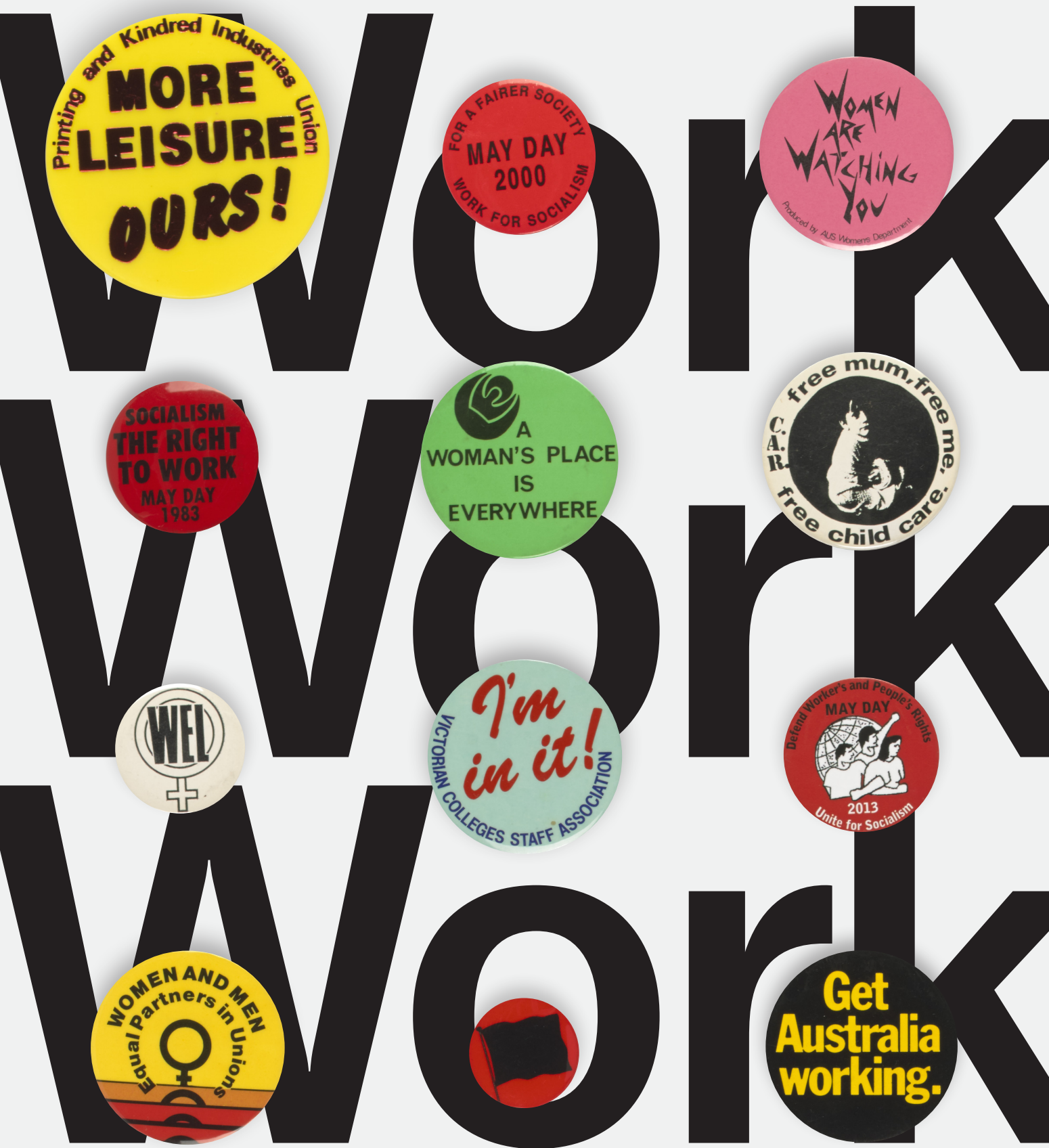


AssemblePapers





Assemble Papers is published by Assemble, a housing development and community management business on a mission to make thoughtfully designed, sustainable homes more accessible to more people. With a deep respect for people and place, we create communities that embrace diversity, reflect local culture and nurture a stronger sense of ownership and belonging.

Assemble is located on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded and pay our respects to elders past and present, and extend this respect to all Indigenous Australians.



14

Work

EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor

SOPHIE RZEPECKY

Content & program producer

MADELINE ELLERM

Director of culture & strategy

EMMA TELFER

Editorial advisory

**TANIA DAVIDGE, ANDY FERGUS,
CARYN KAKAS, JACK MITCHELL,
FLEUR WATSON, JEN ZIELINSKA**

Copyeditor

BRIDGET CALDWELL-BRIGHT

Design

FORDE + NICOL

Printer

ELLIKON

Distribution

PLAKKIT



Life feels a little like a work in progress at the moment, doesn't it? The centre of business is no longer in the city, surpassed by the screen and long-distance working. The way we work has shifted – emerging technologies, big tech and shared economies have created both opportunity and unexpected outcomes. These rolling pandemic lockdowns have exasperated already deep structural inequalities. In their recent book *On Connection*, Kae Tempest says it best, “to be able to ignore the inequality in our own city, is to prosper from that inequality”. So, we wonder, after a couple of years of resounding uncertainty, from climate crisis to pandemic – how do we work to reconnect to our built and natural environment, our deep past, and, importantly, each other?

Illustrator Mary Leunig told me to “maintain your rage” on a recent phone call about her illustration on p. 11. So let's maintain our rage at a broken housing system, which sees more than 100,000 people, including 30,000 women and children, on the Victorian Housing Register. Maintain our rage for those facing violent actions in violent streets and homes. Maintain our rage for unfair working conditions and for never-ending gender inequality. For whole worlds erased through ignorant action. Then, we get to work.

Together with the team for Open House Melbourne's 2021 program themed ‘reconnect’, we talked to people actively working towards equitable cities in the face of structural inequality. The perpetual emptiness of our city streets has encouraged us to question and reconsider the ways we move through this world. As design researcher Nicole Kalms put it on p. 16, “building architecture can't solve everything”. We must put our skills towards challenging policy and bureaucracy, designing systems, models and ways of building that are better for everyone.

Recently, we announced our Key Worker Program in collaboration with City of Melbourne, to provide discounted rental for key workers on seven affordable apartments at 393 Macaulay Rd. Kensington – our Assemble Futures pilot project. We are invested in supporting the workers amongst us who are crucial to a functional society, but who are facing housing insecurity. It's a small step, but it's a start.

We can lament how we have ended up here, as a nation that cannot house those who most need support, or we can work to do something about it. We're not saying we don't need to make a profit; we do. But we are finding ways to put people and the environment at the centre of that profit, while exploring better ways of working that provide quality housing for more. We don't have all the answers, but in the pages of this issue you will find the voices of those fighting for fairer, more accessible and equitable futures.

SOPHIE RZEPECKY

Editor

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the system,
change
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6

Public Moments

SOPHIE RZEPECKY chats with FLEUR WATSON
on reconnecting to place and each other

Since the first stone was laid in 1839 on Melbourne's first building, St James' Old Cathedral, buildings and infrastructure have determined the ways in which we move through the city. It's these built structures that choreograph our public interactions: with each other, with nature, and with history. Yet architecture's role is expanding – with a refreshed understanding that nothing is new, buildings don't have to serve their original purpose, and architectural thinking can be applied to structural processes and systems. For curator Fleur Watson, architecture is as much about communicating design ideas and challenging the status quo as it is about building solutions to perceived problems. As executive director of Open House Melbourne and curator of the newly formed Centre for Architecture Victoria, her aim is to rethink in a collective way how we design for public moments. We chatted on the eve of Open House Melbourne's 2021 program about curatorial practice, the shifting role of the architect, and designing a generous city.

Sophie Rzepecky: I'd like to start by asking, if you don't mind, where you grew up? I'm asking because I think to be a designer, or to work in the cultural world in any form really, you must have a strong understanding and awareness of where you come from.

Fleur Watson: Until I was eight, I grew up in a creative community in Lesmurdie and Kalamunda – about 40 minutes east of Perth on Whadjuk Noongar Country. Perth is generally quite flat, spreading north and south along the coast. From the hills, I could see the sunset over the city every night to the west. That vantage point gave a real sense of connection to the Indian Ocean, connection to place and connection to the incredible natural landscape. In those days, the unceded sovereignty and significance of the area to the Traditional Owners of the land was not recognised at my school or in the community – it's only now that this is shifting and being addressed and acknowledged.

SR: How do you think having that vantage point at such a young age informed the way you think now?

FW: It is absolutely a part of my DNA. Architect and Professor Leon van Schaik talks about the fact that designers and creative people view the world through our understanding of space. We build a kind of spatial intelligence that is informed by the places where we grow up in and the spaces we occupy at a young age. We bring that spatial intelligence to everything we do – whether it's designing a building, policy making, working with landscape, designing a collaborative structure, or in my case as a curator; how you collaborate creatively with others.



(opposite and above) *Occupied* (2016), RMIT Design Hub, Curated by Grace Mortlock, David Neustein, Fleur Watson. Installation view. Image: Tobias Titz.

SR: Early in your tertiary education you were studying design. What made you want to shift from being a designer, to curating and working with designers and their process?

FW: I was always writing about ideas as much as I might draw them. I've always resisted the idea of design as a service industry. I see architecture and design as a cultural contribution to the world as well as built form.

I think I gleaned that from certain figures from my education and early experience. People like Geoff Warn, the former WA Government Architect, or, in later Melbourne, people like Peter Corrigan, who I worked with on the book *Cities of Hope: Remembered / Rehearsed*. More recently, people like Kerstin Thompson have been a great influence. They all understand architecture's greater contribution to culture and the public realm.

My early experiences as a design graduate in Perth led me to writing about architecture projects, and I started to contribute to *Monument* – an Australian architecture and design magazine which was published from 1995 to 2013. In 2001, I moved to Sydney to take up the editorship and after a few years, I moved the magazine's production to Melbourne. I was the editor for seven years and worked with very talented people during that time including designers Sophie Griffiths and Stuart Geddes, and journalist Ray Edgar. In the early days, we produced it out of an airless warehouse in Surry Hills on the smell of an oily rag, but at the time it had an international reach beyond its very limited means. It was a progressive time for design journals, and we had the chance to experiment with curatorial approaches to making publications.

More recently, I spent another seven-year period as curator at RMIT Design Hub from 2012 to 2020. The building's location, at the juncture of Swanston and Victoria Street meant that it had a civic and cultural presence in that part of the city – reaching beyond a solely university context and into the public realm. In this way, Design Hub's exhibitions and programs focused on the idea of 'performing' design ideas in formation. Curatorially, we were interested in the idea of a 'project space' rather than a traditional gallery, focusing on translating design research and creating opportunities



“How do we think about all those things in-between ourselves and architecture – nature and our connection to it for example. How do we design our public life?”

– Fleur Watson

WORKAROUND: Women, Design, Action (2018), RMIT Design Hub, Curated by Naomi Stead, Kate Rhodes, Fleur Watson. Students in conversation with Mary Featherston as part of her episode, ‘Wonderful Schools?’ Image: Layla Cluer.

for open and active exchange with public audiences that, in turn, could potentially inform the design research process.

Examples of this type of curatorial approach include *Occupied* – an exhibition co-curated with David Neustein and Grace Mortlock of Other Architects in 2016. *Occupied* had a very clear proposition, asking: “If the future city is already around us, how will we occupy it?” It included 25 local and international practitioners who exhibited works – from the pragmatic to speculative – that focused on retrofitting, adapting, and repurposing existing structures and environments with a spirit that was dexterous, transformative and optimistic.

Another example is *WORKAROUND* in 2018, which was produced by myself, Kate Rhodes and Naomi Stead. Conceived as an online broadcast rather than a physical exhibition, we identified an emerging movement of women focused on activism in an expanded field of architecture and design. Each episode of *WORKAROUND* was filmed and broadcast live.

SR: We’re coming out of a legacy of ‘starchitects’ – architects who become famous or high profile for their buildings – which very much drove public perception of architects and architecture as being something elite. How can everyone understand the role that architecture has to play in society?

FW: It’s important that we communicate architectural ideas and share them publicly in a way that is expansive, meaningful, layered, and diverse. But we must start at the beginning.

For example, designer Mary Featherston, who we’re working with for Open House Melbourne’s 2021 program, is passionate about how design and creative practice is integral to early childhood education and the design of education itself. Mary advocates for an approach that moves beyond simply funding new school buildings to one that integrates a progressive and creative pedagogy alongside the design of adaptable learning environments, ensuring every child has access to quality and creative spaces in which to learn. She asks us to think about how we can design spaces to promote creative exchange and experiential ways of learning. A trajectory of this kind of thinking is also informing Mary’s recent project – the LIVEability project with Suzie Attiwill –

which is researching how and why we choose to live the way that we do in our cities and suburbs and the forces shaping the design of our homes and spaces. This project will be part of OHM with a workshop at Broadmeadows Town Hall.

It’s positive to see the emergence of a real commitment and interest in learning from First Nations people’s knowledge of living on this land for over 65,000 years. We have much to learn in terms of our relationship with the built and natural environment that can deeply inform how we educate a new generation of architects and designers. We are starting to see this addressed in a professional sense through things like the Australian Institute of Architects First Nations Advisory Working Group and Cultural Reference Panel. Indigenous architects such as Sarah Lynn Rees at Monash University and Beau de Belle at RMIT University are leading the way in ways of teaching young architects about designing on Country within a tertiary education context. Alison Page and Paul Memmott’s recent book *Building on Country* is significant. We need to provide clear pathways for Indigenous students to become registered architects in Australia so this is an Indigenous-led process as well as creating more opportunities for non-Indigenous architects and designers to learn about what it means to design on Country.

SR: Social and environmental impact, First Nations knowledges, cultural awareness of context, and thinking through collective futures should be central to any architectural process. You were recently appointed jointly as the Executive Director of Open House Melbourne and the Curator of the newly formed Centre for Architecture Victoria. Can you speak yet to what the Centre hopes to achieve?

FW: Without an institutional body behind it, the Centre for Architecture Victoria (CAV) has grown from a more community-led and grassroots perspective. It is an independent and not-for-profit voice for architecture and spatial practice to explore the diversity of ways that we can shape the new possible futures for our city, our suburbs, and our regional centres. I imagine it as a ‘shopfront for design ideas – both digital and virtual – a trusted guide for exploring issues that relate to our relationship with the built environment and how it shapes our experience of the world.

WORKAROUND: *Women, Design, Action* (2018), RMIT Design Hub, Curated by Naomi Stead, Kate Rhodes, Fleur Watson, Pia Ednie-Brown's 'The Jane Approach: Onomatopoeia-play-day'. Image: Tobias Titz.



The idea of a curator being a kind of traditional custodian of knowledge or voice of authority, is not the position that we are interested in. We're interested in pursuing a process that is more open, porous, and exploratory with our audience. There is a real agency in how we can approach the complex challenges around us by creating an environment which can allow an active, meaningful exchange, that doesn't get fixed in time.

How do we start to think about our built environment beyond a singular building or even several buildings? How do we think about all those things in-between ourselves and architecture – nature and our connection to it for example. How do we design our public life? Outside your front door is a 'public moment'. If we can think about our built environment as being public, regardless of whether it is a private house or a community building, then we can consider the responsibility we have to design it well.

In a way these ideas are not necessarily new. They've always been around, but there is a renewed sense of criticality and urgency to them now. The value of design to our public life is at the core of what CAV is about.

SR: This year's Open House Melbourne program has the theme of 'Reconnect'. Inherent in it is this idea that nothing is ever new, but we need to find a new way of connecting to what is existing – to the city, to nature, to each other. How do you imagine that we do that?

FW: Open House Melbourne has always had at its heart, the generous act of opening the 'behind the scenes' of buildings and experiencing different spaces. People feel welcomed to be a part of a discussion around architecture. Through that, we can start to address different aspects of our built environment. For example, how are we going to address the fact that our city is built on unceded Indigenous land? How are we going to respond to climate crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic with generosity, inclusion, and accessibility? How do we create a generous experience of the city for everybody?

Collectively, we have just experienced what our cities look like when empty and devoid of life. There is an opportunity now to gather through Open House Melbourne and understand how we might reshape the city. Our opening program *This is Public* will ask us all to think through multiple futures by bringing together several voices – from XYX Lab's

Nicole Kalms who is working on an app called 'YourGround' which maps personal safety in public space with a focus on the experiences of women and gender diverse people, to architects such as Beau de Belle, Christine Phillips and Jock Gilbert who will speak about designing on Country and Jefa Greenaway and Tristan Wong who have just curated the first Indigenous-led exhibition for Australia at the 17th Venice Architecture Biennale.

SR: What is your hope for Melbourne moving forwards?

FW: Across Australia our cities have been shaped primarily, and not necessarily for the better, by neoliberalist commercial interests. There is a real desire to understand how we might balance that better. Whether it's adopting economist Kate Raworth's economic theory of the Doughnut Economy, or perhaps the idea of the 20-minute city. For example, can adaptive reuse – looking for opportunities in empty spaces and repurposing their function – provide temporary architectural solutions that might not solve a problem long term but are able to adapt to meet urgent need? How might we slow the city down? How are we going to respond spatially to growing economies like the shared economy? How are gig workers using the city?

My hope is that our city can become a more generous and inclusive place for everyone. How can public life be more porous, adaptable, responsive, and accessible for everybody? Not only the inner-city, but also its connection to the outer suburbs and regional Victoria. This is our chance and it's urgent. We need to work together to reshape what we want our futures to be. ●

Sophie Rzepecky is the editor of Assemble Papers. From Aotearoa New Zealand, her focus is on social impact and infrastructure, alongside the changing roles of urbanism, design and architecture.

10 The Cost of Womenhood

Text by JANE GILMORE

I first wrote this piece in 2017. I had been writing a lot about the gender pay gap and how the official figure was not just underestimating the problem, it was actually misleading in how little it described the realities of women's economic lives.

I wanted to write a data story about how a lifetime of unpaid and underpaid work had (and would continue to) leave so many older women in real financial danger which can lead to housing insecurity and homelessness. From 2011 to 2016 older women – those aged over 55 – were the fastest growing group facing homelessness, increasing by 31% over that time. This trend has, and will continue to grow, given affordable housing shortage, aging population, and significant gap in wealth between men and women across their lifetimes.

There is no single piece of data that can tell that story. Rather, it is an accumulation of multiple entwined and disparate factors that move in and out of women's lives from their early school years right through to old age. I could have written a list of all those factors, cited all the robust, credible sources, their percentage value and the proportion of women they affect, but I doubt there's many people who would or could read 2000 words of statistics and feel moved by it.

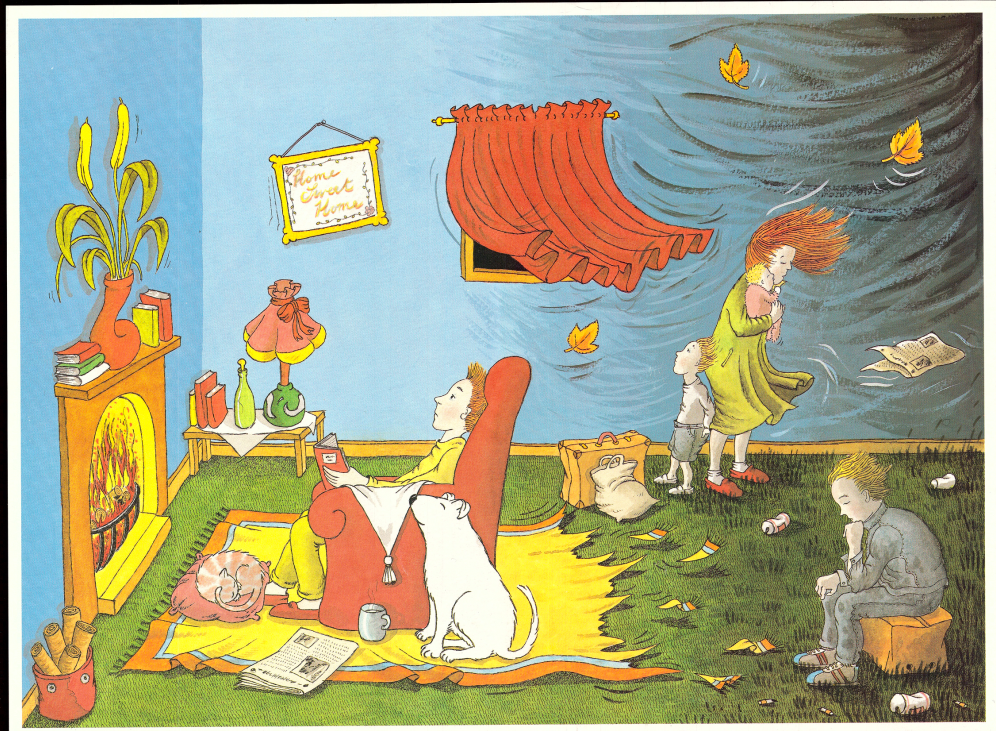
So, instead, I collected all the statistics and used the averages to write a story about how two ordinary, white middle class Australians – John and Mary – can start at the same level in their early 20's and retire into the extremes of poverty and wealth, solely because of gender. The story starts at their graduation in 2004 and continues to their retirement in 2048.

Obviously, we don't know what economic shocks will occur in the next 30 years, so all I can do to predict their future is use the confirmed data we have to date and project it into the years to come. At every change point in their lives, I have used robust, credible data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Reserve Bank. I've used pension, child support and superannuation calculators from credible government sources and listed them all at the end of the article.

I edited and updated the article in 2020, and I will update it again for the post-pandemic period. Unfortunately, I don't think we've hit post-pandemic yet. The data is still fluctuating too much, and we don't yet know what will happen to wages, jobs, housing, and savings once the world has finished adjusting to COVID-19. The one thing we do know, however, is that nearly one million people under the age of 35 drained their superannuation in 2020. Women in all age groups were more likely than men to withdraw their entire balance under the scheme, and women overall withdrew a greater proportion of their superannuation than men. The effect of this will be catastrophic in the decades to come, and so far, no one has a plan for how we will deal with this.

Note: There is no robust data on the pay gap for women of colour in Australia. Data from the UK and the US shows significant differences in pay between white women and women of colour, and it's almost certain we have the same issues here. We collect gender pay gap data because you can't fix a problem you can't measure and it's telling that we don't collect data on the ethnicity pay gap. Without that data, it's not possible to include race as a factor in this story – but it should be.

Mary Leunig, 1987-1989, poster for Victorian Trades Hall.
Image: Mary Leunig.



Shelter for the Homeless



ILLUSTRATION MARY LEUNIG

“I did this poster during my time as an artworker at Trades Hall from 1987 to 1989, working alongside art director Megan Evans and artworker Julie Montgarrett. My salary from Trades Hall was about \$200 a week, which paid the weekly rent in Carlton exactly. The United Nations had just recognised 1987 as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. The brief for this illustration was to think about how homeless people aren’t what people think – men in doorways that The Salvation Army takes care of. It could happen to anybody, women and children included – and through a whole lot of bad luck often.” – Mary Leunig

John and Mary were born in 1981. They met at university and both graduated in 2004 when they were 23 years old. They both found work soon after graduation, John's graduate accounting job paid \$36,000 per year and Mary's admin job paid \$32,000 per year.

At 28 they married and were both promoted. John's salary had increased to the average¹ for men in finance - \$80,000 per year. Mary continued her work in administration and her salary had only increased to \$35,000 per year.

They had been saving to buy a house and both sets of parents gave them \$15,000 each towards a deposit. Houses were too expensive, but they found a nice two-bedroom flat close to the city for \$350,000².

When they were 30, Mary got pregnant, and John got another promotion. His salary had increased to \$92,000. Mary's employer offered her 18 weeks paid maternity leave and a guarantee that she could come back to her job after 12 months.

When it was time for Mary to return to work, they decided they didn't want their baby in full time childcare. They calculated the cost of childcare and measured it only against Mary's salary, because John didn't want to reduce his working hours and risk losing another promotion. They decided that Mary would return to work for two days a week, which would earn \$15,000 per year and just cover the cost of childcare and her travel.

When they were 33, John got a new job and his salary jumped to \$96,000 per year. Mary was earning \$16,000 a year.

The next year they sold their apartment and bought a two-bedroom house in the suburbs for \$900,000³. Mary got pregnant again just after they moved. When the baby arrived, they calculated the cost of childcare for two children under five would be almost as much as she could earn working two days a week.

Also, John was spending a lot of time at work, and they were struggling with running a house and caring for two children. They agreed the best solution would be for Mary to stop working outside the home so she could take on all the domestic work, which would leave John able to concentrate on his career and increase the family income.

By the time the third baby was born, they were both 37. John was still earning the average salary for a man in the finance industry, which by that time was \$104,000 per year. Mary had no paid work and had made no superannuation contributions.

For the next five years Mary stayed home with the children. John continued to work full time. Assuming a conservative salary increase of 1.5% per year⁴, his salary by the time he reached 40 years of age would be \$108,000 per year.

Sadly, the year John and Mary turned 40, both Mary's parents died. They left her some money which Mary used to pay out just over half of their mortgage.

When they were 43 and all the kids were in school, Mary got a casual job as a receptionist in the local medical centre for 20 hours per week, with no paid holidays or sick leave. While her starting salary was \$19,000, as it had been ten

years before, John's salary had increased to \$113,000 per year.

By this time, John and Mary had started drifting apart. They were fighting a lot and John was often absent. Mary thought he might be having an affair. She was lonely and felt that he didn't notice how much work she did to care for him and their children. John felt that she had no understanding or appreciation for how hard he worked for the family.

John and Mary separated when they were 46. John's salary was \$118,000 by then. Mary was still working 20 hours per week at the medical centre, her salary was \$20,000.

After selling their house for \$1.2 million and sorting out their remaining \$550,000 mortgage, they both had \$325,000. John's superannuation balance at the time was just over \$280,000, while Mary's was \$67,000. As part of the settlement, she received \$75,000 of John's super balance. Her lawyer advised her that she could go to court and argue for a larger portion from the sale of the house, because her inheritance had been used to pay down the mortgage. John disputed the claim, because he had contributed a higher amount to the mortgage repayments. Mary couldn't face the emotional or financial cost of a drawn-out family court dispute, so she agreed to John's terms⁵.

The children stayed with John one weeknight and every second weekend but stayed with Mary the rest of the time. John paid Mary \$20,000 per year in child support for all three children.

Mary took on more hours at the medical centre, which increased her salary to \$25,000, but she still had no paid leave.

John used his share of the money from the sale of the house and bought another home for \$1.3 million. Mary couldn't get a mortgage because she only had casual work and she couldn't afford repayments on a house big enough for her and three children. She put the money in the bank. She knew she should probably invest it somewhere, but she wasn't sure where and she didn't want to have it locked away because she often had to draw on it to pay rent⁶.

At 52, John's parents died. He used his inheritance to pay out his mortgage and then started adding \$25,000 per year to his superannuation balance, which he was able to do because his salary had gone up to \$130,000, he had no mortgage or rent to pay and his two oldest children were over 18, so was only paying child support for the youngest child.

Mary was still working at the medical centre. Her salary had increased to \$27,000 but her rent had gone up and she had to move house twice. Her income was not enough to cover all her living expenses, so she was still spending the money she got for the house after the divorce. The balance had dropped to \$250,000.

Two years later, Mary lost her job when the medical centre was sold. Her two youngest children were still living with her, so she needed to rent a two-bedroom house. She was eligible for unemployment benefits but needed to keep drawing on the remaining money from the sale of the house to cover her living costs.

“After a lifetime of hard work, Mary had almost nothing left from the sale of the house and her superannuation balance was \$425,000, which, with top up from the old age pension, paid her around \$42,000 per year.”

Mary never got another permanent job. Despite having a degree, she had spent too long out of the workforce and her job at the medical centre didn't offer opportunities to increase her skills or get promoted. She got a few casual jobs through a temp agency, but most employers wanted younger workers for clerical jobs, and that was the only work she knew how to do. She got around \$350 a week from Centrelink, and John was still paying \$280 per week in child support for the youngest child.

When they were 55, John was earning \$135,000 per year. Mary still didn't have a job and John no longer needed to pay child support because all three children were over 18. The youngest child was still living with her. She moved to a two-bedroom flat and continued to use the money left in the bank to cover the difference between Centrelink payments and living costs.

After a lifetime of hard work, John retired at 67. His superannuation balance was \$1.376 million. He owned his home and received around \$65,000 per year from his super. He also had shares and other investments he picked up over the last ten years. He will be financially secure for the rest of his life.

After a lifetime of hard work, Mary had almost nothing left from the sale of the house and her superannuation balance was \$425,000, which, with top up from the old age pension, paid her around \$42,000 per year. She was renting a one-bedroom flat for \$400 per week, which left her \$350 a week to cover all her living expenses, including food, bills, clothes, health care, transport, insurance, internet, and entertainment. She was in housing stress at retirement and has no prospect of ever being able to change her financial circumstances. She will live in poverty for the rest of her life. ●

Addendum: If John and Mary were born in 1990, they would have been 30 years old when the pandemic hit in 2020. If Mary had withdrawn the full \$20,000 from her superannuation then, as she would have been allowed to do, and assuming nothing else about her life changed, her balance at retirement would be about \$303,000. This would drop her income by just over \$100 per week less than she would have had if she had not taken that money from her superannuation when she was 30. This is the future of all the women who took money from their super in 2020 - and that's without factoring in the economic shocks yet to come.

Jane Gilmore is a freelance journalist and author. Her book *FixedIt: Violence and the Representation of Women in the Media* was published by Penguin Random House in August 2019.

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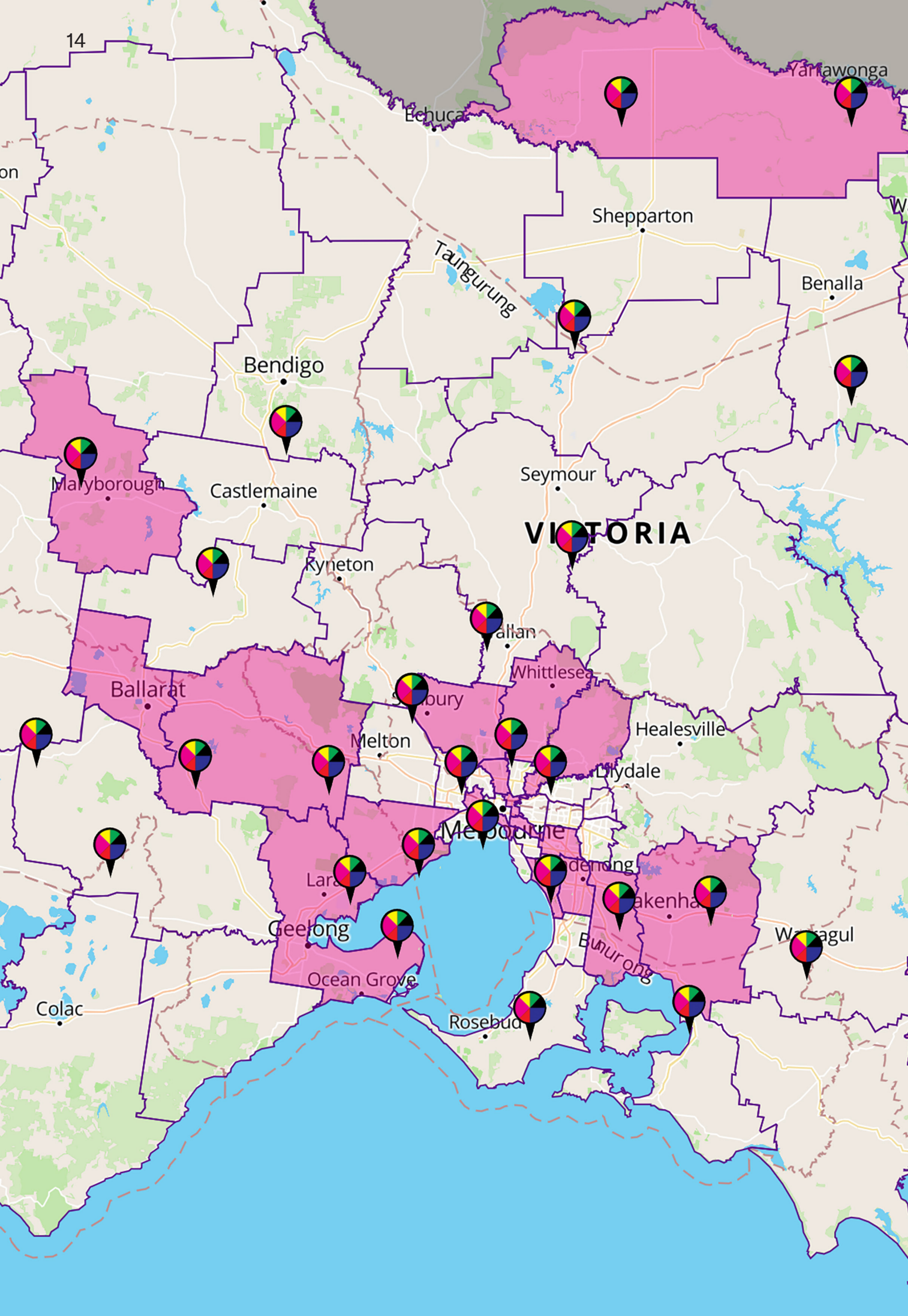
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Building Safer Ground

XYX Lab's NICOLE KALMS
on safety in public spaces

Text by SOPHIE RZEPECKY

For many of us, moving through streets, during the day or at night, is a complex exercise. Instinctively, we feel out the presence of public spaces which feel unsafe – whether it be that dark patch of the street, the empty corners of a park, stepping onto an almost empty tram carriage or strolling down by the river at dusk. Our urban environment is complex, and our fears of gender-based violence not unfounded. We carry the stories told through media of women and gender diverse people killed and harmed by gender-based violence, while we consider the many more untold ones.

The urgent question is – how do we make public spaces safer and more accessible in real-time for our communities, and for our future generations?

A research group at Melbourne's Monash University is busy tackling the complexity of building gender sensitive places. XYX Lab, founded by design researcher Dr Nicole Kalms and co-directed by designer Dr Gene Bawden, works at the intersection of urban space, design, gender and advocacy through projects that tackle 'real world' problems. Kalms started the lab in 2016. "We noticed there was a lot of work and conversation around violence against women in domestic spaces, but there was a real gap in thinking about public space." She mentions, "police, sociologists and criminologists were considering public space, but not people with urbanist training. We felt there was room for architectural thinking to insert itself into the dialogue."

Kalms felt the work that was being done at the time was entrenched in second wave feminist ideas and theory of the 90's – centred around the lives and experiences of white women. "Just because I identify as a woman and an architect, doesn't mean I can speak for all women. Until we ask women and gender diverse people about their experience, we can't know," says Kalms. Lawyer and researcher Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term 'intersectionality' 30 years ago, as a way to describe how race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics intersect with each other and overlap. An intersectional approach to research is at the heart of XYX Lab's work.

The lab's cohort is diverse and has grown significantly since it started, with different expertise brought in by architect Timothy Moore, who has a queer focus, alongside co-founder Gene Bawden. Dr Brian Martin, Associate Dean, Indigenously at Monash University's Art, Design & Architecture Faculty, is an important adviser. XYX Lab's PhD students are a diverse

bunch, with wide reaching interests in relation to gender sensitivity in our cities, homes, and workplaces. "It's always about collaboration," says Kalms. "We acknowledge we have a lot to learn. We can't be experts in all fields, but that shouldn't hold us back from doing the work."

XYX Lab's current project YourGround reflects this intersectional approach. Made in collaboration with digital consultancy *CrowdSpot*, the public online mapping project is collecting firsthand experiences of women and gender diverse folk in public space. The project is backed by 20 councils across Victoria, who will use the collected information to inform their planning policies. Type in a location to the map, drop a pin, and be led through a series of questions and prompts for the safety of that spot and an opportunity to write your experience. The interface also has demographic prompts; what you identify as in terms of gender or ethnicity, age range, and employment, for example. All data is anonymous and goes through stringent ethical checks by Monash University.

It is the fourth project by XYX Lab which crowdsources information. "We realise there is a level of exhaustion that women and gender diverse people face at being asked to time and time again reiterate their negative experiences," mentions Kalms. So, what can gathering this data really do to make public spaces safer for us?

For Kalms, history has taught us that State and Federal Government will not create safer spaces for women and gender diverse people without evidence. "By crowdsourcing information, communities have the chance to speak to people who work with the numbers, to show them the hotspots where they feel unsafe. This data – which is hard to argue with – provides crucial leverage. The next step is to then bring these communities and councils together to design solutions." YourGround has been well supported by councils across Victoria as a result of the Gender Equality Act 2020, which passed last year, and came into effect in March. The act aims to improve workplace gender equality across all of Victoria's public sector, universities and local councils, while identifying and eliminating systematic causes of gender inequality in policy, programs and services in workplaces and communities. XYX Lab are also contributing to the roll out of the act by developing an inclusive city training module for professional urban planners to be able to start to develop their skills and understanding of gender sensitivity – crucial education for planners who make decisions for us all.

“The way the city is built also affects the way that women and gender diverse people see themselves in the world. We are constantly getting the message that the city doesn’t belong to us, and we don’t belong in its spaces; we don’t feel we have the right to occupy them.”

Melbourne’s public spaces didn’t spring from nothing. British surveyor Robert Hoddle laid out the city as a grid at the direction of New South Wales Governor Richard Bourke – when so-called Melbourne was an unauthorised settlement – in 1837. The remnant of that planning is still clear today in Melbourne’s central business district, particularly in the laneways which were created to give access to houses. In many ways we are still living with the unintended effect of this planning, plus years of white male dominated strategic planning with little attention to community need. “The disparity within gender equality plays out in the built environment in particular ways – it might mean that there are places in the built environment that aren’t designed for women, as pragmatic as seats and hand railing’s,” says Kalms. “The way the city is built also affects the way that women and gender diverse people see themselves in the world. We are constantly getting the message that the city doesn’t belong to us, and we don’t belong in its spaces; we don’t feel we have the right to occupy them. Through the work we do, we have observed there is a hyper vigilance for how women and gender diverse people move through public spaces.” Behaviour, societal shifts, and the spatial makeup of the city go hand-in-hand in perpetuating unsafe situations. While YourGround does record behaviour alongside spatial conditions, XYX Lab focus on reporting the spatial aspects they feel they can tangibly change.

Building, or rebuilding, our streets is not the only solution for safer cities. But if not building, what can architectural thinking do? “Architecture is about interrogating social issues”, says Kalms. “Forget the object, focus on the social problems. We, as architects, have skills for translation and transformation. Building architecture can’t solve everything.” Design and architecture are not only about designing for an outcome, it can be as much about designing a process or way of thinking.

While the way our streets, suburbs and neighbourhoods have been planned over time may perpetuate real fear for our safety, this fear is also a consequence of the larger systematic gender inequality that affects us daily. While 80 percent of Australian men report feeling safe walking alone at night, a 2019 Community Council for Australia report notes that only 50 percent of women say the same. As Kalms puts it, “We monitor what we do and where we go. We manage the ways that we move through space. We tell people where

we are going; we don’t go out at all. We spend our income on cabs; we buy a car because we don’t want to feel unsafe all the time. These are systematic challenges to just existing in the world.” The hyper vigilance we learn to feel safe in our inner cities is also perpetuated by changing situations. Take COVID-19 restrictions: “Now we are in winter, it is dark by 5:30pm. If you don’t want to go out at night, then your opportunity for exercise is reduced. Then perhaps you use your income to pay for exercise inside, but not if we are in lockdown”, says Kalms. This was one of the reasons why YourGround was launched, “if we can track data about how barriers to public space affect women and gender diverse people’s health and wellbeing, we can build a case for why spatial typologies should change.”

It’s frustrating that change is slow in the face of increasing gender-based violence in our public spaces. It feels like permanent change is only made when there is a violent death or sexual assault in our community. But designing the process and policy for how change can be enacted is the first stage to making long lasting updates. “There must be a kind of permanency to the way we deal with gendered experiences in cities, because it shows everybody that it is significant,” says Kalms. “It’s important. It’s permanent. It’s not just passing us by.” While YourGround takes a long view to making cities more equitable and accessible for all, it is also challenging the status quo and the fundamental processes behind urban planning.

During this year’s Open House Melbourne program, Kalms and the XYX Lab team will present WalkYourGround – roving walking tours across Victoria, that, as Kalm’s put it, “will examine the hidden or silenced stories that need to be incorporated into formal planning and urban design processes.” ●

Sophie Rzepecky is the editor of Assemble Papers. From Aotearoa New Zealand, her focus is on social impact and infrastructure, alongside the changing roles of urbanism, design and architecture.

I often run faster through here or try to slow down before I get there if there runner not too far behind me.

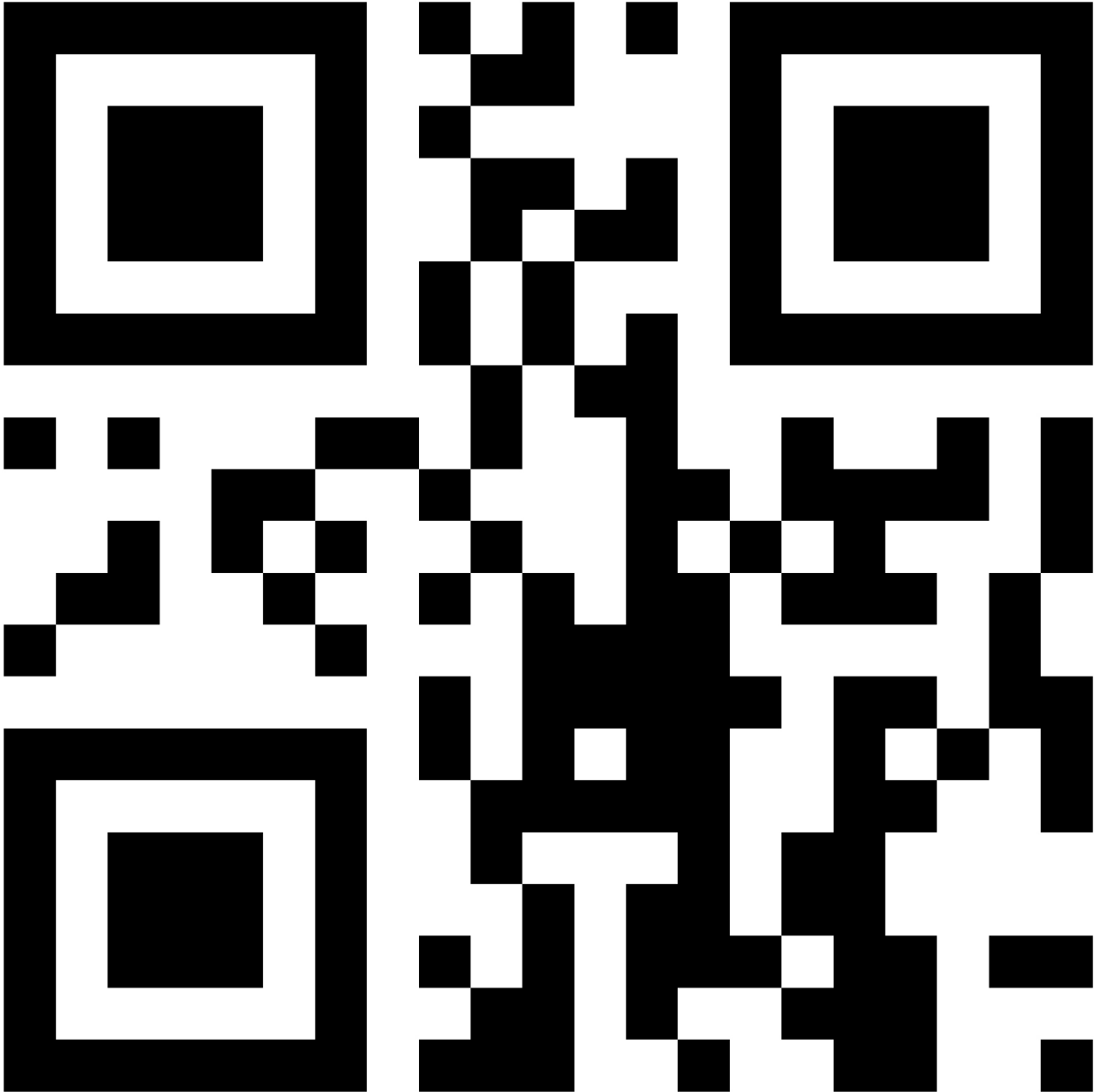
AGE 25-29, FEMALE

The bike path feels safe in the daytime but at night, there's very minimal lighting.

AGE 30-34, NON-BINARY

It's my favourite walk, but limit to once a week and very very aware. Also take my phone at all times.

AGE 55-59, FEMALE



Gig Workers & Home Consumers

The gig economy is here to stay.
Convenience is comfort for many,
but how are the people working for that
convenience faring?

KEELIA FITZPATRICK examines a worsening divide,
and the changes needed to establish a fairer system



“It seems very much as if these gig economy companies begin their operations in whichever manner will maximise their profits, whether their processes are legal and meet community standards or not, and they work out their defenses on the fly later on. Comparisons are often drawn between today’s gig workers and the wharfies of yesteryear, who would line up on the docks hat in hand day-by-day for shifts. Perhaps this comparison is more instructive than it looks, as it actually provides a sort of road map for these workers, and an end-goal – within a relatively short period of time dockworkers went on to become some of the best paid and most secure members of the working class in this country through organising, by formalising their solidarity and striking when necessary. Admittedly dockworkers occupy a vital choke point of the economy, the ports – but then again, there’s nothing quite as essential as food, so delivery riders may yet come to enjoy a seat at the table.” – Sam Wallman

Now more than ever, our lives are being delivered at all hours, mostly by gig workers and facilitated by the digital platforms built and run by multi-national corporations. Exasperated by the COVID-19 pandemic, a clear duality has emerged, whereby grossly unprotected gig workers bring takeaway food and shopping parcels to those reorienting around a safe and convenient home and work space. We must do more than simply notice the teal Deliveroo riders, the piles of boxes, and the delivery vans clogging our city streets. We must think about how technology's efficiencies and conveniences can be enjoyed without the deterioration of basic employment rights.

CHANGES TO CONSUMPTION

As many of us moved inside to the safety of our homes during the pandemic, we changed what and how we consumed. Unsurprisingly, 2020 saw huge growth for some products; household cleaners, soap, vitamins and coffee, and a decline in others; cosmetics and sun care. Food delivery and e-commerce quickly became essential habits of the imposed lockdowns and restrictions. Although e-commerce has been growing for years, the pandemic is expected to accelerate its growth to levels that would have otherwise taken years to reach. For example, Uber Eats, which controls around 29 percent of the global food delivery market saw a 152 percent increase in revenue in 2020. Meanwhile, *The New Yorker* reports that in the year leading up to April 2021 alone, Amazon US grew its workforce by about 400,000 employees. The company's total direct workforce now exceeds 800,000, not including the hundreds of thousands of delivery drivers who, like gig workers, are employed as contractors. In Australia, Amazon has been building 'fulfilment centres' across the country since 2017 when it opened its first facility in Dandenong South. There are currently four warehouses operating nationally, and this number continues to grow with the construction of a new 'robotics fulfilment centre' in Sydney's west, its largest warehouse in the Southern Hemisphere, and a

second Melbourne site in Ravenhall. Australia Post reports that online sales now account for over 16 percent of total retail spend, a sharp acceleration which brings Australia into line with pre-pandemic habits in the UK and US.

THE GIG ECONOMY

As brick and mortar retail and hospitality jobs disappeared overnight, many turned to gig jobs to supplement lost incomes and ensure survival. Gig work is commonly understood to mean the exchange of labour for money between individuals and companies via digital platforms which match the provider with the customer. Workers are paid for the individual 'gigs' they perform rather than a regular wage, and are often given 'rankings' by customers which can impact how many gigs they are allocated. Despite its popularity amongst consumers, who quickly embraced ride sharing and delivery apps, the gig economy remains controversial amongst governments and labor rights advocates. This is because it bypasses the standard employer-employee relationship that forms the basis of most labour law and social protection systems. Instead, gig workers are classified as 'independent contractors', not employees, and are consequently not covered by employment laws and regulations. This means they're not entitled to the minimum wage, dismissal protections and other employment rights, occupational health and safety protections and workers compensation schemes. Gig work sidesteps the safety net that such laws are designed to establish, particularly for vulnerable and low-wage workers. Categorising workers as contractors is fundamental to gig companies' business models. By denying workers these rights, companies reduce their labour costs and maximise their profits.

In negotiating our congested city roads, workers on bikes and motorcycles are thrown into dangerous situations on a daily basis. Furthermore, the importance of quick delivery times to a gig workers's income and rating can pressure riders and drivers to speed and take on other unsafe behaviours, including using smartphones to navigate. These occupational

safety risks are inherent to the business model and have had tragic consequences; five food delivery riders in Sydney and Melbourne died on the job between late September and November 2020 alone.

The approach of gig companies to labour law reflects Big Tech's 'move fast and break things' culture. Unsurprisingly, when the things being broken are long-standing social safety nets, gig work has become a key labour rights battleground.

WHERE TO NEXT?

It is now hard to imagine a time when we didn't get our weekly groceries brought to our front door, or when Amazon purchases arrive within two days. However, our laws must adapt to consumer choices in a way that protects vulnerable workers. So how can we fix the very real and consequential disruption that the gig economy has created?

In many ways, the gig economy horse has bolted and addressing its problems doesn't mean turning back time. Some solutions reimagine the gig companies' business model entirely. Worker-led delivery collectives are popping up across Europe. The ventures tend to be small and governed democratically, using consensus decision-making to manage operations. Riders take a greater share of earnings and help to manage operations. Restaurants are also better served under co-operative models, which usually charge 10-20 percent of the total order as compared to 30-36 percent taken by big delivery companies. Similarly, ethical food delivery models backed by trade unions are being tested as alternatives to gig work. In Sydney, Menulog is trialling the reclassification of all workers as employees instead of contractors. Greater consumer awareness of these alternate models could help the shift to more ethical norms in the delivery sector. However, such smaller models face challenges in overcoming large gig companies' brand recognition and ability to win customers by flooding the market with promotions like free rides or deliveries.

The most universal ideas for reform usually rely on regulatory intervention to ensure

that our laws regulating the gig economy are fit for purpose. A recent Victorian State Government inquiry recommended, amongst other reforms, clarifying and codifying the work status of gig work and application of entitlements, protections and obligations for both workers and businesses. These changes require intervention by the Federal Government, which oversees Australia's national workplace system.

The voices of gig workers must be central in all reform efforts. It is important to note that some gig workers prefer the flexibility and autonomy of self-employment and feel they can earn more money being paid per gig than if they were direct employees. Others are migrants on temporary visas and without family or social support will take any job they can get. Reform must address these diverse needs and preferences. This might involve mandating that gig companies offer workers the choice to be hired as a direct employee, and that those who continue to be engaged as contractors must be proven to be genuinely 'self-employed' small business workers.

Alan, a rider who has worked for multiple delivery companies in London and Seville, says that "If you want to get workers on board, any reforms will likely need to be presented with evidence of an unambiguous improvement in working conditions, most of all in pay and not losing any flexibility of access to the work."

Our reliance on expanded digital infrastructures and platforms has permanently changed the way we live and work. But the gig economy, which so many of us relied upon to get through the last year, cannot be resumed as normal. In our pandemic recovery, we can embrace its benefits without turning a blind eye to the impact it is having on workers's lives. ●

Keelia Fitzpatrick is a labour lawyer and researcher based in London. She was the inaugural Director of the Young Workers Centre in Melbourne.

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Sinking in

SINK promotional image. Image: courtesy of the artist.

SIMONA CASTRICUM on the work of
queering architecture through sound

Text by ANNETTE LIN

Still from music video *Supertouch* Ft m8riarchy by Simona Castricum.
Image: Gianna Mazzeo.



In 2018, during the exhibition series *WORKAROUND* at the RMIT Design Hub, musician and architecture academic Simona Castricum took matters of gender into her own hands. Creating her own bathroom sign pictograms, she replaced the male and female bathroom signs – with a colleague's help – with her own signs, that focused on whether or not the bathroom held toilets or urinals. Though the guerilla-style gesture was small, as she later wrote in an opinion piece for *The Guardian*, it was “the opportunity to make an existing space as non-binary as I could: there would be no space or building function that forced a person to feel as if their gender identity was contested against the normative ideas of male and female.”

It's a goal that Castricum has maintained throughout her parallel careers, as an architect and graphic designer working at firms including ARM Architecture and the Jewish Museum of Australia, and as a fundamental part of Melbourne's electro scene supporting international acts like DJ Hell and Terre Thaemlitz. In Castricum's hands, music and architecture seem less like two separate fields, and more like two sides of the same coin. Her latest album, *Panic/Desire*, released in June 2020, is the soundtrack to her PhD researching gender nonconforming experiences of architectural space at The University of Melbourne, and *SINK*, her upcoming performance with video artist Carla Zimbler at Melbourne's Arts House, uses percussion to destabilise popular conceptions of urban space. For someone who practices architecture like Castricum, who is trying to rewrite the ways in which we move and experience urban environments, sound becomes a way to access a wider audience.

“[Making music] is not a very conventional way to articulate ideas of architecture, but historically it's worked really well. Look at [Greek composer] Vangelis in *Blade Runner*, or Wendy Carlos in *Tron*, and just how well those soundtracks conveyed those worlds,” she says.

“To me, urban architecture has been a place where I've almost had to sort of imagine an alternative reality, because how it exists in real life is a bit dystopic for me,” she says. “Trans and gender diverse people have to live with the consequences of design decisions made by cisgender people who don't necessarily understand that [experience]. So how do we cut through that?” Not through an 80,000-word PhD thesis, is her answer.

On stage, Castricum likes to perform in body-hugging latex, accompanied by flashing fluorescent lighting reminiscent

“To me, urban architecture has been a place where I've almost had to sort of imagine an alternative reality, because how it exists in real life is a bit dystopic for me.”

of Electronic Dance Music (EDM) raves. She describes the music she produces – expansive, epic and pulsating with throbbing, synthesised 80's beats – as “stadium techno”: techno designed to stake a claim to the stadium arena, a hark back to her childhood in the late 70's and early 80's. “I'm from the generation when electronic musicians didn't belong in the realm of the stadium unless they were burning disco records,” she says. “That was only for rock bands, you know?”

For Castricum, music has always been a gateway to exploring life outside the confines of binary norms. As a child watching *Countdown* on ABC, the likes of Sylvester, Boy George, The Human League, Laurie Anderson and Annie Lenox dominated the TV screen on Sundays. School was “a very masculine environment where it was all about, you know, guitars, rock 'n' roll and metal,” she says, where she was bullied for playing New Order's *'Fine Time'* on the bus. But she was fascinated by these artists redefining gender norms on their own terms, and saw something of her reflection in these musician's worlds. A brief flirtation with the drums in high school confirmed her natural affinity for rhythm, but it wasn't until she started studying architecture, first at Deakin University and then RMIT, that she had the chance to create music. She started by recording sounds and collecting samples with keyboards and guitars. Eventually, she released two albums as the artist Fluorescent, and three more as Simona, including *Panic/Desire* featuring fellow Melbourne artists m8riarchy and Light Transmissions, released in June last year.



When Program is the Enemy of Function.
Image: Simona Casticum.

Panic/Desire is the culmination of much of her work in both architecture and music. As an accompaniment to her research into how gender nonconforming people experience the city, the 10 tracks explore “how I move and navigate through the city in the night; how I find a place of belonging – somewhere between my fears and desires,” as she writes on Bandcamp. Drawing from her experiences in the city, her music creates sonic landscapes that convey to the listener the threats trans and gender nonconforming people face in the urban environment.

“Over time, in my emergence throughout music and architecture as a queer and trans person, I’ve had to formulate tactics of survival and music has been one of those. Music not only helps me imagine a reality, it also helps me describe ideas of the city, and helps me to process emotions. So, music and performance become this wonderful way to understand, to process trauma, and to create an empathetic space of shared catharsis with an audience,” she says.

Her latest work, *SINK*, with video artist Carla Zimble, brought a glimmer of that experience to Melbourne earlier this month at Arts House. The two artists have performed together before, most notably at Golden Plains Festival 2020 and Live at the Bowl in March 2021, but there, Zimble followed Casticum’s lead to create visuals for her sets featuring tracks from *Panic/Desire* and previous albums.

SINK, on the other hand, is a brand new composition and collaboration they’ve been working on together since January, conceived of to challenge urban spaces that, more often than not, are cis-normative and can be hostile to trans and gender nonconforming individuals. It’s an act of queering a space, defined by Montreal-based architect Éloïse Choquette as “a reaction to the status quo, to society’s normative standards – a chapter of the queer movement targeted at architecture specifically,” as opposed to a “queer” space, “a space occupied by queer and marginalised people” – as Choquette acknowledges there may be a lot of overlap between the two. With Casticum working sonically and Zimble working visually, *SINK* aims to “explode the hostility off the city, of places, and reference queer space – places of belonging and permanence, of safety,” according to Casticum. Collaborating with architecture graduate Cody McConnell, Zimble manipulated a 3D model of a fictional city projected onto a suspended orbiting structure over Casticum, who played a full suite of drums and percussion

“If binary thinking of gender uses x and y, well perhaps I’m interested in z – the z axis might be queering and transiting the urban space. It’s a non-compliance.”

below. Together, their actions combined to “sink” through the hostile normative environment built around the gender binary, a metaphor for how queer and trans space is so often produced. As Casticum puts it, “If binary thinking of gender uses x and y, well perhaps I’m interested in z – the z axis might be queering and transiting the urban space. It’s a non-compliance.”

Consider the bathroom again, the site of Casticum’s intervention at *WORKAROUND* and “perhaps the most important private place in the house, [and] also unquestionably the most badly designed,” as Professor Alexander Kira describes in his book *The Bathroom*. Thrust into the spotlight over a series of “bathroom bills” in 2016 as several US states passed laws requiring people to use bathrooms according to their gender assigned at birth, the bathroom has become a frontline in recent fights for trans-inclusive spaces. In Australia, in theory, people are welcome to use the bathroom of their choice, since several state and territory anti-discrimination laws provide protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. But the law is not explicitly welcoming either: no Commonwealth law exists, and if people are prevented from using their preferred bathroom, there’s not much they can do about it. In March this year, Casticum herself was ordered out of the women’s bathrooms at a Melbourne venue, despite having written the live music venue inclusion guidelines for Music Victoria.



Simona Castricum performing *Panic/Desire* live at The Capitol during Melbourne Music Week in February, 2021. Image: Michael Woods.

Castricum has been trying to engage with the Office of the Victorian Government Architect to challenge the Building Code of Australia (BCA) to provide accessible spaces for trans and gender nonconforming people. As part of the National Construction Code (NCC), the current BCA specifies the number of washbasins, toilets and urinals a building should have according to the predicted gender split of people using the building. Organisations including LGBTQI+ advocacy group ACON, funded by the NSW Ministry of Health, want companies to label these as all-gender facilities. Unfortunately, the process has been slow, not least because as soon as the word “accessible” gets mentioned, measures to improve spaces for trans and gender nonconforming people become slotted in with people with accessibility issues, creating both a false dichotomy and scarcity in an industry that already has little interest in changing.

But Castricum doesn’t want bathrooms to dictate the conversation. “Trans and gender diverse people carry archives of trauma, and archives of delight as well,” she says. “The bathroom is a space of anxiety in many sites – at the swimming pool, in airports or hospitals – and we need to have those conversations, but the bathroom [alone] is a conversation forced upon us.” The bathroom is not the only site of conflict, and she doesn’t want “queer architecture” to be reduced to that.

“If I’m gonna be at the table for the next 20 years, asking for a better bathroom experience – which is a sad indictment on the BCA – whose interests are being prioritised? The interests of cis-people. That’s how cissexism and transphobia are enabled,” she points out.

Instead, she wants the conversation to focus on the possibilities offered by architecture: sites of joy, freedom, protection, belonging and safety. These offer “social infrastructure”; sociologist Eric Klinenberg’s term for public use spaces that can and should reduce inequality and build connection, and that exist “outside the bounds of a society built to actively work against them,” as writer Eduardo Rios Pulgar puts it in *i-D magazine*. Artist spaces have traditionally been places of organising, she points out, and can serve as libraries, community centres and more. Castricum wants queer experiences of all kinds of spaces, including transport, healthcare and recreation, to be considered. She gives queer gyms as an example of how this could work. “I don’t think that queer and trans people have a lot of access to buildings and spaces we can take over,” she says.

Lockdown served to highlight the importance of third places as sites of community and identity: “COVID-19 really highlighted how our entertainment spaces are a huge lifeblood to the queer community,” she says. “The Melbourne lockdown was frightening in no uncertain terms. And I think that it damaged trans people in its own very specific way, because we do rely on connection and community, and we’re not connected to, you know, family in the traditional heteronormative sense of a word.”

In the meantime, she’s excited to be back in entertainment spaces, and for *SINK*. “You know, I think the people that have come along to some of my shows, have understood something quite profound about my experience – because I can only speak from my lived experience.”

Unlike architecture, “music reaches an academic audience, a professional context, and most importantly it reaches a queer and gender diverse audience, and they can get their own reading of it,” she says. “That’s the beauty of producing art that speaks to the effective condition of humanity.”

Annette Lin is a freelance journalist writing about design, culture and contemporary art through the lens of foreign policy and social movements. She holds a master’s degree in journalism from Columbia University.



Community In Process

The work in cultivating
community and belonging

If 2020 taught us anything, it is that strong, local social connections are vital when communities are faced with life-changing disruptions. Even in the absence of bushfires and global pandemics, or the unknown shock events that are yet to come, local-level social cohesion is important to maintaining thriving, safe and healthy communities. In established places, relationships and networks grow and deepen over time. But what about in new developments? We generally assume that some models of development can facilitate a more cohesive social environment than others. Community-led projects are often considered the gold standard in making places for people, simply because they involve the people in the place-making. Such developments are far from mainstream in Australia, so what about developer-led models of residential development? Can they achieve the same outcomes?

Text by ALISON WHITTEN

KNITTING A STRONG SOCIAL FABRIC

Social cohesion and social capital have increasingly been understood as foundational to personal wellbeing and a stable, functional society. Both terms are often defined differently, and the two are sometimes used interchangeably. What is central to these concepts, however, is a recognition of the value of interpersonal connections and social relationships, and the networks generated from them. These personal connections benefit individuals, who can rely on one another for mutual support, and cohorts, who can leverage strength in numbers to motivate societal change.

Volunteer organisations, religious institutions and sporting cultures – among other forms of civic engagement – provide platforms for building a strong social fabric. Through his book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, American sociologist Robert Putnam piqued public interest in this idea by exploring links between disengagement in politics and a decline in public participation in certain types of civil society organisations. Some trends influencing this change, including women's increased participation in the workforce, reflect positive cultural changes. Other trends that have re-oriented how we spend our time are less encouraging; perhaps most obviously, the search for affordable housing has forced many households into patterns of long car-based commutes, leaving little time for civic engagement. Some arguments suggest that virtual networks and social media provide new, more flexible platforms for 'building community.' But as stand-alone mechanisms for inter-personal relationships, these forums can have a darker side, devolving into echo chambers and allowing participants to hide behind virtual identities. And, as COVID-19 reminds us, all the technology in the world isn't the same as face-to-face interaction.

These are important debates in good times, and a matter of life and death in bad. Time and again, we see the power of social networks in disaster preparedness and response. In New Orleans, communities with greater cohesion returned and rebuilt more quickly and effectively after Hurricane Katrina. In Chicago, two similarly low socioeconomic neighbourhoods with distinctly different levels of engagement from civic institutions saw vastly different death tolls from a historic heat wave. And in Australia, community action is formally recognised as key to bushfire management. These aren't one-off examples, either: years of studying outcomes from disasters have led researchers such as Daniel Aldrich and Eric Klinenberg to conclude that community trust and networks are more critical to our resilience than formal emergency responses.

Again, the pandemic demonstrates this every day: how many of us have relied on neighbours to pick up groceries while we await COVID-19 test results? How many stories have we heard of neighbourly bonds forming and strengthening over the fence?

COMMUNITY IN PLACE

This is why place matters. Lockdown has shown us the importance of neighbourhoods as places for building compassion. As Hugh Mackay noted in his Australia Day speech in 2019: "Ultimately, the health of any society (especially its mental health) depends upon the health of its local neighbourhoods – the streets, apartment blocks, suburbs, towns where we actually live; the places where we need to feel as if we belong; the places where we have to learn how to get

along with people we didn't choose to live amongst...the places where feelings of loneliness and social isolation are most likely to overwhelm us; the places where homelessness begins."

We've also experienced practical gaps in what spatially dispersed or virtual networks can do. In North Melbourne, the *Refuge* program at Arts House, which brings together artists, emergency services and community groups to simulate a different emergency each year, literally practiced for a pandemic two years ago. Not surprisingly, locals sprang into action when lockdown restrictions hit.

Easy enough in established places like North Melbourne, you may say, where residents, retail and community amenities have existed for decades. Social scientist and urban researcher Talja Blokland's idea of community as a 'performance' – including organically shaping rhythms and dances with those who are part of our local routines – is easier to imagine when family-owned shops and the pub on the corner have been around for years. But what about all of the new residences being built in Melbourne, racing to keep up with a fast-growing population? Blokland also notes that more transient groups, or recent arrivals in a place, often quickly seek a sense of belonging and establishment. We want connection, we know it's good for us, and we look for it in the places where we live.

LEADING WITH COMMUNITY

It's natural, then, to believe that some approaches to new development can facilitate stronger social cohesion and community resilience outcomes than others. This was the hypothesis underpinning Resilient Melbourne's *Resilient Communities in Residential and Mixed-use Developments* program, which was designed to respond to the question: How do we create and sustain buildings, infrastructure and neighbourhoods that build resilience by genuinely reflecting the needs, values and aspirations of the communities using or occupying these spaces? The program explored this question through a series of development site partnerships and collaborations with policymakers, practitioners and researchers. Over the long term, the aim is to understand whether participatory development models contribute to stronger built-form outcomes and greater community connection as a result of the planning and development process itself.

Just as there is a broad range of financial models for delivering housing, so too is there a spectrum of participation. An assumption has been surfacing that more community-led, deliberative models are inherently 'good', and that they automatically generate vibrant, sustainable, cohesive and resilient places. We don't actually have firm evidence to prove this, at least not yet in an Australian context. Longitudinal research is underway, now in partnership with the City of Melbourne, to understand health and wellbeing outcomes at two Resilient Communities sites, Urban Coup's Near and Tall (a co-housing apartment building) and Assemble's 393 Macaulay Rd. in Kensington, as well as Nightingale Village. It will take time, however, to be able to draw conclusions about resident's individual and collective experiences in these places.

While we wait for formal evidence to emerge, there is, of course, reason to believe that community-led models deserve to play a larger role in our housing delivery system. Importantly, such models prioritise liveability over investment return. At the individual level, this influences spatial design of homes and consideration of factors such as useable area and equitable access to natural light. At the site level, this results in a focus on creating generous, inviting and practical shared spaces – multi-purpose rooms, workshops, kitchens

and gardens, among others – that are not only designed to support and facilitate social connection among residents, but also increase the amount of community co-operation required for ongoing management.

Building social cohesion through community-led development may ultimately prove to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Co-housing and other community-led models attract residents who are specifically seeking a community-focused environment. While residents may come from diverse backgrounds, they share a commitment to participating in deliberative and collective decision-making – processes that require a considerable investment of time. These groups aren’t immune to conflict, but they establish norms that prioritise the collective good and create guardrails to maintain cohesion. Perhaps counterintuitively, successful community-led development is far from informal; rather, it relies on clear processes and structures to succeed. The journey of creating such structures acts as a compelling ‘dress rehearsal’ for residents before they actually live together.

ENTER, THE DEVELOPER

Can developers come close to emulating the social cohesion outcomes embedded in community-led housing models? The ‘big bad developer’ persona is a popular one, if misleading in its indictment that all developers sit on the cold and heartless end of the participatory development spectrum. Yes, financial returns factor into decision making when developers design, build and sell homes. But developers build what the market will buy, and increasingly, the market wants to buy a community, or at least a stage and set that make performing community easy to imagine. Communal spaces of many varieties are now presented in new developments of all sizes, from infill apartment blocks to greenfield suburbs. Such amenities are converging – not universally, but notably – with resident-defined features included in community-led development. At a smaller scale, these include rooftop gardens and dining areas and community rooms that accommodate a breadth of uses. In new suburbs, we see examples of developers front-loading substantial investment in community hubs and recreation centres to ensure that they are open as soon as the first residents arrive.

These features look great in marketing materials, but a build-it-and-they-will-come mentality is unlikely to quickly generate the trusted social connections and networks that we know are important. As observed through the Resilient Communities program, some developers are venturing further to test new approaches to ‘fast-tracking’ community connection. As soon as residents are identified, community development teams provide virtual and in-person opportunities for future neighbours to meet and bond over their shared anticipation of settling in their new homes. We also see examples of developers seeking future resident’s input on public realm design decisions and moderating programs to prepare future residents to settle in their new homes. From a commercial perspective, these are smart moves: they create a ‘stickiness’ in new places that contributes to a strong brand and future sales. It’s no surprise, then, to see marketing teams adopting community development language.

Just because community sells doesn’t mean that developers shouldn’t encourage it. And, where genuine commitment to social cohesion outcomes exist, we see developers working behind the scenes, away from marketing suites, to establish partnerships with the likes of social enterprises and local councils to create frameworks for communities to shape their own futures. Through such



Urban Coup Near and Tall 1 under construction in April 2021.
Image: Eve Recht, Urban Coup.

collaborations, resident reference groups and leadership development programs are activating community voices from the outset. As with community-led development, all of this takes time and commitment. Recognising that not everyone is prepared or able to invest in the demands of community-led development, it is worthwhile to grow, learn from and build on the mix of emerging developer-led models. In fact, encouraging a diversity of approaches to community-building should be part of our aspiration. Returning to Blokland, “For resilient cities, an urban community is necessary. Fortunately such communities are everywhere—for those who care to see.” ●

Alison Whitten is a planner and strategist whose career has followed a long (if meandering) path in pursuit of housing models that are heavy on health and community benefits and light on the planet.



A site excursion with future residents of Urban Coup’s Near and Tall 1. Image: Urban Coup.



393 Macaulay Rd. residents visit their new home, under construction in January 2021. Image: Assemble.



J.W. (Chummy) Fleming
'Anarchy' flag, c.1920s
Pictures Collection, State Library Victoria.



The way we “work” today in Victoria did not just come about by chance. It is part of a long history of workers campaigning for hard-won labour rights, a history of struggle which continues into the present day. For example, the routine hours that were won by male Victorian workers more than 150 years ago during the 888 Movement (eight hours work, eight hours rest, eight hours recreation), do not service the 24-7 cycles under which many people operate, then and now.

Over time as society changes, with things like technological advancements, conditions for work change with it. Whether it be campaigning for a four-day week or protesting the pay equality gap – fighting for fairer conditions intersects with a struggle for equality.

This series of images is part of State Library Victoria’s free exhibition *The Changing Face of Victoria* on now in the Dome Galleries, open until 31st March 2022.

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Unseen Labours

Deathcare as
an essential service

Text by SAMUEL HOLLERAN
Photography by BRI HAMMOND

The origins of this photo series lie in a desire to explore the hidden-in-plain-sight spaces of death and memorialisation that exist in every city as well as to celebrate the labour of Melbourne's deathcare workers. It started as a collaboration between scholars from the DeathTech Research Team at The University of Melbourne and Bri Hammond, a documentary photographer. DeathTech has been studying death, technology, and social change for close to a decade, and much of our research focuses on how death is mediated. During Melbourne's 'second wave', we noticed that 'frontline' medical staff were publicly celebrated but death care workers have remained largely unacknowledged. Hammond's portraits show the people who work not on the frontline, but on the 'endline.' In the small details of working environments, the images reveal deathwork to be an essential service and a practice of care, not only for the dying and dead, but also for the bereaved and the wider community.

While Australia has weathered the COVID-19 pandemic relatively unscathed compared to the rest of the world, last year's 'second wave' in Melbourne left the city paralysed for months. Thousands grew seriously ill and over 800 people died. For some, it may have been the first time that thoughts of mortality became front of mind. Images of mass graves and overflowing funeral homes overseas began to be featured on the nightly news. Estate planning services and websites focused on alternative funerals reported higher-than-average traffic. Some even became flippant with a touch of dark humour; comments such as "I reckon you can toss me in the rosebed" proliferated. Beneath such attempts at levity real questions emerged, as people began to consider the materiality of their bodies. In an era of dramatically extended lifespans in wealthy countries, like Australia – where seniors are becoming the main demographic group – many middle-aged people were suddenly forced to think about what would happen when they died. How did they want their remains treated? A burial? Cremation? Natural burial? Who would be part of the ceremony and what rites would they evoke? Lockdowns and 5km movement restrictions led some to head to local cemeteries to take socially-distanced walks, and to wonder about the provision of space for the dead and the different qualities of memorialis. In sum, the pandemic has helped to illuminate the presence of death in our lives.

Behind the scenes, processes of death and dying command substantial natural resources, including tons of timber for traditional coffins. Annually this takes the hardwood from over 100,000 mature trees in the United States; transportation networks for the repatriation of bodies abroad; and a workforce of thousands in what's known as the 'deathcare sector.' Palliative care nurses, funeral directors, morticians, crematoria operators, and cemetery staff perform roles that are integral to society and their work shapes the built environment, but their labour goes largely unnoticed.



A 'hearse car' that ran on Melbourne's Upfield Line during the first half of the 20th century.

While the pandemic put a new focus on frontline workers in health and safety professions, those whose work involves tending to the dying, dead, and bereaved were not recognised in the same way. Historically stigmatised, the sector has gained in respectability in recent decades but is still marked as a bit odd, good fodder for dark comedy programs like *The Casketeers*, *Buried by the Bernards*, *Six Feet Under*, and *Fun Home*.

The spaces in our city where deathcare occurs are mostly hidden away from public view, but coexist with activities and spaces of everyday life. They form an invisible layer – a 'deathscape' that makes the presence of normal life possible. One of the largest mortuaries in Melbourne is tucked away in an unmarked building behind a Bunnings. While individual bodies do travel in hearses, they also move about the city in innocuous black SUVs or white vans. Signs of death and the final disposition of bodies have shaped infrastructure and land-use across Australia since the beginning of European settlement, but they have been obscured from the public.

Fawkner Memorial Park, founded in 1906 in what was then the very outskirts of Melbourne's North, is unique amongst cemeteries in that it frankly acknowledges body transport and the infrastructural concerns of burial. Not far from the Upfield Line that serves it, an old train car is parked with an informative panel noting that this "mortuary hearse car" ran the rails from 1903 to 1939 taking Melburnians to their final resting place while hooked to the same engines, and passing the same stations, they commuted to the CBD with. Fawkner also contains an on-site crematorium behind a chapel. It is a squat, workaday, and utterly missable structure, unlike its monumental European counterparts, like the Feuerhalle Simmering, built by the Red Viennese government of the 1920's to resemble a Silk Road fortress or Kyiv's brutalist crematorium. The architecture of death and memorialisation in Australia tends to be more retiring, and, like the cement and brass war graves that dot nearly all cemeteries, more one-size-fits-all.

As cemeteries like Fawkner age, and the city grows around them, the once peripheral spaces of death and commemoration have been more tightly woven into the urban fabric. Dog walkers and strollers pass through them and small businesses pop up just outside their gates, but few stop to think too much about the labour or maintenance necessary to the upkeep of these sites, nor do they think about the people who prepare the bodies of the deceased. ●

Samuel Holleran is an interdisciplinary artist and writer. He is currently a PhD student in Media and Communications at The University of Melbourne, examining public participation in the reimagining of cemeteries.

Bri Hammond is a Melbourne-based portrait photographer with a strong focus on telling stories less heard.



(above) Catherine McIntyre and Jess Bell, grounds workers at a Melbourne cemetery.

(opposite) Barry Dawson, who has worked in Melbourne cemeteries for 30 years.

(p. 32) Robert Ridi, an embalmer, puts on his second layer of PPE. Ridi cared for many of those who died from COVID-19 during Melbourne’s second wave.





W. Szczepaniak, readies the car for a funeral service.



Tara Mackay, an embalmer, opens the door to a refrigerated room.



Kimba Griffith and Nastassia Jones from Last Hurrah Funerals, an independent funeral service provider based in Thornbury.



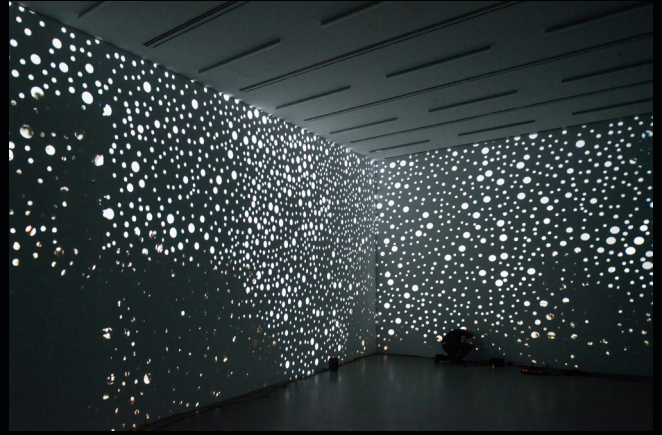
Stephanie Longmuir, a celebrant,
closes the doors to a chapel.

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Inbetween Lands

TRISTAN WONG and JEFA GREENAWAY
on their work for the 17th Venice
Architecture Biennale

Interview by ANNETTE LIN



In *INBETWEEN*, the exhibition selected to represent Australia at the 17th Venice Architecture Biennale, Australasian architecture takes centre stage. Curated by Jefa Greenaway, a Wailwan and Kamilaroi man and director of Greenaway Architects, and Tristan Wong, director at SJB; the installation offers a filmic response to the Biennale's theme: "How will we live together?". A central film showcases a series of public architecture projects that celebrate cultural connection – with the environment, with heritage, and with the greater world at large.

For Greenaway and Wong, the Biennale's theme provoked them to consider Australia's location "in between" countries in the Pacific. As a result; blueprints, renders and photographs of projects from around Australia and our nearby Pacific neighbours, including Aotearoa New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, flit across the screen against an atmospheric soundtrack of fire crackling and birds in the background. Blurring the line between the built and the natural environments, the resulting experience feels uncannily like floating outdoors amongst a river of architectural projects.

Initially intended to be exhibited in 2020 – but delayed due to pandemic restrictions – *INBETWEEN* took two years to create. Conceived as a projection onto a sphere within the cubic dimensions of the Australian pavilion, Greenaway and Wong will also tour and exhibit *INBETWEEN* as a film locally in Australia – a first for an Australian exhibition since its first Biennale pavilion in 1988. Annette Lin spoke with Greenaway and Wong on the challenges and opportunities of working on the project during the COVID-19 pandemic, and what it heralds for the future of Indigenous and non-Indigenous architectural practice on colonised land.

Annette Lin: So this question might be really obvious, but how did the pandemic affect *INBETWEEN*? In some ways it seems like it might have opened up different opportunities and possibilities, would you say that's correct?

Jefa Greenaway: We feel in some respects that the pandemic has actually strengthened the ideas in *INBETWEEN*. We responded quite directly to the original Venice Biennale theme of "How will we live together?". Our idea of "in between" is really looking at the space between a number of different dimensions: the space between identity and place; anchoring in Country; some of the global challenges around climate change; and understanding the context of our broader region. We wanted to give expression to the process and journey of how architecture can speak to identity and culture. And despite this being an extended experience over two years, rather than one year, in many respects, the content couldn't be more relevant – the last year has actually amplified it.

Tristan Wong: Exactly. It's been a really tumultuous last year or two, with COVID-19, Black Lives Matter, and environmental challenges: rising sea levels, global warming, bush fires. The themes and the narratives of *INBETWEEN* dovetail really well into all of these things. The overarching theme of the Venice Biennale is, "How will we live together?". We've got challenges around cultural identity, Black Lives Matter, environmental challenges and the COVID-19 response, so how do we live together *in this context*?

How do we live and work together? How do we harmonise cultural dimensions that exist between First Nations people and non-Indigenous people? And how do we create projects that are really layered and give voice and agency to Indigenous people whilst also existing in a very contemporary context?

AL: Do you see *INBETWEEN* as part of a bigger shift in consciousness? And how do you think people – both within and outside the architecture industry – can build on that?

JG: Well, in some respects, the starting premise is to acknowledge that all projects built in the Australian context and within our region are built on Indigenous lands. And if that's the starting premise, then everyone has a responsibility, an obligation and an opportunity to engage with the complexity of how we engage and anchor in Country.

Within the pre-colonial Australian context, there are over 250 distinct languages, and over 450 languages within our broader region. So, what that talks to is diversity. It talks to complexity. It talks to the fact that culture isn't monolithic or homogenous.

As a result, all the projects in *INBETWEEN* give voice to the layers beneath how we actually go about a culturally responsive design practice. The projects we chose, and the diversity across our continent, demonstrate how practices are grappling with some of these complexities across different scales and project typologies. Some are quite modest; others are much larger in scale and ambition. But the same threads run through – the way they develop and build a process and a methodology.

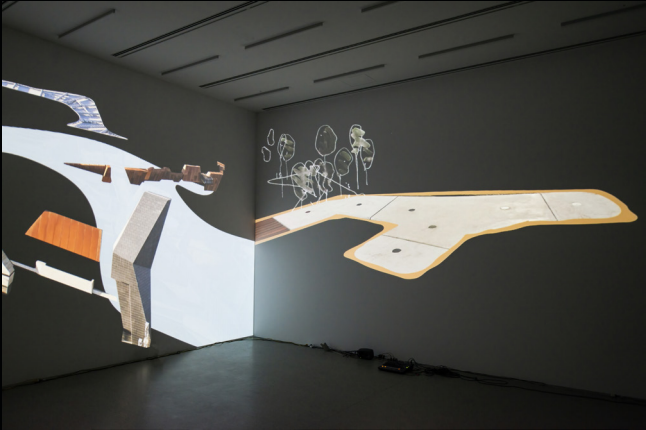
AL: From arts centres in the Pilbara to ranger accommodation in the Northern Territory, there's quite a diversity of projects. Can you speak more about the process of sourcing and curating the projects you included in *INBETWEEN*?

JG: There was a national call out, which we then expanded beyond our shores. What we wanted to do was explore a number of different dimensions and to see how the various projects mapped to our thematics of sustainability, identity, and Country or place, and see that these projects understood those dimensions within their own projects. We also created a cultural reference panel, to ensure that we had a level of cultural authenticity embedded as part of the curatorial process.

We managed to get projects from every state and territory in Australia, as well as across other nations within our broader region as well. But the focus wasn't really around hero-ing the individual practices, it was more about: how do these different projects support a bigger story and conversation?

TW: Exactly. It was actually about trying to convey and elevate the processes – the methodologies, the levels and layers of engagement these practices went through, the conversations they had with communities, the language groups and the Elders that informed those decisions and those projects.

We also managed to include some somewhat very humble projects that might otherwise never have been



published. Some of the projects we chose for *INBETWEEN* are big civic projects, and that's fantastic. But there are also smaller projects, in quite remote locations, that affect people in a powerful, positive way but that ordinarily wouldn't get a lot of exposure. These are buildings that are built for communities. And that's really important because it demonstrates the power of architecture to affect people in different ways – not just in urban environments but in remote environments too, and not just on a large scale in the civic, urban realm, but also in smaller communities. That's the relevance of good architecture – that it makes an impact in a positive way, across all of those different dimensions, contexts and landscapes.

AL: How do you think urbanism and architecture can be used to embed Indigenous knowledge within a wider Australian cultural context?

JG: In many respects, one of the elements that we sought to communicate is that as architects, urban designers and landscape designers, we all operate within a social contract and a social license, and that comes with certain obligations and responsibilities.

If we start to think and consider the urban environment in which we practice – the layers of history and meaning of that place – we can start to give voice to that. We can make the invisible visible through engaging with Traditional Owners, knowledge keepers, Elders and custodians, and these stories and narratives can start to be embedded as part of the way in which we engage.

It's the simple idea of starting with a conversation and having the right people in the room, and carving out the time and space to have that meaningful engagement. That way you can obtain the requisite cultural knowledge to proceed with the project, adhere to cultural protocols, and what you're essentially doing is talking to our explicit First Nations experience.

We asked the various participants who responded to the call out, on which Country is your project located? If they didn't know, then it potentially demonstrated a cultural blind spot. What that reinforces is the role and necessity of developing a process which speaks to the complexities of practice in the Australian context and beyond, particularly on the back of some of these broader global movements. The time is now to have these conversations. In Victoria, for instance, we're seeing developing legislation for a treaty, we launched the Yoo-rook Justice Commission on the 14 May this year. There's a First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria. So in a way, through the film, we've captured the pulse of what practitioners are doing now.





TW: There's so many layers of history of recognising and acknowledging Country and Traditional Owners and storytelling. These things can be embedded into projects that give them a much more layered dimension. First Nations people have lived on these lands in the Australian context for some 60,000 years, touching the land lightly, understanding preservation of land sustainability, doing all of this as part of their daily life and ritual. Are there things that we can learn, as architects, landscape designers or creatives? Whether they're construction techniques, site building orientation, water preservation – there's a whole lot of potential for contemporary architecture to learn from what First Nations people have done on this land for generations. These things should be, and can be, layered into our own practices.

AL: Agreed. What are your thoughts on how we put it into practice? Jefa – you lecture at The University of Melbourne. What role does education have in bringing these ways of working and understanding in?

JG: I think the start of these conversations should ideally occur through design education. Invariably, many of those who are practicing now weren't privy to even having these conversations – it wasn't part of our experience through learning about and developing our skills as practitioners through university. But there has certainly been a shift in recent times where there is an impetus to decolonise or, or Indigenise, design education.

And how can one start to do that without engaging and understanding our deeper history? Why would we not draw upon generations of wisdom? Why would we not connect to and engage and try and understand the relationship to Country?

(p. 40, 41, 42, 43) Installation view of *INBETWEEN*, Australia's exhibition for the 17th Venice Architecture Biennale curated by Jefa Greenaway and Tristan Wong. Lyon Housemuseum Galleries, May 2021. Image: Aaron Puls.

Why wouldn't we not want to seek to explore and understand Indigenous knowledge systems? Why would we not want to understand the diversity and complexity of language, of narrative, of sustainability through a cultural lens as informing the way we think about design teaching? That process of knowledge exchange – of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems coming together – can coexist. ●

The Creative Directors of the Australian Pavilion exhibition for the Venice International Architecture Biennale, Jefa Greenaway and Tristan Wong, will present a screening of INBETWEEN at 'This Is Public' – the opening event and speaker series for Open House Melbourne 2021 on Friday 23rd July at The Capitol, RMIT University.

Annette Lin is a freelance journalist writing about design, culture and contemporary art through the lens of foreign policy and social movements. She holds a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University.



The Eight Hour Commute



For some, life is a constant imbalance of commute and labor, often with no end in sight. Commuting these days is a means to an end and shortening the time it takes, a drive towards optimal productivity. From Elon Musk's 'hyperloop', claiming to carry passengers in 29 minutes from New York to Washington, or closer to home, to CLARA – a plan to connect 'smart cities' in Victoria and New South Wales with a high-speed rail; solving the work and commute balance is a source of much debate. What if our daily journeys to work weren't built around efficiency, but interaction, knowledge sharing, catharsis, and connection? PAUL VAN HERK imagines a fictional city in perpetual motion, where the daily commute is in service to itself.



The alarm begins to hum softly 12 minutes before I want to wake: this I have come to accept no matter how much I sleep. It's easy to sleep too much. The alarm sound gradually builds and falls away when I am no longer at risk of lapsing back into drowsiness. Getting ready usually takes seven minutes, eight if I haven't already pre-selected outfits the night before. This is considered slow, but slowness these days is a matter of taste. Measurements of progress have swung away from optimising every aspect of human life. Looking to minimize time would be considered old fashioned, and ill advised. I leave home and begin the commute.

The sky glows a pale orange behind a copse of trees, the light piercing through the ragged canopy. It is autumn. I lower my still sensitive eyes to the ground. There, the path; dirty, pierced by tufts of grass and well-trodden. I plod clumsily along it, feeling vulnerable like a newborn, but cosy in my hi-vis. A hint of the city hits my ears as a humming background noise, which I find comforting.

I approach the refectories, a haphazard strip of stalls that open onto the path, emanating warmth and puffs of fragrant steam. The proprietors have their own hand signals and patrons too, expressing their needs through gestural interfaces. A low hum of speech echoes and dims that of the city beyond, insulating the more fragile among us. Some places are known to be havens for the grouchy, others cater to those who awake, excited and ready to relate. Today I do not wish to stop and I get a warm pot of *batare* – a tasty and nutritious stimulant – to go.

I sip it in a mobi-library; a plush linear pavilion with space for a dozen or so people to sit and watch the city go by. There are many thousands of such libraries in this city. This is one of the smallest, a G-class. The mobi-libraries move slowly across neighbourhoods throughout the day, inching along and criss-crossing each other's paths as people step on and off. Every day they take a different route, like wandering beasts. Some days I meet friends and colleagues in whichever beast best fits between our respective movements. They never take us far.

My Nan used to tell me about the commute in her time, in the old coastal cities. I found it hard to understand: aggressive, competitive, reptilian. Enormous chunks of life were dedicated to physical presence at work, not to mention the repetitive journeys across endless suburbs. The trips were self-navigated, energy-intensive, dangerous. People would fight with fists and finance to minimise the time it would take them to travel, but would rarely swap out their places of work or homes or committed hours. It makes me think of how water boils, all the discrete particles agitating and colliding and ultimately evaporating in the heat.

I look up when I am done responding to the news and signing petitions. We are passing through one of the main city concourses and it is bustling. The concourse's population

“Nan said that the shape and speed of vehicles used to be the central facts of planning, so that the city was defined by lines of hazard. It produced myths of efficiency and urgency, but in reality everyone felt stuck, unable to experience the passing of time. Their history taught them that work was the point of the commute, but now, thanks to their legacy we agree that commuting is the point of work.”

grows and falls over the day, generally with five peaks and five troughs: popularly known as ‘the tides’. Right now, it is ‘high tide’. I read that people spend on average 19 minutes here at a time, but multiple visits per day are common. I step off the mobi-library, which rumbles on.

Nan tried to help me relate to the old way. Collective ritual, she said, was discarded along with organised religion, which was deemed to have no place in an efficient society. It took many years for public acts of ritual to re-emerge, peeled away from old oppressive narratives and attached to new ones that allowed for perpetual movement, change and self-expression.

Most groupings in the concourse are centred around some kind of activity; games, music, role play, politics or a combination. Here strangers and demi-strangers meet, or just watch and regard each other in action. Lots of people lean on or sit in the booths that spiral out below the ringed canopy overhead. They display symbols, apparatuses or postures that are supposed to be recognisable only to the initiated. Most people very quickly learn to read the signs though – it is a constant source of curiosity and gossip. It is normal to be alone here, but it would be a conspicuously strange act to pass through the concourse without stopping.

Like most people in my inland city, I work in the caring industries. I care for the algorithms and autonomous vehicles that are central to cross-country logistics. It is not always the most exciting work, but it is as honest as it gets. I check the interface to find the location of the workshop that currently has a vacancy for me.

I get completely engrossed in the complexity of today’s problem and find myself working the four-and-a-half-hour maximum. The caring industries rarely offer up neat solutions, and we continually work to teach the systems to be slightly better. A lot of patience is required.

This means that I often need to leave through the halls of frustration. Today I elect for the silent scream module and am soon fogging up the perspex booth with my breath. A corresponding haze emerges on the other side, another person shouting directly back into my face as I into theirs. I can’t hear a thing except my own screams. Inevitably the two of us make more sustained moments of eye contact and the cracks start to appear in our ruddy and contorted faces. We chuckle a bit on the inhale then scream again and so on until all that can possibly pass between us is maniacal laughter. I’ve been matched with this person before, and at the end we laugh a bit longer and more knowingly than last time.

Nan said that the shape and speed of vehicles used to be the central facts of planning, so that the city was defined by lines of hazard. It produced myths of efficiency and urgency, but in reality everyone felt stuck, unable to experience the passing of time. Their history taught them that work was the point of the commute, but now, thanks to their legacy we agree that commuting is the point of work.

I pick up something to eat from the servo. It’s one of the more expensive servos but the food is very good. I carry it not towards my own home but to somewhere just as familiar: dirty path, the trees, the aged but well-used facilities. The pathway here meanders and loops, winding through dense clumps of trees where the damp smell and chill of autumn is intoxicating and small birds can be heard rustling around in the undergrowth.

I met my lover playing kawuri at a concourse last year. We were so evenly matched that it took us three and a half hours to finish a single game, and even then, we tied. We walk together, hand-in-hand among many others who walk and chatter through the fading pink light, witnessing the city take a quiet breath before the night commute begins. ●

Paul van Herk is a practising architect and urban designer based in Melbourne. He teaches architectural history and design at RMIT University, and was a researcher at Strelka Institute, Moscow in 2018.

Julie Shiels, Another Planet Posters
 Worker Control, 1985
 Poster from the Pictures Collection,
 State Library Victoria.



“This poster was one of three commissioned by the Department of Employment in 1985. Screen-based work was being introduced into the workplace and awareness and occupational health and safety was growing. In this poster I used a retro futuristic aesthetic combined with the new look dot matrix fonts of these early technologies to suggest rapid change. The aim of this poster was to encourage workers to use technology to improve their standard of living. 35 years on – I suspect the jury is still out on that aspiration.” – Julie Shiels

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Practical Matters

Recipes from around the world
with FREE TO FEED

مذاق با سبزو

Portraits by ANU KUMAR



A Free to Feed grazing table in preparation.
Image: Free to Feed

Free to Feed is a Melbourne-based social enterprise that creates empowering employment opportunities for refugees and people seeking asylum through the creation of shared food experiences. They facilitate community interconnectivity and break the stifling sense of social isolation often faced by these new arrivals. Through the delivery of cooking classes, catering, and one-off seasonal workshops, Free to Feed has provided over 24,582 hours of paid employment including training, 1,677 events, and \$614,552 in employment wages.

We asked Free to Feed participants Abeer, from Syria; Shayama, from Sri Lanka; Tayebah, from Iran; and Tiff, from Malaysia, for their special recipes that tell stories of family, community, culture, and belonging.

All proceeds from this commission will help Free to Feed raise funds for 3000 critical wraparound support hours for participants. This includes 900 hours of access to social work support, 900 hours of access to specialised training, and 1200 hours of personal development and leadership coaching. To support the cause, head to freetofeed.org.au/donate



Abeer

Abeer was born in Damascus, Syria and moved to Australia in 2018 – she has a refugee visa and is currently working on a permanent residency application. In her hometown, she was an established tailor and beautician, and celebrated amongst her community as an amazing cook. Abeer lives with her husband Yasser and her two daughters in Melbourne.

“Harak Osbao is a traditional Syrian soup made with lentils, pasta, sumac, pomegranate, fried onions and fried bread. I watched my mother and grandmother cook this dish many times, and I learnt to make it by heart from a young age. In Australia I cook Harak Osbao for my family. Here I’ve had the chance to expand on my passion for cooking, mixing traditional nostalgic recipes with modern techniques and local ingredients.”

HARAK OSBAO (SYRIAN SOUP)

Ingredients

- 300g dough cut into small oblongs - see below
- 3 Lebanese flat breads
- 300g brown lentils
- Vegetable oil
- 3 large brown onions thinly sliced
- 1500ml water
- 40ml pomegranate molasses
- 60g tamarind puree
- ½ bunch coriander leaves
- ½ bunch parsley leaves
- 6 garlic cloves finely chopped
- Pomegranate jewels
- Lemon wedges
- Ground black pepper
- Salt

For the dough/pasta

- 250g plain flour
- 1 tbsp salt
- 150ml warm water
- Additional flour for dusting

“Harak Osbao is a traditional Syrian soup made with lentils, pasta, sumac, pomegranate, fried onions and fried bread.”

حراك اوسباو

Method

For the dough/pasta:

- Place the flour in a medium-sized bowl and add salt
- Slowly incorporate the water, knead until the dough forms a ball and is quite soft but not sticky, and there are no dry flour spots – you may need to add a touch more water or a touch more flour, depending on the weather
- Knead the dough for four to five minutes until it is soft and springy
- Let the dough rest for approximately 10 minutes
- Dust the bench with flour and roll out dough to .5cm thickness
- Cut into small pieces – roughly 3cm by 1cm
- You may need more flour to dust once you have cut the dough, to avoid the dough sticking together

Once you’ve prepped the dough/pasta:

- Heat 50mls vegetable oil in a large saucepan
- Cut the flat bread into thin strips – roughly 5cm by 1cm
- Fry the bread in the oil and cook until golden brown
- Remove from the heat and set aside
- Using the same saucepan, heat another 2tbs of vegetable oil and cook the onions until they are a deep golden brown
- Remove from the pan and set aside to cool
- Using the same saucepan, bring the stock/water to the boil and add the lentils, cook until al dente
- Add the cut-up pasta to the water along with the pomegranate molasses, salt and pepper
- Simmer until the pasta is cooked and a lot of the moisture has evaporated (although it should still be moist) and set aside
- In a small saucepan, heat 2tbsp of oil. Add the garlic and fry for one-two minutes, until just golden brown
- Remove from the heat and stir in the coriander
- To serve, place the lentils and pasta on the bottom and then garnish with the fried herbs, fried bread, garlic, onions, pomegranate, lemon wedges and sumac



“Recently my mother passed away, and every time I cook Sri Lankan food, I’m reminded of her memory, my family and my culture.”

Shayama

Shayama moved from Sri Lanka to Melbourne in 2008 and lives with her husband and young daughter. She has a diploma in business management and is a trained hairdresser. Known to go everywhere with a good plate of food and a warm smile, Shayama is famous for her goat curry.

“I grew up with the Muslim community in Sri Lanka and my family learnt this recipe from them. My mother taught me how to make it as a young woman and I continue to make it for my family today. Recently my mother passed away, and every time I cook Sri Lankan food, I’m reminded of her memory, my family and my culture.”

ELUMAS (GOAT/LAMB CURRY)

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1kg diced lamb or goat
- 1 tbsp black mustard seeds
- 1 onion, diced
- 25g ginger, grated
- 1 bulb of garlic, chopped
- 3 stalks fresh curry leaves
- 1 pandanus leaf

- 5 tbsp coriander powder
- 1 tbsp chilli powder
- 2 tbsp roasted curry powder
- 5 whole cloves
- 5 cardamom pods
- 1 tbsp ground black pepper
- 50ml tamarind paste
- 2 tomatoes
- Salt to taste
- Coriander to garnish

Method

- Gently heat oil in a pan over medium to low heat
- Once the oil is hot, add the mustard seeds and cook until you begin to hear them pop
- Add onion, ginger and garlic to the pan and sauté for five minutes until softened and beginning to colour
- Add curry leaves, pandanus leaves and remaining spices to the pan and cook for a further two minutes
- Add your lamb or goat meat, tomato and tamarind
- Cover with a lid and leave on low heat to simmer for 15 minutes
- Remove the lid and add water. Simmer for a further 30 minutes until sauce has thickened and meat is tender
- Garnish with coriander and serve with steamed rice

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“The first few years after arriving in Australia were very hard, and cooking food from my country really helped me to feel connected to my home in Iran.”

میرزا قاسمی با دانش جدید

Tayebah

Originally from Ilam, a Kurdish city in the western part of Iran, Tayebah grew up with a fusion of influences from her Iranian grandmother and Iraqi mother. Tayebah’s work and studies traverse architecture in Iran to child-care here in Melbourne, but her true passion is to share her traditional Kurdish cuisine as a proud aspect of her culture and heritage.

“The first few years after arriving in Australia were very hard, and cooking food from my country really helped me to feel connected to my home in Iran. Now, I teach these same recipes and Iranian dishes to others, which allows me to feel more connected to my new home in Australia. Mirza Ghasemi is a traditional recipe from the 19th century in the north of Iran made from eggplant. It was passed down from my grandmother to my mother and we would cook it together for our family. Food reminds us of the people we love, especially the ones who aren’t in our lives anymore.”

MIRZA GHASEMI (PERSIAN EGGPLANT DIP)

Ingredients

- 2 eggplants (medium)
- 2 cloves garlic
- 3 tomatoes
- 3 eggs
- Salt
- Pepper
- Turmeric
- Vegetable oil
- 2 tbsp (heaped) tomato paste

Method

- Chargrill eggplant over a gas flame until skin is charred on all sides and the flesh is really soft
- Leave to cool
- Finely chop garlic
- Peel and finely dice tomatoes
- Sauté garlic in oil over medium heat until lightly golden, stir in turmeric
- Add tomatoes and cook until tomatoes break down and cook through (about 15-20 mins). In the meantime, scoop out flesh of eggplant
- Add the eggplant to the tomatoes and garlic mixture, cook for several more minutes
- Make little holes in the eggplant mixture and pour eggs straight into pan – do not stir
- Continue to cook until the egg becomes opaque (about five-six minutes) before giving a final stir. The aim is to have the egg solidify before incorporating them into the eggplant mixture

Best served warm and with flatbread

مواد مورد نیاز برای ۴-۵ نفر

۲ عدد بادمجان بزرگ (۹۰۰ گرم)

۲ بوته سیر (کله شده)

۱ قاشق چایخوری زردچوبه



Tiff

Tiff arrived in Australia from Kelantan, Malaysia. He is from the Hokkien culture – a Malaysian Chinese community – and today he works as a chef in Melbourne. As a child, Tiff loved to carefully watch his parents cooking, observing their diverse styles.

“My love for cooking started when I was ten years old. During celebrations in the community, my mother loved to cook the food – she would always bring something special for friends, relatives, or family. Food strengthens our connection and friendships with the people around us. Not everyone has access to food, and I always try to share leftovers with asylum seekers and homeless people. My mother always told me that if you can help someone, just help. My recipe is a noodle dish called Mee Goreng – in my culture we eat noodles every day, you can eat them as breakfast, lunch or dinner, and supper as well. We love noodles!”

MAMAK MEE GORENG

Ingredients

- 1 ½ litres water
- 630g instant noodle cakes
- ¼ green cabbage
- ½ brown onion
- 2 spring onions
- 1 long red chilli
- 7 cloves of garlic
- 280g fried soft tofu
- 1 carrot
- 10 eggs
- 110g beansprouts
- 1 bunch choy sum
- 25g fried shallots
- 2 tbsp kecap manis (‘ABC’ is my preferred brand)
- 1 tbsp dark soy
- 25g light soy
- 1 tsp dried chilli paste (‘Singalong’ is my preferred brand)
- ½ tsp white pepper
- 1 tsp oyster sauce

“My mother always told me that if you can help someone, just help.”

Garnish

- 1 Lebanese cucumber
- 1 lime
- ½ bunch coriander sprigs
- 1 tomato
- Banana sauce (UFC is my preferred brand)

Method

For preparation

- Bring water to the boil. When boiling add noodles and cook for a minute to blanch – rinse under cold water to stop the noodles from cooking – drain and set aside
- Peel and finely slice onion
- Finely slice spring onion (both white and green parts)
- Finely slice red chilli (including seeds)
- Finely chop garlic
- Peel carrot and cut into thin julienne pieces (3mm thick)
- Cut tofu in half, then into 3mm thick strips
- Roughly cut choy sum into 6cm long pieces
- Cut the cabbage into 4cm cubes
- Combine all of the sauces together

For the garnish

- Cut cucumber into thin slices
- Cut lime into wedges
- Thoroughly wash and pick coriander sprigs
- Cut tomato into wedges
- Heat 200ml vegetable oil in pan until very hot then reduce heat
- Add the eggs and spoon hot oil over the egg until the white has cooked and the yolk is still soft. Sprinkle with a little salt and keep warm
- Heat 50ml vegetable oil in a large wide saucepan
- Add onion and garlic into the pan and stir fry for one-two minutes
- Add carrot and cook for several minutes or until carrot is cooked
- Add tofu, constantly stirring for a minute before adding cabbage
- Cook for a further few minutes then add choy sum
- Cover with a lid and cook for two to three minutes
- Add the chilli and noodles – stir fry gently to avoid breaking the tofu
- Add the sauce mixture and stir to thoroughly combine
- Check seasoning
- Cook for a further couple of minutes
- Add fried shallots, spring onions and bean shoots
- Place onto a large serving platter
- Serve the fried eggs & garnishes on the side of the noodles with banana sauce



Text by HENRIETTA ZEFFERT
Illustration by KYLE GRIGGS

Tree-change

Notes on home and work-life from rural Ireland

Last year my family and I moved from London, our home of 10 years, to settle in rural Ireland. Because of the arbitrary fact that I deal with words and numbers – rather than, say, my hands – my work can be done almost anywhere. Our parting with the city was bittersweet – we’re passionate Londoners – but the pandemic, combined with the toxic politics of Brexit and the reality that we’d never be able to afford a home without choking mortgage stress, catalysed our departure. So, we swapped our two-hour (one way) nursery-drop-commute on London’s tube for life in a village, near extended family, where our daughter enjoys the sort of space and freedom that would be unimaginable in the city.

Tipperary, one of the Irish Republic’s 26 counties, is landlocked farming country famous for its milk, idyllic landscape, and of course *that* song. The main drag in our village looks like many others in Ireland: there are three family-run pubs – Stapletons, the Clodagh Bar and Finn’s. At least one is unlikely to wake from its pandemic slumber. There’s a branch of An Post, O’Dwyer’s – the butcher, Mary’s hairdresser, a Chinese takeaway (Ling’s Garden), a greasy chipper beloved by all, and the service station, Shanahan’s, that doubles as a supermarket. Old shopfronts, boarded up, their gracious fanlights still visible above the door. Saint Brigid – one of Ireland’s patron saints – watches over the village from the blue stone solidity and holy calm of the Church of the Sacred Heart.

While Ireland has just marked the centenary of the 1919 War of Independence, the country’s internal urban-rural division – between Dublin and the rest – dates back to at least the 19th century and the potato famine which decimated the rural population (and fuelled emigration to Australia). The urban-rural divide was intensified during decades of British rule. West Britons, as the British in Dublin were known, described anywhere outside the capital as ‘beyond the pale’. That divide is still reflected today in the fact that Dublin receives a disproportionate share of state funds and the capital’s Celtic Tiger-era investor friendly tax regime attracts international businesses, draining rural areas of young people with the pull of jobs. Most villages show the scars of the Ireland’s boom-and-bust economic cycle in the loss of local industry. Our own village, famed for its pure spring water, saw the bottling factory bought up by a multinational – which then promptly shut the factory down to quench competition, costing hundreds of jobs. There has long been a sentiment

that rural Ireland has been left behind.

Ironically, the pandemic might be beginning to reverse some of the damage. Thousands of Irish people have returned ‘home’ over the past year. Yet this Atlantic drift seems not only to have been caused by the pandemic. There’s a sense that Ireland, a decade after its devastating downturn, has recovered to the point of being able to welcome back its émigrés with the prospect of a healthier, greener and less frenetic life – and a life within the European Union.

This population shift has eased my own transition to the village. After a year, the things I miss about the city (street life, the energy of high density living, the extraordinary diversity that comes to seem ordinary) have been replaced by new pleasures and fascinations. In the Irish summer there is light in the sky until midnight. Life is close to the land, tuned to the rhythm of the seasons. The distinctive patois of nature: cow parsley, furze bushes and gorse flowers; fairy doors and blackberry bushes; swifts, blue tits, robins and wrens; and pet days (good weather days). I have a new and surprising empathy for the burdens of dairy cows and the farmers who care for them – it is not unusual to see tractors carting silage at midnight. Beautiful ancient cemeteries are dotted all around – ivy-festooned headstones carved with ornate Celtic knots and symbols – bearing testimony to families lost to poverty, famine, hard labour on the land and the endless wandering diaspora.

Basic things we rarely think about in the city – clean water, sewerage, rubbish collection, mainline gas, internet, delivery services and public transport – cannot be assumed here and I’ve been shocked by the costs and inefficiencies involved in acquiring them. Collectively, rural areas are home to over a third of Ireland’s population. Despite this, the number of people aged 25 or under is dropping sharply, while increasing in urban areas. Household income in rural and remote areas of Ireland is 34 percent lower than in cities, aligning with the highest risk of poverty, and almost half the population in remote areas have no internet access. The higher day-to-day costs of rural life are reflected in the distance to travel to everyday services such as a supermarket, a post office, the doctor or a bank, which is seven times longer than in urban areas.

However, with the pandemic catalysing the shift of workers from cities, in Ireland and elsewhere, rural policymaking has come into renewed prominence. In March

2021, Ireland announced ‘Our Rural Future’, acclaimed as Europe’s most ambitious strategy for rural development. Key to the strategy is attracting remote workers to live in rural areas. This could revitalise villages, lift rural employment and business, boost tourism and the green economy. Part of the strategy involves transferring shuttered hospitality venues to local ownership and reopening them as remote worker centres, or as they’ve been dubbed, ‘hubs in the pubs’. Perks for tree-changing workers could include tax breaks, the rollout of national broadband and the appeal of a greener, cleaner life without a commute.

While Ireland’s strategy has been feted as ‘ambitious’ and ‘transformational’, critics have called it out as another empty gesture towards rural areas and a repackaging of existing government policy. Teachta Dála members (MPs) in the Dáil Éirann (Parliament) pointed out that the strategy contains no new spending or ideas, no targets or timelines. And the idea that people working in cities should be able to work in rural areas is neither ambitious nor transformational. It should have happened years ago.

So what should rural areas in Ireland (and across Europe) do to address decades of neglect and underinvestment, and to capitalise on the opportunities of post-pandemic new ways of living and working? How do we move from tree-change utopia to reality, grounded in sustainable change? From the gimmick of ‘hubs in the pubs’ to making real commitments to place-based development, rural-proofed policy and a just transition for agriculture-dependent areas to a carbon-neutral economy?

The pattern of challenges facing rural Ireland may be global (an ageing population, urbanisation, climate change, environmental pressure, technological innovation) but rural communities in Ireland (as elsewhere) need locally-tailored responses nested within a broader vision. For a start, house building policy needs to reflect new desires for rural living. Many of those tree-changing to rural Ireland during the pandemic have discovered a dearth of family homes for sale and unending red tape blocking new housebuilding. Land needs to be released and planning regimes adjusted to enable housebuilding, complemented by high green building standards and grant schemes. Derelict buildings, vacant properties and sites need to be re-designated for residential occupancy and multi-use space.

Investment is needed in social and economic infrastructure in rural areas to increase regional attractiveness and ensure that those who live there – and those the Government envisages as its new ‘remote working army’ – have access to quality public services and a better quality of life. This means extending public transport, healthcare and remote education services, without which rural communities will not survive. Our own village has one irregular bus service and locals rely on lifts from others – mainly elderly samaritans – to get to medical appointments. Roadside births in the back of the bakery delivery van are not uncommon. Local childcare options must be created – a need overlooked in Ireland’s new strategy. The pandemic has also demonstrated that having access to good quality internet is not a luxury but essential to enabling full participation in society. As *Social Justice Ireland* points out, internet access is an equality issue and a key calibrator of economic, social and educational inclusion.

The delivery of these sort of vital public services should be designed around the ‘equivalence principle’: public services in rural areas should be equivalent to urban areas. And rural policymaking must happen in dialogue with local communities; be underpinned by a multidimensional concept of wellbeing, comprising economic, social and environmental factors; and be dynamic and agile to account

“The pandemic has also demonstrated that having access to good quality internet is not a luxury but essential to enabling full participation in society.”

for changing local, regional, national and global events, as the pandemic has taught us. Above all else, places need strategies for equitable adaptation. As part of this, it’s crucial to remember that rural areas will be most impacted by the transition to a carbon-neutral economy, automation and changes in the future of work, as well as the effects of Brexit on trade, pricing and survival for small farms (EU reforms just introduced may provide some protection against the intensification of agriculture). Dialogue to support a just transition and to protect vulnerable rural areas needs to be ongoing and advocate opportunities for sustainable agriculture.

We’ll soon be moving into a modest semi-detached in the centre of the village – one of few houses that have come onto the market in the year we’ve been here. With favourable state grants, we’re able to retrofit the house. Ireland’s green home scheme means that all new and retrofitted homes must meet a minimum energy rating, which usually involves installing a heat pump (ground source or air to water), proper insulation and air tightness measures. Optional flourishes include window upgrades, sophisticated ventilation systems (DCV) and solar panels. For us, the benefits will be an immediate and drastic reduction in energy consumption and bills, and the retrofit costs should be repaid by those savings in less than a decade. Yet even with the generous rebate, retrofit starting costs are out of reach for most people. The contradiction between the costs and the rhetoric around green homes makes the prospect of an Irish tree-change less possible than it sounds.

As a native city-dweller, I’ll always be an outsider in this village. But that’ll be more to do with my choice to cling on to my urban roots than village parochialism. As an outsider, I retain some of the anonymity I valued in the city, even while embracing – and being embraced – by village life. My tree-change has shown me that the mythic qualities of Ireland are real. There is a culture of care and hospitality. Storytelling and connections are treasured – perhaps best expressed in the oral ritual of ‘tracing’, where people gather to draw out the links between families and acquaintances across generations.

But culture will not be enough to sustain rural Ireland through the type of change we’ve experienced over the last year and what we should expect in the near future. Rural policymaking needs to address inequalities around mobility – everyone should have the opportunity, as I’ve had, to choose where they and their families could best flourish. Such choice could cause a ‘fierce’ shift in the urban-rural divide (as they say in the village) – and meaningful, lasting transformation. ●

Henrietta Zeffert is a writer from Australia, living in Ireland. She lectures at University College Cork.

Waves by DRMNGNOW



Interview by MADELINE ELLERM

“*Waves* is a collage of music that acknowledges the powerful waves being made by Indigenous women in recent years. In the music terrain of so-called Australia, as well as other Indigenous lands affected by settler colonialism, they take up and occupy a critical space powerfully.”

As part of our Ears mixtape series featuring Triple R presenters, we chatted with Indigenous hip-hop artist and Yorta Yorta man DRMNGNOW, also known as Neil Morris, about his musical journey so far, alongside the importance of connection to Country and community.

In his words: “When I was 18, I started to question how the world was laid out for us – not only for Indigenous people, but for humanity as a whole. I had this feeling that society lacked a sense of fullness – elements like spirituality, connection to Country, love for Country and the preservation and sustainability of Country. While studying philosophy and anthropology at university in Melbourne, I went deeper and deeper into deconstructing constructs that were set out for humanity – things like the nine to five working week, belief in power dynamics, and the notion of nationhood. For me, these constructs deplete people in so many ways – not just Indigenous people, everybody. As I got a bit older, I started to understand Indigenous sovereignty, and it was then that

I thought, ‘Hey, we really need to unpack this, and we need to challenge it.’”

Neils mixtape *Waves* riffs off his show *Still Here* which shines a spotlight on Indigenous voices working to uphold traditional cultural practices. *Waves* showcases female-presenting artists both locally and globally who use their voice for Indigenous sovereign rights, and the power of storytelling to heal. ●

Community radio station Triple R has been live for more than 40 years. The diversity of shows and presenters reflects the values at the heart of Triple R – for the people, by the people. Independent and non-profit, the station relies on sponsorship and listener subscriptions to stay on the air. Listen to *Still Here* every Sunday from 1-2pm on 102.7FM and support Triple R.



CONTRIBUTORS

Madeline Ellerm, Keelia Fitzpatrick, Free to Feed, Jane Gilmore, Kyle Griggs, Bri Hammond, Paul van Herk, Samuel Holleran, Anu Kumar, Mary Leunig, Annette Lin, Neil Morris, Sophie Rzepecky, Julie Shiels, Sam Wallman, Alison Whitten, Henrietta Zeffert.

THANK YOU

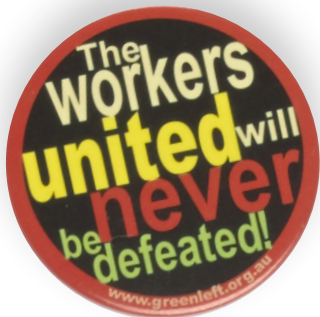
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ASSEMBLE TEAM

Alannah Manuk, Alex Kennedy, Andy Fergus, Brendan Smee, Bruce Longden, Cameron Quinn, Dan Moore, Emma Fox, Emma Telfer, Heather Christodoulou, Ingrid Langtry, James O'Dwyer, James Mirtschin, Jessica Githiomi, Justine Boland, Kris Daff, Leona Li, Lucy Goldsmith, Luke Eden, Madeline Ellerm, Maggie McKeand, Manny Singh, Matt Ablethorpe, Matt Roper, Nat Burcul, Nathan Elliott, Nicola Fawl, Rebecca Shackleton, Rob Moffatt, Robyn Lukstin, Sally Male, Sam Delmenico, Sarah Matzouranis, Simon Denny, Sophie Rzepecky, Stephen Dodd, Tim Schaefer, Tom Billings.

370 Swan St,
Richmond, Melbourne
VIC 3121
editorial@assemblepapers.com.au



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A new pathway to home ownership

A life in an Assemble building is one well-lived. Whether you're living independently, with your family, friends or pets, we're committed to fostering more connected, resilient local communities in homes built to last.

393 Macaulay Rd Kensington

Located among the wide, tree-lined streets of Kensington, 393 Macaulay Rd. is the first project to be delivered under Assemble Futures. Designed by Fieldwork Architects, 393 Macaulay Rd. features generous shared spaces, together with a landscaped, open-air walkway—bringing cross-flow ventilation and dual-aspect natural light to all homes. We have a small number of two bedroom apartments available. With residents set to move in this Spring, act now to find out more about this limited opportunity.



Communal space - artist impression only

15 Thompson St Kensington

Designed by Hayball Architects with landscaping by Oculus, 15 Thompson St. comprises studio, two and three-bedroom homes across eight levels. 15 Thompson St. is designed to encourage informal neighbourly interactions, whether it be the communal room, multi-purpose workshop, laundry facilities or an edible herb garden, these spaces are designed for social and collective culture to thrive. The building offers 100% renewable energy and passive design features: natural cross-flow ventilation from the open-air walkways and the cooling benefits of the exposed concrete ceilings.



Rooftop garden - artist impression only

4 Ballarat St Brunswick

Located in the heart of Brunswick and created by Fieldwork Architects, 4 Ballarat St. offers accessible, quality homes, designed to provide an enriched life inside and beyond the apartment. From a rooftop pavilion, to a multipurpose workshop, lending library, or external staircases that encourages neighbours to gather, 4 Ballarat St. exemplifies Brunswick's culture of community, sharing, and togetherness—connecting residents to place, and to each other. A clear set of design principles have been followed to ensure all apartments offer natural light, cross-flow ventilation, and connection to landscaping and open space. They also run on 100% renewable energy, as all Assemble buildings do.



Living room - artist impression only

Act now.
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