resurrection Church Keysborough (1976); Amenities Black, Nagambie (1977); St Josephs Chapel, Surrey Hills (1978); Resurrection school, Keysborough (1978); Childcare Centre Keysborough (1978); Barber House, Carlton (1979). Other projects on display were the Archives competition Project, Canberra; and the design development stages of an Industrial Park and high-rise development, Yarraville; and the clubhouse for Sale Football Club, Sale. In addition to these were drawings and sketches for set design and costumes.

To celebrate the opening night a cake was made to replicate the RAI Victoria Chapter award that Edmond & Corrigan won for their Resurrection School project in Keysborough.



Figure 10: Room with Edmond & Corrigan's display. ©Edmond and Corrigan, School of Architecture and Design RMIT University



Figure 11: Cake representing both sides of the Bronze Medal won in the RAlA Vic Chapter 1979 Awards for the Resurrection School in Keysborough. Image in the background on the wall is of Evan Walker presenting the Bronze Medal to Maggie Edmond. © Edmond and Corrigan, School of Architecture and Design RMIT University

### Influences?

41. Peake, Drew, and Anderson, 'An Exhibition by Four Melbourne Architects: Three Reviews', 11.

42. *Five Architects*.

In Philip Drew's review of the exhibition in *Transition*, he wrote:

Melbourne architecture has changes since the Tavistock Place exhibition of 1964 [sic] – indeed much of the conventional wisdom of the sixties has now been overturned. This is illustrated by the 'Four Melbourne Architects' exhibition. No doubt it had the New York 'Five Architects' in mind and seeks to establish a similar purchase for the Melbourne Four as the New York event.<sup>41</sup> In response to this comparison with group known as the 'New York Five' (NY5),<sup>42</sup> Day wrote:

43. Day, 'NY5 & 4MA - NDA 29 June 2021', 29 June 2021.

*Four Melbourne Architects* was the antithesis of the NY5. The only similarities between these two occasions is that they are about architects who are located in proximity to each other as groups and each group is signified by a number. The contrasts are clearer. NY5 shared common architectural beliefs, and they came together in 1969 to prescribe their manifesto which led to the publication of their (white covered) book in 1972 (there was no earlier exhibition).<sup>43</sup>

44. Day, 'Letter to John Andrews', 7 August 1979.

In a letter to John Andrews (then head of the Australia Council Visual Arts Board), Day wrote of the exhibition "I hope it will be the start of many other similar exhibitions in Australia. I might add, we don't see it as a touting for work thing, but rather a show of some new directions in architecture". This letter was attached to the application to the Australia Council for financial support from the exhibition.<sup>44</sup>

### 1970s – Modernism Passed

45. Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*.

By the late 1970s, architects had developed an awareness of the failures of International Modernism as a vehicle for social and environmental change. The Venturi team in Philadelphia had described this shift in values, for urban design and architecture, in their publications *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966) and *Learning From Las Vegas* (1972).<sup>45</sup> In the Australian context, Robin Boyd died on 16 October 1971, and his last building, Neptune's Fishbowl (Melbourne, opened on 24 November 1970), was the final vision of a singular vision Modernist building at that time, and it could be argued signalled the end of Modernism in Australia.<sup>46</sup>

46. Day and Day, 'Neptune's Fishbowl: Australia's First Post-Modern Building?'

47. Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*.

Modernism passed away in the 1970s through two iconic clinical interventions: one was the explosive demolition of huge social housing blocks represented by the Pruitt-Igoe housing scheme. Charles Jencks had triumphantly announced this expiration as having occurred in an explosive moment.<sup>47</sup>

### Conclusion

48. Webster, Day, and Raisbeck, 'Day in The Age: A Critical Observation of Architecture'.

This exhibition came about predominantly because the four architects, were aware of substantial changes to their profession and ambitious to describe a new vision for architecture, one related to place, people, and locale. The culture of global and International Modernism had ended. The exhibition was intended to describe, to the profession and general public, a realigned proposition for architecture that the participants proposed with their creative work, designed to establish a fresh paradigm for architectural practice and production.

These architects were largely interested in exploring and revising the orthodox modernism of those architects who had been trained prior to the mid-1960s, with an emphasis on the human condition,<sup>48</sup> and heralding in postmodernism in Australia. *Four Melbourne Architects* was the first of many exhibitions that followed during that period, which became vehicles for public engagement with this new architecture and those creating it, where collaboration, inclusion, and connectivity informed designers.



Figure 12: Catalogue poster (front) Peter Crone Four Melbourne Architects (Norman Day Archive)



Figure 13: Catalogue poster (front) Greg Burgess Four Melbourne Architects (Norman Day Archive)



Figure 14: Catalogue poster Norman Day Four Melbourne Architects (Norman Day Archive)



Figure 15: Catalogue poster Edmond & Corrigan Four Melbourne Architects (Norman Day Archive)