

# architecture institutions and change

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## Architecture and the Australia Council in the 1980s

*Throughout the 1980s, design and architecture were a key part of the agenda of the Australia Council, the country's peak arts funding and policy body. This coincided with political and ideological pressures on the Council to adopt a view of the arts as industries, to develop new arts audiences through community engagement, and to align its activities to address questions of national identity that concerned the federal government. Despite a history of constantly changing administrative arrangements that reflected the uncertain place of architecture among the arts, and ultimately excluded it, the Council's engagement with design led to support for architecture in several ways. The Council represented the economic significance of design to governments and industry, subsidised the activities of professional organisations such as the RAIA, and facilitated contacts between Australian and Chinese architects. To promote a broader community interest in architecture, it assisted in developing programs of design education in schools, and toured exhibitions of contemporary Australian architecture locally and internationally. Through these exhibitions and publications drawn from them, and by supporting Australian-themed editions of international architectural journals, the Australia Council promoted Australia's architecture and design culture. In particular, it projected Australian architecture as complex, inclusive, and multiple. The paper investigates how in Australia Council activities, support for architecture cut across the conventional distinction between modernism and postmodernism and demonstrated a relationship between government agencies and postmodern architecture that is distinct from that prevailing elsewhere. In particular, it considers the significance of this engagement with postmodernism in relation to emergent constructions of identity which particularly concerned Australia in the 1980s.*

During the 1980s, architecture was a formal part of the programs of the Australia Council, Australia's peak arts funding and policy organisation. During this period, the Council's objectives in relation to design were articulated from time to time in its official publications, the Council's Annual Report for 1984-85, for example, stating that it supported design in order to promote its contribution to "the amenity of our cities and towns, the products we use, and our visual communications" and to "the development of Australian cultural identity". Further, anticipating later developments in what would become known as 'creative industries' policy, the Australia Council connected design to the "the competitiveness of industry and commerce".<sup>1</sup> In this paper, we examine the Australia Council's support for design and architecture during the 1980s, considering first the emerging ideological commitments of the Council, and then briefly surveying the activities of the Design Arts Board and other entities the Council established to propagate a design agenda. We focus then on publications on architecture – two associated with exhibitions the Design Arts Board staged, and three in the form of special issues of international architecture journals devoted to Australia which it funded – to consider how Australia Council support for architecture cut across the conventional distinction between modernism and postmodernism. This demonstrates a relationship between government agencies and postmodern architecture that is distinct from that prevailing elsewhere. This is particularly significant in how Australian architecture during the 1980s played a role in emergent constructions of national identity.

### The Australia Council in the 1980s

Established in 1968, in 1975 under the Whitlam government the Australia Council became a statutory authority, succeeding and subsuming various other federal arts funding agencies which had evolved since the immediate post-war period.<sup>2</sup> Organised as a series of boards that were responsible for funding programs and for policy in particular fields – visual arts, music, literature, theatre, Aboriginal arts, and so on – in its first years of operation, and particularly under the chairmanship till 1981 of Geoffrey Blainey, the Australia Council acted mostly to coordinate the activities of its various constituent boards which otherwise were left to their own devices. Other initiatives of the Whitlam and Fraser governments, however, were to bear on the Council, in particular to promote three foci across the activities of all its boards. One of these foci was consideration of the economic value and impact of the arts construed as industries; the second entailed an emphasis on community access and increased participation to the arts; the third was to align arts policy more specifically with the policies of federal government, especially in regard to multiculturalism and cultural identity.<sup>3</sup> It was in the context of these developing themes that architecture and design were included on the Australia Council's agenda.

Among the economic initiatives of the Whitlam government and continued under Fraser was the establishment of the Industries Assistance Commission. The Commission's role was to consider ways to promote economic development in Australia other than through the traditional and crude device of tariff protection. Before the fall of the Labor government in 1975, the Industries Assistance Commission began an investigation into the performing arts in Australia; its report was delivered in 1976, to be followed by reports on commercial

theatre, music recording, and publishing. While these reports took care not to assert that, from a public policy perspective, cultural endeavour should be treated only as a matter of economics, they nevertheless suggested that there was some value in considering the arts as if they were industries. In particular, the IAC's investigations into the cultural sector questioned direct government support of traditional performing arts companies such as the Australian opera, ballet, and theatre companies, on the grounds that money spent on them subsidised the cultural consumption of but a small number of Australians. The IAC suggested that a better approach would be to develop broader interest in the arts through supporting education and grass roots arts endeavours: using a crude economic idea, to stimulate demand rather than to subsidise supply. The IAC further suggested that the productions of traditional elite arts could be better made available to the Australian community not by directly supporting the companies that produced them but rather by making video and audio recordings of their productions widely available. It recommended innovation be supported to further this aim.

The reflections and recommendations in the reports of the IAC on the performing arts, theatre, recording and publishing were met with outrage from the arts community which predictably argued that its activities should not be considered from the IAC's economic perspective. IAC recommendations were not adopted by the Fraser government. But IAC's views nevertheless had influence, not least because they coincided with a different critique of the arts in Australia that emerged in the early years of the Australia Council's operations. In articles appearing for the most part in the pages of *Meanjin*, writers including R. W. Connell and Tim Rowse staged leftist critiques of elitism in the arts in Australia.<sup>4</sup> These were framed not in terms of economics but rather of social justice. But possibly to the alarm of left-intellectuals, their social justice critique coincided with the neo-liberal economic stance on the moribund nature of the arts sector. Commenting on Rowse, *Meanjin's* editor Jim Davidson observed that what was striking about his view was "despite its impeccable left-wing credentials, is its closet consumerism ... he's concerned about choice, and the operation of a free market in it."<sup>5</sup> The left critique of arts policy and funding tended, then, to further underline the emphases on community, education, audience, and industry within the Australia Council, set in train by the Industries Assistance Commission reports.

While Blainey nominally addressed the call for more grass-roots involvement in the arts by setting up a Community Arts Board, it was not until Tim Pascoe succeeded him as chair of the Australia Council that the Council's commitment to community arts had substance. Pascoe had been Federal Director of the Liberal Party 1974-75: his community arts focus aligned with the Fraser government's views on the rights of communities to self-determination in their development within a broader collective identity of a multi-cultural Australia.<sup>6</sup> Pascoe also further encouraged the view that arts needed to be understood in terms of their economic dimensions. These ideological imperatives gained impetus when Donald Horne succeeded Pascoe in 1985. Apparently influenced by the writings of Daniel Bell, Horne viewed the arts "as a quintessential post-industrial industry", and envisaged a role for the Council in reshaping Australian polity to address economic and social change.<sup>7</sup> Placing

community development at the centre of the Australia Council's activities, he replaced the Community Arts Board with a Community Cultural Development Unit, which he chaired and on which the chairs of the art-form specific boards all sat.<sup>8</sup> But Horne's tenure at the Australia Council coincided with the 1986 McLeay Report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Expenditure. The McLeay Report emphasised the economic view of the arts that had been in the ascendency for the previous decade, but informed also by the 'small government' ideology then prevalent sought to refocus federal support for the arts on direct grants to artists and arts companies, and to reassign policy responsibilities to the Department of Arts, Heritage and Environment. There they would be under closer overview of the responsible federal minister.<sup>9</sup> In response, Horne had to defend the role of the Council in formulating national cultural policy and to make its own operations leaner.

## Architecture and the Australia Council

Architecture and design came and went from the Australia Council's portfolio during this fast moving helter skelter of changing personalities, and changing political and ideological circumstances. The suggestion that the Australia Council should have a Design and Architecture Board, equivalent in standing to those for other art forms – the Visual Arts, Literature, Music or Theatre – emerged in the late 1970s. Johanson comments:

Just as the Community Arts Board became the Council's expression of its sensitivity to community interests in the wake of the IAC reports, the Council was also impelled to exhibit its sensitivity to the needs of national industries. In the late 1970s, a group within the Visual Arts Board suggested the creation of a Design and Architecture Board... [A]n Architecture and Design Committee was created when Ellicott [R. J. Ellicott, Minister for Home Affairs] expressed his support for the proposal, on the grounds that the encouragement of such activities would assist Australian manufacturing industries to raise the quality of their products.<sup>10</sup>

The architect John Andrews certainly led the group within the Visual Arts Board championing the establishment of a design and architecture board. Andrews was made a member of the Visual Arts Board no later than 1977. He was at the peak of his career and influence: the Cameron Offices for the Federal government were nearly complete; his first major Sydney building, the American Express Tower, had just been opened, and he was about to serve on the competition jury to select the design for the most ambitious building undertaken by the Federal government, New Parliament House.

The trajectory of the Australia Council's interest in matters architectural and designerly corresponds exactly with a particularly reflective moment in Australian architecture and in cultural activities more broadly. This is a moment bracketed by the making of the new parliament between 1979 and 1988, when government and its agencies were occupied intermittently with the meaning of the forthcoming bicentennial. The Federal government established a Bicentennial Authority in 1979<sup>11</sup>, with which the Australia Council anticipated

collaborating to produce a bicentenary arts program for 1988.<sup>12</sup> The prospect of national jubilation was, however, mixed with a sense of anxiety about the country's economic prospects and about what we might in retrospect call its post-colonial condition. While preliminary commitment to a new parliament dates back as far as 1965, the project of implementing it in time for an opening early in 1988 was announced in November 1978.<sup>13</sup> An international architectural competition was launched in April 1979, with Andrews named as one of the competition jurors. Interestingly, he was already identified as "Mr. John Andrews, Architect, Sydney, Chairman of the Architecture and Design Panel, Visual Arts Board, Australia Council", more than a year before that panel officially came into existence.<sup>14</sup> The documentation of the new parliament competition conditions raised questions about architecture's representational and aesthetic roles – articulated in a manner likely to have been strongly influenced by Andrews – that in many ways foreshadow concerns that were to range across the architectural undertakings of the Australia Council. The parliament design competition conditions included the statement that

Competitors should ... question whether it is appropriate that a building of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century use the language of bygone eras. What would be the connotations – in the mind of the visitor – of a building with a monumental scale, sited on a hill? Does significance necessarily mean bigness? Should the functional aspects of the building be moulded into an abstraction of checks and balances (Brasilia)? Does the nature of the requirements imply an acknowledgement of the forces of growth and change?<sup>15</sup>

1988, the year of bicentennial and of the formal opening of new parliament, was also the year in which Australian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale was completed to the designs of Sydney architect Philip Cox; it was the most tangible and lasting legacy of the Australia Council's architectural fling.

Organisationally, this fling started with the establishment in 1980 of the Architecture and Design Panel of the Council's Visual Arts Board. Just a year later in 1981, this panel became a committee responsible directly to the Australia Council's board rather than through Visual Arts.<sup>16</sup> It was chaired by Andrews, with three other members including Cox.<sup>17</sup> From 1984, this was expanded to become the Design Arts Board. After the McLeay Report, the government proposed to reorganise the Australia Council into five boards, with the Design Board (as it was by then styled) being one of those to continue.<sup>18</sup> However, Horne's organisational review of the Australia Council in 1987 – attempting to stave off the full extent of the government's plan – proposed four boards of a different configuration. Following Horne's review, the Design Board was disestablished. Support of design within the Australia Council was returned to a committee of the Council<sup>19</sup>, which was dissolved two years later, after the Visual Arts Board had installed its 1988 Venice Biennale offering (an exhibition of the work of the painter Arthur Boyd) in Cox's still incomplete pavilion.<sup>20</sup> Andrews remained on board throughout this rocky institutional ride, Cox for most of it.

## Industry, community, and identity

The Design Arts Board and its precursors within the Australia Council promoted architecture in several ways. It supported design education initiatives in schools. In conjunction with municipal authorities, it developed a program of 'Townscape Improvement'. To promote knowledge of Australian architecture internationally, it toured the exhibition 'Old Continent, New Building: Contemporary Australian Architecture' to six European cities and five in the US, where it coincided with the arts program of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.<sup>21</sup> 'Australian Built: a photographic exhibition of recent Australian architecture responding to the place', was a complementary exhibition which toured Australian centres.<sup>22</sup> Visits to Australia were arranged of significant figures such as the contrarian historian of modernism Reyner Banham and American landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, and other international visitors supported through the RAlA's International Architecture speaker series such as Zaha Hadid and James Wines. The Design Arts Board supported publication of Australian architecture through the catalogues of its exhibitions and by assisting the travel to Australia of writers and editors from journals including the *Architectural Review*, *International Architect*, *Domus*, the *Architect* and *Interior Architecture*.<sup>23</sup>

The nature of the Australia Council's commitment to design was outlined in statements such as that from the 1984/85 Annual Report of the Council already cited. It is most fully delineated in a leaflet published by the Council's Arts Information Program in 1981, setting out the agenda of the then Architecture and Design Panel. This agenda consists of several items. 'Design Communication' includes projects "that let more people know about the role of design in everyday life and of Australian design achievements" – books, television programs, and exhibitions are envisaged. 'Design in Industry' will seek to "influence business and industry to make greater use of design". 'Design in Government' initiatives "will work with government and its agencies to develop policies that will increase the use and effectiveness of design". 'The Design Professions' will support the existing programs and initiatives of professional design bodies and will collectively represent "the design professions to industry, government and society". 'Design in Education' will "encourage increased opportunities for design experience in schools, in the general curriculum as well as in the crafts, industrial arts and home science areas".<sup>24</sup>

The undertakings of the Design Arts Board (as it was by 1984) can also be seen to have followed the pattern established by its parent – the Visual Arts Board – and the other 'art form' boards. In part this was because the Visual Arts Board – presumably at Andrews' prompting – was already supporting architecture and design before the establishment of a separate entity within the Australia Council to promote them. The year before it established its Architecture and Design Panel, the Visual Arts Board gave grants to individuals including Norman Day, Jennifer Taylor, John Redmond, and John James to work on architecture or design projects.<sup>25</sup> It also subsidised the travelling exhibition 'Ettore Sottsass jr: From the end product to the product's end', shown in 1979 at the National Gallery of Victoria, the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, and the S H Ervin Museum and Art Gallery in Sydney.<sup>26</sup>

The much more significant support of international travelling exhibitions to present Australian achievement abroad was also a well-established pattern in the activities of the Visual Arts Board. The first venue of the major undertaking of this kind with respect to architecture, 'Old Continent, New Building', was the Harry Seidler designed Australian Embassy in Paris, where it opened in November 1982.<sup>27</sup> Seidler's building had already hosted exhibitions of Australian painting and photography staged by the Visual Arts Board.<sup>28</sup> The sponsorship and promotion of articles or special issues on Australian culture in international journals was a well-established pattern in the activities of both the Literature Board and the Visual Arts Board. Sponsored visits by writers and editors from international art journals had resulted in articles on Australian art in *Domus* and *Flash Art* (Italy); *Art Monthly* and *Studio International* (UK); *Art Press* (France); and *Art Forum* and *Art in America* (US).<sup>29</sup>

Despite the activities of the Design Arts Board in retrospect appearing inclusive and eclectic, its most significant undertakings can nevertheless be mapped against the three themes of industry, community and identity emergent across the Australia Council's activities in the 1980s. These were the key drivers.

The 'industry' commitment of the Australia Council's interest in architecture and design entailed promotion of the economic value of design to government and business worlds, the support of the existing programs of relevant professional organisations, particularly the Royal Australian Institute of Architects but also the facilitation of design as a way of enhancing the government's own activities. One of the first design visitors to come to Australia under the design programs of the Australia Council was Michael Pittas, Director of the Design Arts program of the US National Endowment for the Arts, to present an initiative that "was aimed at improving the standard of design within the United States Government and its agencies".<sup>30</sup> From 1985-86, the Design Arts Board was particularly to target municipalities to promote better urban design, starting with a project to improve Parramatta Road in Sydney through a design ideas competition.<sup>31</sup> Further such work was done in conjunction with planning authorities in Victoria and New South Wales in 1986-87, and in Western Australia in 1987-88, by which time there was an edifice called the National Townscape Improvement Grants Program.<sup>32</sup> And anticipating the future significance for Australian architectural practices of China, a path-breaking delegation of Chinese architects made a visit to Australia in June 1983, sponsored by the Australia China Council and the Design Arts Committee. Andrews subsequently visited China in an official capacity.<sup>33</sup> An ongoing collaboration was subsequently established with China's Ministry of Urban Construction and Environmental Protection, with exchanges of Chinese and Australian designers across engineering, architecture, interior design and industrial design being established the following year.<sup>34</sup> Another industry initiative involved the Design Arts Board placing furniture designers with manufacturers to come up with prototype designs. These were shown at the Australian Furnishing Expo in Sydney in 1985, and subsequently in David Jones department stores.<sup>35</sup> The work with furniture designers and manufacturers continued until the Australia Council discontinued its support for design in the late 1980s.

Community involvement primarily entailed the building of audiences for design and

architecture within Australia. To this end, in 1981 the Architecture and Design Panel staged a national seminar in Melbourne titled *Design Education in Secondary Schools*.<sup>36</sup> Follow-up conferences were held in Adelaide the following year, and in Canberra in 1984, when a national organisation called the Design in Education Council Australia was formed.<sup>37</sup> Subsequently, grants were made to place designers and architects in schools, which continued at least to 1988-89.<sup>38</sup> The exhibition 'Australian Built: Responding to the Place', shown in 25 Australian centres from 1985 to 1988,<sup>39</sup> could also be construed as an attempt to encourage further engagement of communities and individuals with design.

Finally in regard to identity, the Australia Council's design programs were strongly motivated to articulate a national design profile for Australia, at a time before the 'culture wars' of the Howard era when multiculturalism was a bipartisan – albeit diffident – commitment of Australian governments. This specifically entailed an engagement with postmodernism, most apparent in the publications that came from the two major architectural exhibitions commissioned through the Australia Council, and in the issues of international architectural journals on Australia that the Council's design apparatus supported.

### Identity: Australia's postmodern moment

In this last section of our paper we will examine this question of identity articulated through architectural design as it was tacitly and explicitly explored in three special issues of international journals that resulted from invitations to Australia of writers and editors<sup>40</sup>, and two publications for which the Australia Council was directly responsible. All five publications – an issue of *UIA International Architect* from 1984, one of *Domus* that appeared in July 1985, and of *Architectural Review* that appeared in December of that year, and the publications associated with the international exhibition 'Old Continent, New Building', and its local equivalent, 'Australian Built' – present a consistent cross section of Australian architecture of the mid-1980s. This cross-section includes design work from the explicit postmodernism of Edmond and Corrigan and Norman Day – both represented in all five publications – to the late modernism of Glenn Murcutt and Philip Cox – also covered in all publications.

There are two things apparent in retrospectively looking at these publications and the projects they present. Firstly, while there were clear distinctions to be drawn in the Australian architecture of the 1980s between late modernism and postmodernism, it is nevertheless possible to see confluences as well. We will return to this point later. Secondly, while internationally postmodernism has been widely seen as an architecture of the enterprise culture unleashed by the end of the welfare state and 'big government', in Australia postmodern architecture enjoyed patronage from public agencies and was directly associated with the issues of community and identity that concerned government in Australia during the period. The international connection between neo-liberal markets and architecture is explored most famously by Fredric Jameson in his 1984 essay, 'Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', and more sceptically by Mary McLeod's essay of 1989, 'Architecture and Politics in the Reagan Era: From Postmodernism to Deconstructivism'.<sup>41</sup> But looking at the volumes on architecture sponsored by the Australia Council we find multiple examples

of government-funded projects in an explicitly postmodern manner, by which we mean here architecture consensually defined as postmodern in the architectural discourse of the period as a repertoire of stylistic attributes. This repertoire is found in Australian government work from the small-scale public housing projects of the reformed Victorian Housing Commission, including the work of Day and Edmond and Corrigan, to the work-in-progress of the Mitchell/Giurgola & Thorpe design for new parliament house. The key to understanding this difference in the Australian reception of postmodernism and its reception in the US and the UK particularly, is in the difference between the Thatcher view of community (that it did not exist) and that of Fraser (that it did).<sup>42</sup>

Beyond likeness in the projects they document, the five publications otherwise vary; they use a common range of projects to make distinctive propositions. With the subtitle 'Detailing, National Identity, and a Sense of Place' the Australian special issue of *International Architect* reflected the judicious view of its editor, expatriate Haig Beck, of the value of drawing and construction to architectural design, no matter stylistic variations. The *Architectural Review* special issue came just a few months before that journal's explicit call for architecture to take up the 'New Spirit' that it discerned to be abroad; this was a call for the journal to assume as a specific agenda the phenomenological turn of much of the writing that appeared – and still appears – in it.<sup>43</sup> *AR*'s Rory Spence attributes much of the range in Australian architecture to differences in the architectural cultures – 'spirits' one might say – between Sydney and Melbourne. *Domus*, by comparison, used its Australian issue to further its general editorial stance of promoting a radically critical architectural approach. Titled 'Ciao Australia: Coast to Coast; the last wave', it featured sections on architecture, design, art and fashion. The architecture section was inclusive of the late modern/postmodern range – Melbourne infill housing by Edmond and Corrigan and Norman Day, to the 'late modernism' of Seidler's Hannes House, Murcutt's Kempsey Museum and Information Centre, and Cox's Yulara Tourist Village. Postmodernism prevailed: the only lengthy piece by an Australian architectural commentator included was Peter Corrigan's 'Learning From Suburbia'. While Seidler was accorded the distinction of an interview with the *Domus* editor Alessandro Mendini, Mendini observed to him that "Young Australian design culture today is looking to values different from the ones which you brought with you", and asked "What do you think about Corrigan?" (Seidler's answer: "... typically desperate trying to be interesting by being offensive visually.")<sup>44</sup>

By contrast to the editorial hand apparent in each of the journals, the two exhibition publications are both explicitly committed to multiplicity in their selection of projects and in their texts. Textually, *Old Continent; New Building* attempts to perform this through the different voices of four writers: Philip Cox, Leon Paroissien, Conrad Hamann, and Jennifer Taylor. In a broad sweep, Cox characterises Australian architecture in relationship to a long history of human experience of landscape; Paroissien offers an abbreviated but conventional historical survey from anonymous indigenous architecture to modernism's 1970s implosion; Hamann suggests current Australian architecture emerges in relation to several urban conditions and sensibilities which are its new ground; Taylor describes a growing confidence in balancing

cultural inheritances and a poetic awareness of the environment.<sup>45</sup> The *Australian Built* publication, by contrast, features the words of but a single author, Craig McGregor. Under the title 'Responding to the Place', McGregor follows the Jencks pop-semiotics line that the buildings in the exhibition are "not just shelters, though they are that, but communication systems as well":

And in the conflicts which exist between these signal systems – between the modern and the post-modern movements, between the regional and the international, the vernacular and the theoretical are reflected the tensions and conflicts which exist within Australian society.... There is no mainstream; current Australian architecture is nothing if not pluralist.<sup>46</sup>

These words from *Australian Built* and the essays from *Old Continent, New Building*, and the photographs of the projects published in these volumes and exhibited from Paris to Los Angeles and throughout Australia, proposed a collective representation of Australian architecture that was multiple and inclusive. Nevertheless, unlike the *International Architect*, *Domus* and *Architectural Review* special issues, these Australian publications also featured a single dominant image – John Andrews' Eugowra farm house of 1981.

The Eugowra house – a steel framed and steel and glass clad pavilion – is the cover image for the *Old Continent, New Building* publication, and appears twice within its pages; it features as the first of a small number of coloured images in *Australian Built*, and twice more in black and white. Eugowra does not appear in the Australian issues of the international journals at all. A cynical reading of this might suggest that the Australian writers and curators the Design Arts Board patronised felt obliged to acknowledge Andrews, their man on the Australia Council, the guy who got them the gig. There were, however, many Andrews projects to choose from, and the explanation more likely lies in the high regard with which this project was held. It was and is a complex project, not in its program – a house for Andrews and his family – but in its symbolism and in its hint that post- and late-modern lines could be linked, as we alluded to earlier. The Eugowra house can be read as a project driven by its use of construction and environmental technologies appropriate for its isolated situation. Indeed the same descriptive text on the house that appears in both *Old Continent, New Building* and in *Australian Built* describes it in just these terms. But it can also be read in terms of symbolic projection and historical allusion. Taylor, the critic who knew Andrews' work best, describes it in her essay in *Old Continent, New Building*, as follows:

The time-honoured homestead is revived, transformed, and imbued with a new and startling imagery. With its water tanks, spreading roof and energy tower, the building tells of the stringent conditions of the area. This gleaming house of corrugated iron shimmers in the stark landscape and highlights the sun's strength and intensity. Like Murcutt's houses it is a classical pavilion, but the Andrews' house reaches back into history through the colonial period and Georgian England rather than through continental classicism.<sup>47</sup>

Egowra is the small house precursor to the big house of New Parliament; the questions formulated in 1979 for the entrants in the parliamentary design competition about the contemporary significance of symbolism, siting, and symmetry could just as well be directed at Andrews' Egowra. Egowra's 'energy tower' and spreading, hipped roofs might have impeccable pragmatic sense, but they also made an iconic representation of what Australian architecture apparently wanted to be in its postmodern moment.

## Conclusion

Egowra's power as an architectural icon was to be outstripped by New Parliament House when it was completed in 1988. The Giurgola design also put into the shade the Australia Council's major architectural achievement of that year, and the last outcome of its engagement with design and architecture, the completion of the Philip Cox designed Australian Pavilion in the Giardini della Biennale in Venice. Though long projected, the Australia Council's Visual Arts Board started serious work on this only in 1986-87, with the idea that its completion in 1988 would be a celebration of the bicentenary. Professional design services were provided by the Design Arts Board, by then restyled the Design Board.<sup>48</sup> In the Design Board's last report for 1987-88 included the rather plaintive comment that

Design Board members also donated their services to design the new Australian pavilion at the Venice Biennale. The pavilion, which was opened in June by the Honourable Ralph Willis, Minister for Industrial Relations, is an excellent example of contemporary Australian design as well as a permanent venue for exhibiting Australian art at this major arts venue. This amalgamation of design with fine arts exemplifies the contribution both can make to Australian culture – in this case for Australia's international benefit.<sup>49</sup>

By 1990, when the second exhibition had been installed in Australia's Venice Pavilion, the Australia Council was ascribing its design not to the Design Board that it had erased, but rather to Philip Cox personally.<sup>50</sup> The Australia Council's commitment to design as one of its responsibilities had gone. While the events that led to this can be traced, root causes are harder to discern. On one hand, Horne and Andrews did not get on, and Andrews' drive and commitment had strongly underwritten the Australia Council's engagement with design issues and culture. On the other, the economic rationalism that subtended the Council's interest in 'design arts' in the 1980s perhaps receded in its influence on arts policy in Australia – at least temporarily – as a more traditional, elite view of the arts began again to prevail.

Whatever the case, the Council's architectural fling had lingering traces. These significantly include the representations about Australian architecture made in the publications supported by the Design Arts Boards and the various other entities which preceded and succeeded it within the Australia Council in the 1980s. These representations might be characterised in various ways: in terms of their use of photographs; of the historiographical and theoretical propositions put in their various texts; of different international and local circumstances that

shaped how the strands of the period's architectural culture were perceived in Australia's own range of locations, and how reception of Australian architecture abroad was shaped by agendas set elsewhere. In this paper we have, rather, examined these constructs of architectural identity in relation to the Council's own ideological commitments, and how these aligned with the wider political discourse of the period. It is this discursive context that in Australia during the 1980s sustained an official engagement with the architecture of postmodernism.

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- 1 Australia Council Annual Report, 1984-85.
  - 2 John Gardiner-Garden, "Commonwealth Arts Policy and Administration," Parliamentary Library Background Note, 2009, 1-2, [www.aph.gov.au/binaries/library/pubs/bn/2008-09/artspolicy.pdf](http://www.aph.gov.au/binaries/library/pubs/bn/2008-09/artspolicy.pdf) (accessed February 16, 2015).
  - 3 Katya Johanson, "The Role of Australia's Cultural Council 1945-1995" (PhD dissertation, University of Melbourne, 2000), 149. The discussion here of Australia Council policy and its relationship to the federal government of Australia draws heavily on Johanson's work.
  - 4 Tim Rowse, "The Great Arts-funding Debate," *Meanjin* 40, no. 1 (1981); R. W. Connell "Democratising Culture," *Meanjin* 42, no. 3 (1983) as cited in Johanson, "The Role of Australia's Cultural Council 1945-1995," 166.
  - 5 Jim Davidson, "The Great Arts-funding Debate," *Meanjin* 40, no. 4 (1981): 456; Johanson, "The Role of Australia's Cultural Council 1945-1995," 168.
  - 6 Johanson, "The Role of Australia's Cultural Council 1945-1995," 169.
  - 7 Johanson, "The Role of Australia's Cultural Council 1945-1995," 189.
  - 8 Johanson, "The Role of Australia's Cultural Council 1945-1995," 202.
  - 9 Johanson, "The Role of Australia's Cultural Council 1945-1995," 201; see also Gardiner-Garden, "Commonwealth Arts Policy and Administration," 16-17.
  - 10 Johanson, "The Role of Australia's Cultural Council 1945-1995," 161-162; Johanson refers to Minutes of 29<sup>th</sup> Meeting 19-20 April 1979, Blainey Papers, Australia Council Minutes 1979.
  - 11 Australia Council Annual Report, 1979-80, 11.
  - 12 Australia Council Annual Report, 1980-81, 13.
  - 13 Parliament House Construction Authority, *Project Parliament: The Management Experience* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1990), ix.
  - 14 Parliament House, Canberra: Conditions for a Two-stage Competition, Volume 1. April 1979, 11.
  - 15 Parliament House, Canberra: Conditions for a Two-stage Competition, Volume 2. April 1979, 15.
  - 16 Australia Council Annual Report, 1981-82, 22.
  - 17 The other two original members were the engineer Peter Miller and the industrial designer David Terry. Australia Council Annual Report, 1981-82, 9.
  - 18 Gardiner-Garden, "Commonwealth Arts Policy and Administration," 20.
  - 19 Australia Council Annual Report, 1987-88, 4.
  - 20 Australia Council Annual Report, 1988-89, 37; Australia Council Annual Report, 1989-90, 14.
  - 21 The European cities were Paris, London, Geneva, Ghent, Bonn and Milan. Australia Council Annual Report, 1983-84, 60. The American cities were Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington and Memphis, and 'Tennessee' – so perhaps four. Australia Council Annual Report, 1984-85, 80.
  - 22 'Australian Built' opened at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in September 1985. Australia Council Annual Report, 1985-86, 35.
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- 47 Taylor, "History and Place in Recent Australian Architecture," 54.
- 48 Australia Council Annual Report, 1986-87, 55.
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