
ASSEMBLE *Papers*

THE CULTURE OF LIVING CLOSER TOGETHER.

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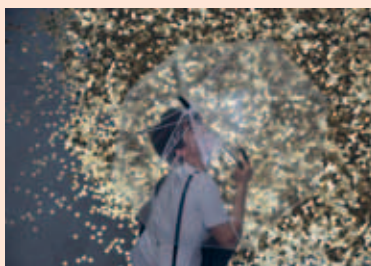
ISSUE #1 | FIRST HALF 2014



Zoned out

Mitra Anderson-Oliver delivers an urban planning 1-0-1 on how changes to Victoria's zoning regulations might affect you and your housing dreams.

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Movement of the crowd

Rafaela Pandolfini naturally looks to the movement of the crowd in places where people are preoccupied with carrying out contemporary rituals.

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String Garden by Pop Plant

Andy (Maxi) Walker and Gabriela Holland discovered a passion for plants while cultivating a garden paradise in the wilderness of Ollantaytambo, Peru. Follow their step-by-step guide to create a string garden for your own home.

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Alain de Botton on Living Architecture

Alain de Botton is a Zurich-born writer and philosopher now based in London. His 'philosophy of everyday life' covers the stuff of human existence: love, travel, work, status, architecture and most recently, religion for atheists.

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Dan, Paul, Eike: Mid-city mountain cabin

"Home is where we are all together and a space we can share with friends and family. It's not a definitive geographical or physical space, rather a place for laughter, being free, relaxation, making ideas and being inspired."

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The Cairo: romance and the minimum flat

A leafy art deco gem built by Australian modernist architect Best Overend, Cairo Flats was completed in 1936.

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Things revisited: Henry Wilson

In the fairly fickle and trend-conscious world of design, Sydney-based Henry Wilson has managed to forge a reputation for sturdy, no-nonsense craftsmanship.

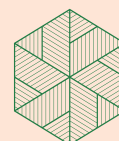
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The barometry of bees: Melbourne City Rooftop Honey

As you enjoy your daily grub, consider that every third mouthful is brought to you by the hardworking honey bee.

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Exploring small footprint living across art, design, architecture, urbanism, the environment & finance.

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EDITORIAL

THE CULTURE OF LIVING CLOSER TOGETHER

Eugenia Lim and Rachel Elliot-Jones

Hello, good reader. Welcome to the first ever print edition of Assemble Papers, a young publication with an old soul, exploring the culture of living closer together and small footprint life. Assemble Papers stands for optimism and the hunger to understand context; to join the dots between the ideal and the practical; to advocate for the local while participating in an international conversation.

We treat our readership with the utmost respect, as intelligent peers with whom we share values, knowledge and stories. Appealing to both left and right sides of the brain, Assemble Papers features content that aims for ingenuity and inventiveness, while taking a thoughtful, considered and practical approach to the clutter of contemporary life.

Assemble Papers launched in the digital realm in 2012, publishing work by and about a stellar mix of people; words, ideas and images related to living small.

New content is published on our website on a weekly basis and is distributed via our free e-newsletter every Friday morning, 11am AEST.

The decision to delve into the print medium was motivated by a desire to expand, reach out and broaden the discussion; to connect more individuals with important issues and interesting stories that affect them, now and in the future. The portability and tactility of printed matter is an exciting prospect. It creates the opportunity for chance encounters, incidental discovery of new ideas, and the ability to absorb information at a slower pace. In the following pages you will find a selection of our favourite pieces of content from the website, along with a couple of timely new additions.

The timing of our pioneer print foray is important. The current housing affordability crisis in Melbourne, coupled with the recent changes to residential zonings proposed by local councils, has huge implications for the urban fabric and social diversity of our city (planning guru Mitra Anderson-Oliver seeks to demystify the complex new planning regulations in *Zoned out* on page 6). What you have before you is a tangible invitation to pause, think, and participate. A call to arms, if you will, as the time to have an opinion is now.

As Joseph Rykwert has said, “a city doesn’t happen because nature orders it... it happens because we have willed it.” We believe in the cities we live in, and the people who live in them (that’s you!). Together we have the power to effect change.

INTRODUCING ASSEMBLE

*Giuseppe (Pino) Demaio, Ben Keck
and Joachim (Quino) Holland*

Assemble is an architecture, design and property development company focused on small footprint projects. Assemble also provides architecture services via Fieldwork and creative services via Local Peoples. With backgrounds in architecture, design, property and finance, Giuseppe Demaio, Ben Keck and Joachim Holland joined forces in 2010, spurred to action by the increasing absence of well-designed housing in Australian cities.

For the best part of two decades, our friends and peers have negotiated soaring rents and decreasing housing affordability as property prices have risen dramatically in the inner city. For those lucky enough to be in a position to buy, detached housing and the traditional Victorian terrace have become increasingly out of reach and arguably out-of-date, leaving apartments and townhouses as the only affordable options. Sadly, the design and quality of new apartments and townhouses in Australia has largely been driven by the needs of investors, rather than the needs of residents. All around Melbourne, developments are going up with eye-watering exteriors, thin walls, minimal natural light, poor quality fixtures and flimsy workmanship; built with a lack of care for future residents and disregard for the fabric of our city.

We founded Assemble to counter this trend by providing small footprint housing designed for the needs and wants of residents. We believe that small footprint living is not a compromise. You can and should be able to live the fullest of lives in a small but well-considered space – and we know this through direct experience. The three directors of Assemble have lived in apartment cities such as Copenhagen, Barcelona, Amsterdam, Berlin and Brussels, witnessing the complete and complex lives lived by fellow apartment dwellers who had families, kept pets, worked, studied, shared picnics, tinkered with bicycles, grew indoor plants, threw parties and shared spaces. What made these apartment cities and spaces work? Good design, robust materials and buildings that were built to last. But in addition to the physical built environment, what made these people and places work was the more intangible but equally important culture of collectivity. Neighbours were encouraged to interact in and through what was shared, while also having a sense of agency and ownership of their own space.



This knowledge of and fondness for small footprint living informs the Assemble ethos. We listen to the needs and wants of our peers and will build homes for them, taking just as much pride in their homes as our own, *mi casa es su casa*.

Over the past two years, Assemble has been looking for a location in the inner north of Melbourne for a small to medium scale apartment or townhouse project to bring our ideas on small footprint living to life. During this time we have assessed hundreds of opportunities, however suitable sites have been extremely difficult to find and secure on viable terms. The main challenge has been that the residential development market is highly competitive and increasingly, we are competing against developers who have a lower cost of capital and/or a greater capacity than us to pay for sites. Typically, these developers are: offshore developers who are motivated to invest capital in countries with lower sovereign risk than their own; builder-developers who are motivated to secure the building margin at the expense of the development margin; developers prepared to cut corners and sacrifice quality; and other developers who just don't do their homework and end up paying too much for sites.

Despite the disappointment of not having secured our first project, we remain optimistic and determined to make our vision for small footprint living a reality. We're confident that 2014 will be the year in which Assemble's first project comes to fruition and it will be well worth the wait! For more information about what we have in mind for our first project and to register your interest, please visit our website and follow the link to 'Project 1'.

In the spirit of fostering the culture of living closer together, Assemble also publishes Assemble Papers, a publication exploring small footprint living across art, design, architecture, urbanism, the environment and finance. Beyond bricks and mortar, Assemble Papers reflects our broader passions and beliefs in inventive yet practical approaches to sustainable living. We are very proud to be bringing you the first print edition of Assemble Papers and we thank the founding editor Eugenia Lim, the acting editor Rachel Elliot-Jones and all of the talented contributors for their energy, involvement and generosity to make this publication possible. We also thank our loyal and growing readership for their continued interest and support.

Ben, Quino and Pino.

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ZONED OUT

Mitra Anderson-Oliver

An urban planning 1-0-1 on how changes to Victoria's zoning regulations might affect you and your housing dreams.

Statutory planning is not exactly the stuff of dinner party conversation. It's part of the 'dark matter' of the city: most don't know about it, or know how to know about it, or perhaps even want to know about it. Housing affordability though, is something that we can all relate to. Unless you are lucky enough to already own your home, you are probably painfully aware of how increasingly inaccessible the Melbourne housing market is.

In mid-2013 something happened in the deep recesses of Melbourne's planning bureaucracy that, arguably, has the potential to make this situation significantly worse. A new zoning scheme for Victoria was released, replacing the existing residential 1, 2 and 3 Zones with three new ones: the Neighbourhood Residential Zone (affectionately called the 'No-go Zone'); the General Residential Zone ('Slow-go Zone') and the Residential Growth Zone ('Go-Zone!'). As the nicknames imply, the intention behind the new zonings was to provide greater certainty as to where we can expect more and higher density development, and conversely where we can relax and rest easy in the knowledge that our heritage streetscapes will be preserved.

So far, only two councils have had their new zones approved by the Minister for Planning: Glen Eira and Greater Dandenong, with seven having submitted but still awaiting approval, and nineteen others at various stages of completion.

The delay on approval of those that have submitted their amendments may have something to do with the fact that Glen Eira, as the first out of the blocks, took a particularly conservative approach, zoning 78% of their area as Neighbourhood Residential, or No-go Zone. This zoning allows no more than two dwellings on a lot (and with attendant restrictions on height and setbacks making even this difficult) effectively putting a stop to the small scale residential in-fill development that has, over the past 10 years, supplied over a third of Glen Eira's new housing. Other Councils have followed suit. For example, the City of Yarra's new zone proposal seeks to apply the Neighbourhood Residential Zone to 77% of residential land, with 23% General Residential Zone and no Residential Growth Zone at all.

According to Terry Rawnsley, of SGS Economics and Planning, such restrictive application of development zones is effectively reshaping the housing market at the stroke of a pen. A significant portion of our inner ring development has, up until now, been delivered by your 'ma and pa' investors, taking out a second mortgage to, for example, convert a decent sized house block in Bentleigh into three or four semi-detached town houses. James Mansour, of property consultancy firm Charter Keck Cramer, agrees and adds that it is these "small-scale developers who are responsible for a significant supply of affordable new housing in established areas across Melbourne." The high application of the Neighbourhood Residential Zone will decrease the opportunity and viability of this type of small-scale

NEIGHBOURHOOD RESIDENTIAL ZONE
PROVIDES A HIGH LEVEL OF PROTECTION FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER, WITH HEIGHT LIMITS AND LIMITED OPPORTUNITY FOR INCREASED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT.

GENERAL RESIDENTIAL ZONE
ENCOURAGES MODERATE GROWTH AND HOUSING DIVERSITY IN AREAS WITH GOOD ACCESS TO SERVICES AND TRANSPORT.

RESIDENTIAL GROWTH ZONE
PROVIDES FOR INCREASED HOUSING GROWTH AND DENSITY.



ILLUSTRATION BY MARC MARTIN

development, which will in turn increase our reliance on new supply from larger apartment projects, particularly in the Central City Region, which tend to cater towards the needs of investors more so than owner-occupiers.

The problem, according to both Terry and James, is that it is going to become increasingly difficult to find affordable property in Melbourne. We are already in a state of constrained supply not meeting demand, and by cutting off what has thus far been one of the more steady supplies of new, well-located housing, prices are only going to go up, but supply can't respond. By locking down our inner and middle ring suburbs, we are further entrenching the social and economic divide in our city, pushing demand for single detached dwellings further towards the fringe, with its attendants of ever-longer travel times, lack of access to jobs and services and escalating infrastructure servicing costs.

Exactly what the current state government was thinking in leaving it to local governments to determine how much new housing to supply in residential areas – and by implication how our city is to be shaped in the coming decades – is unclear. It is hoped that the current pause in approvals is suggestive of a high-level rethink on the wisdom of this approach.

On this point, Sam Nathan, from Charter Keck Cramer states in a recent report, "policy and industry stakeholders must do more to understand the tripartite relationship between property (as the delivery vehicle), town planning and economics to ensure the aspirations of a city are embedded in strategic policy." This disconnect between the short-term political aspirations of the day and the long term needs of the housing market, he says, threatens to undermine our ability to meet the housing and lifestyle needs of our growing population.

Strong leadership is required at the state and local government level to strike a balance between the protection of established residential areas for existing residents and the encouragement of new and appropriate housing supply for future residents. The high application of the Neighbourhood Residential Zone suggests that this leadership is lacking and that decisions are being made for political expediency rather than in the long term interests of the city.

Alain de Botton on Living Architecture

TEXT BY EUGENIA LIM

Alain de Botton is a Zurich-born writer and philosopher now based in London. His ‘philosophy of everyday life’ covers the stuff of human existence: love, travel, work, status, architecture and most recently, religion for atheists. A writer and thinker of many commitments and convictions, Alain put a few thoughts to email while in transit to Oz on a book tour.



A ROOM FOR LONDON – DESIGNED BY DAVID KOHN ARCHITECTS IN COLLABORATION WITH FIONA BANNER, PART OF LIVING ARCHITECTURE. PHOTO BY CHARLES HOSEA.



A ROOM FOR LONDON – A ONE BEDROOM INSTALLATION DESIGNED BY DAVID KOHN ARCHITECTS IN COLLABORATION WITH FIONA BANNER, PART OF LIVING ARCHITECTURE.
PHOTO BY CHARLES HOSEA.

Physical and psychological space for living, reflection and inspiration is an ongoing theme in your work. How do these interests play out in your own domestic setting – what does your own home look and feel like?

I live in a contemporary home, very uncluttered, wide, open, white. I feel I need this to counterbalance the chaos and busy-ness of my life. I look in architecture for values I revere but don't have enough of in my day-to-day existence. I have always had a problem with the nostalgic side of English life, and in my house, resolutely set myself against it. It's a house that might have been built by a Swiss architect in Zurich – it aims to suggest optimism about the future.

You published 'The Architecture of Happiness' in 2006 and were named an honorary fellow by the RIBA in 2009. When did you become an architecture lover and advocate?

I grew up in Switzerland, a country with an extraordinarily high level of good, decent architecture: schools, bus stops, houses are all exemplary. It was a shock moving to the UK as a boy to see a far inferior design and construction standard – so what I'm advocating is a return to what I used to know as a child.

Overall, I believe that architecture has a huge role to play in altering our mood.

When we call a chair or a house beautiful, really what we're saying is that we like the way of life it's suggesting to us... if it was magically turned into a person, we'd like who it was. It would be convenient if we could remain in much the same mood wherever we happened to be, in a cheap motel or a palace (think of how much money we'd save on redecorating our houses), but unfortunately we're highly vulnerable to the coded messages that emanate from our surroundings. This helps to explain our passionate feelings towards matters of architecture and home decoration: these things help to decide who we are.

Of course, architecture can't on its own always make us into contented people. One might say that architecture suggests a mood to us, which we may be too internally troubled to be able to take up. Its effectiveness could be compared to the weather: a fine day can substantially change our state of mind – and people may be willing to make great sacrifices to be nearer a sunny climate. Then again, under the weight of sufficient problems (romantic or professional confusions, for example), no amount of blue sky, and not even the greatest building, will be able to make us smile. Hence the difficulty of trying to raise architecture into a political priority: it has none of the unambiguous advantages of clean drinking water or a safe food supply. And yet it remains vital.



THE BALANCING BARN BY MVRDV. PHOTO COURTESY LIVING ARCHITECTURE.



GOOD HANG OUT – THE BALANCING BARN BY MVRDV. PHOTO COURTESY LIVING ARCHITECTURE.

Many people view architecture either as a luxury or an ideal, something separate from their daily lives. Can you talk about the idea of accessible design and architecture in relation to your work with the Living Architecture project?

Judging from the success of interior design magazines and property shows, you might think that the UK was now as comfortable with good contemporary architecture as it is with non-native food or music. But scratch beneath the metropolitan, London-centric focus, and you quickly discover that Britain remains a country deeply in love with the old and terrified of the new. Country hotels compete to tell us how ancient they are; holiday cottages vaunt that they were already in existence when Jane Austen was a girl.

A few years ago, I wrote a book about architecture critical of British nostalgia and low expectations (*The Architecture of Happiness*). It got a healthy amount of attention, on the back of which I was invited to a stream of conferences about the future of architecture. But one night, returning from one such conference in Bristol, I had a dark moment of the soul. I realised that however pleasing it is to write a book about an issue one feels passionately about, the truth is that – a few exceptions aside – books don't change anything.

I realised that if I cared so much about architecture, writing was just a coward's way out; the real challenge was to build.

So on the back of a notepad was born a project which officially launched two years ago: Living Architecture (a not-for-profit organisation that puts up houses around the UK designed by some of the world's top architects and makes these available to the public to rent for holidays throughout the year.) We describe it as a Landmark Trust for contemporary architecture.

Our dream was to allow people to experience what it is like to live and sleep in a space designed by an outstanding architectural practice. While there are examples of great modern buildings in Britain, they tend to be in places that one passes through (airports, museums, offices), and the few modern houses that exist are almost all in private hands and cannot be visited. This seriously skews discussions of architecture. When people declare that they hate modern buildings they are on the whole speaking not from experience of homes, but from a distaste of post-war tower blocks or bland air conditioned offices.

Living Architecture's houses are deliberately varied. One of them by the Dutch firm MVRDV hangs precariously off the edge of a hill in Suffolk. Another in Thorpeness by the Norwegian architects JVA has four steel roofs, each of which houses a bedroom and a bathroom. A third, by the young Scottish practice NORD is a stark black box in the shadow of Dungeness nuclear power station. A fourth, by the legendary Swiss architect Peter Zumthor, is a secular mini-monastery which aims to bring an ecclesiastical calm and solemnity to the Devon countryside.

The idea has been to avoid the obvious and to place houses in locations one hadn't necessarily ever thought of holidaying in and to design rooms different from those



THE SHINGLE HOUSE BY NORD. PHOTO BY CHARLES HOSEA.



FRAMED VIEW – THE SHINGLE HOUSE BY SCOTTISH ARCHITECTS NORD, PART OF LIVING ARCHITECTURE. PHOTO BY CHARLES HOSEA.

that people know from their own homes. We also want to keep things accessible. Prices start at twenty pounds per person per night and the buildings themselves, while always comfortable, are far from grand.

The organisation has an educational mission at its core, a wish to teach as well as to soothe and relax... luxurious toiletries in the bathrooms are just a way of sweetening the pill of learning. We have been criticised in some quarters for building holiday homes when there is an overall housing shortage, to which we'd simply answer that the organisation in fact hopes to lessen the demand for second homes which places such pressure on rural economies and the environment.

In the future, we hope to be able to build one new house every year – and each time, to push the boundaries of architecture a little more. We want to build a tower on the Isle of Sheppey, a house for a modern hermit in the East Anglian fenlands, a low-cost eco house outside Aberdeen and a cojoined building for a divorced family in the Yorkshire moors.

For a writer, it was undeniably something of a challenge to have to become a practical sort of person. Behind every house lies a seemingly endless procession of meetings with donors, local authorities, architects, waste disposal experts and cutlery manufacturers. The house rental business demands a keen attention to detail: you won't get far without an in-depth knowledge of mattress protectors and the best dog policy (yes, but not in the bedrooms). Yet there's fun in the minutiae. Whatever the pleasures of designing your own home, it's perhaps even more satisfying imagining someone else's holiday needs, to design their bedside library, welcome basket and closet.

I wouldn't have driven this project forward if I didn't believe that architecture changes our characters.

We are simply not the same people in whatever room we are in. For too long in Britain, our buildings have suggested that the past is the only worthy realm, that we have to dress in the clothes of yesteryear and that technology is bad and the future terrifying. Living Architecture's houses propose a new vision of the United Kingdom as a country that is reconciled to technology, that is no longer painfully in thrall to the past, that is democratic, tolerant, playful and optimistic.

The salvation of British housing lies in raising standards of taste. If one considers how rapidly and overwhelmingly this has been achieved in cooking, there is much to be optimistic about. Consumers have learnt to ask probing questions about salt or fat levels which it wouldn't have occurred to a previous generation to raise. With the right guidance, a similar sensitivity could rapidly be fashioned to the worst features of domestic buildings. My hope is that a holiday in a Living Architecture house will, in a modest but determined way, help to change the debate about what sort of houses we want to live in.

What is optimism for you?

Optimism is an awareness that life is very short and therefore that the risks of trying something out are not as great as the risks of never daring.

ALAIN DE BOTTON: ALAINEBOTTON.COM
LIVING ARCHITECTURE: LIVING-ARCHITECTURE.CO.UK



RENDER OF PETER ZUMTHOR'S THE SECULAR RETREAT, PART OF LIVING ARCHITECTURE. IMAGE COURTESY PETER ZUMTHOR.

Beach vernacular & Boyd: Kerstin Thompson

TEXT BY LEON GOH

Australian summer means slow languid days spent at the beach. On a recent escape to Port Fairy in Victoria, I became enamoured with beach life and this distinctly relaxed mode of living. On the topic of how the beach dwelling can influence our way of being, I spoke to Kerstin Thompson, architect and beach house believer, on the idea of ‘making do’ with less, and how her own coastal projects seem to resonate a Robin Boyd-like simplicity.



AN OCEAN VISTA FROM WITHIN THE BASTION. HOUSE AT BIG HILL, KERSTIN THOMPSON ARCHITECTS. PHOTO BY TREVOR MEIN.

The beach getaway is incredibly enticing. I wanted to ask you about how you contextualise and design this kind of built form in your practice?

In terms of our work, design and buildings are all about ways of living. Beach houses or second houses are often the way that practices start. It tends to be quite a common first project, even more than a renovation. Often the client is likely to give a bit more latitude and experiment in their non-permanent house.

Once you have done a few of them the differences between the beach house and the primary house become more evident. You start to be able to see them as a survey and think about the different groups that they fall into. In terms of personal experiences, you come to the design of a project as an architect with formal training, the things that you have learnt about architecture in school, both rationally and intellectually; but you also bring your own experiences through childhood. The two converge – almost always aspects of our buildings register a childhood memory or something intuitive about a space you've previously known.

The Australian beach house is a particular approach to living and holidaying. Do you have fond memories or personal experiences that continue to resonate?

I spent a lot of summers as a child in Merimbula, NSW. A lot of those summer memories are rooted in that place. There are certain things that I remember about the house – my mum and dad built that house and my father designed it – he was not an architect so it was entirely do-it-yourself.

They wanted something that felt Mediterranean so an arched verandah featured. It was a small and very compact house actually – and it was made out of concrete block which was a cheap way to build at the

time. It was very builder-driven of course but it had surprising clarity to it. Now that I think about it, my love of the concrete block perhaps stems from that... memories embedded in the house, a collection of feelings that are evoked.

Beach houses are so embedded in the Australian vernacular. You've previously talked about the notion that the beach house represents 'the coming together for parallel lives.' Can you expand upon this idea?

With the beach house or the second house, it's often the place where people go to get away with one other chosen person or family. Or it's about getting together with a lot of people. So that sense of the collective experience and many lives intersecting in one place is quite central to how these spaces operate.

The beach house is essentially about 'making do', you don't design for every situation, it's about people's behaviour and learning to adapt to fit the space that you've got and vice versa.

For instance: kids bunking together, fitting as many into a room as possible; or how the front lawn becomes an informal gathering, camping place. Similarly, the notion of a single bathroom – negotiating who's next for the shower – is all part of the deal. These adaptive ideas about beach houses I find really interesting.

I think back to my time at Merimbula again and tasks like washing the dishes were entirely social. You'd get lost in conversation during those pursuits, time fades away... I think there's something quite important about that.



THE DARK ROOF CAMOUFLAGES THE HOUSE WITHIN THE SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE. HOUSE AT BIG HILL. PHOTO BY TREVOR MEIN.



VIEWS ARE CAPTURED THROUGH PICTURE FRAME WINDOWS. HOUSE AT BIG HILL. PHOTO BY TREVOR MEIN.

What about this notion of the beach house encouraging a mode of living or behaving that is the antithesis of living in an urban environment? Tell us more about your thoughts on this...

Urban living is largely about your day-to-day – ingrained habits and making your space fit. Alternatively, your habits fit your space, but they are definitely intertwined. I would say that as soon as people spend a few days in any space, they start to form routines and rituals.

So there might be subtle shifts in how you prepare a meal in your urban situation; it might be slightly more makeshift in a secondary house.

If I think of something like light, you would tend to live around that natural cycle. At Merimbula, the house had lots of west-facing windows, so I remember this fantastic time at the end of the day when the table would be bathed in that glorious golden light. The golden hour. I used to love just sitting in it. The light really made you want to be in that space, to make the most of it. In any other house with a different aspect you might spend your days differently.

When I think about this, I consider what the beach house might not have. It's not the sort of building that seeks to replicate a city existence, it's more about what the house can't give you... that's what the beach is really for. That makes a really big difference: the building doesn't have to do it all. Space in a more modest form – which is my idealised version.

Recently I stayed in a beach shack in Port Fairy and was able to experience beach living with fresh eyes. I feel that archetypal Australian notions of landscape play a big part in how beach houses are designed. In your experience, is this something that you consider when designing a new beach house?

Yes definitely. What I've learnt is that when we first go to a site, I think one of the key reactions is whether it's going to be a shack or whether it's a more 'hunker down' space... so perhaps there's a lightweight option and a heavyweight option – though I've never thought about it as oppositional before. The landscape definitely informs, whether it's a minimal form of shelter where you can feel the elements, like perhaps the Blairgowrie house, or if it's more about the refuge, the bunker or the bastion, an entirely different relationship to the outside.



THE TIERED STAIRWELL OF BLAIRGOWRIE HOUSE. PHOTO BY TREVOR MEIN.

You have a strong sense of flow between 'inside-ness' and 'outside-ness' in the Blairgowrie house whereas with the Big Hill house we recently designed – partly because it felt more exposed as a site, but also because it's more bushfire prone – ideas of mass and inflammability resonated and were translated into built form with an interior that was deliberately distinct from outside. Much more a bastion than a shack.

I wanted to talk more broadly about Robin Boyd's contribution to this vernacular. In a 2009 'Monthly Magazine' article, Peter Conrad revisits Robin Boyd's 'The Australian Ugliness':

"Boyd describes an Australian rite of passage in reverse: our necessary escape into the wider, larger world is followed by the homecoming, when we look with newly opened eyes at the place we left and see for the first time its strangeness, its savagery and its abstract, inhuman beauty."

This, I feel, really rings true about the strange beauty of the landscape. In your experience, how does this inform choices of materiality?

I think something that I've noticed is that good architecture will always draw out and amplify aspects of its situation and its place.

I've noticed too that things you might have had a blind spot to may become clearer when the building is there. It becomes a way of heightening your understanding of place, actually.

For instance, with Big Hill it was once the building had gone up – which had a lovely dark blackness to its interior – that it immediately drew out the blackness in the iron bark trunks. All of a sudden, the forest felt even more beautiful. And similarly, as soon as you put a wall in a landscape, shadows start to appear that you wouldn't see otherwise. So that relationship between the built form and place can really draw out things you may have otherwise missed. Whether in the city or the bush, it's the same thing, this amplification of place by architecture.

In your essay 'Building on the Sublime', you talk about your beach house at Big Hill, 'aligning surface and structure... offering a purity of form and construction that exhibits a Boyd-like preference for the reduced over complexity.' Is this simplified approach important to your practice?

Yes definitely, and I think it's even more important because Melbourne's architectural culture – perhaps this is a new world tendency – is very 'additive'. It's like food: you know when you mix a whole lot of cuisines there's always one ingredient too many or maybe an extra step you could have done without. So I think a lot of local buildings are that way – some of it is not deliberate and some of it is, in order to mix things up and create a disjuncture.

Do you think this is particularly a new world approach?

I think so, because there aren't so many rules. There isn't some law that's been around for 500 years that circumvents that freedom. I also think probably partly in reaction to that, as you get more experienced, I feel you do seek a more synthesised and singular response.

There are some design elements in your beach houses that to my untrained eye reference some of Boyd's simple visual language. Is this something you seek out, or is it a more instinctive response to the client, site and brief?

Probably a bit of both. Sometimes it's an unintended consequence of being in Melbourne and growing up around certain buildings – these buildings I guess are recognised as your local legacy. Inevitably that influences you and similarly there are schools of



BLAIRGOWRIE HOUSE. PHOTO BY TREVOR MEIN.

thought that you align yourself with and not others. I think too that some of it is intuitive. So in terms of the Big Hill house, at the time I wasn't looking particularly at Boyd's work as references except that I knew that there was an interest in geometry that came out of Melbourne's Modernists. It was when the building was nearly completed that I started think, 'gosh I can see a connection in the windows with Jimmy Watson's façade', for instance, realising it was in the back of my mind without even recognising it.

Or strangely, the feeling of NGV's Great Hall, the mass of those walls and the darkness of that space and the blackness of that ceiling... I realise in retrospect that there's a quality to that space that I was trying to speak to. So it's a subliminal process until you recognise the links.

When speaking about your work, you often bring it back to the 'act of living' above anything else. Why do you think this is so important?

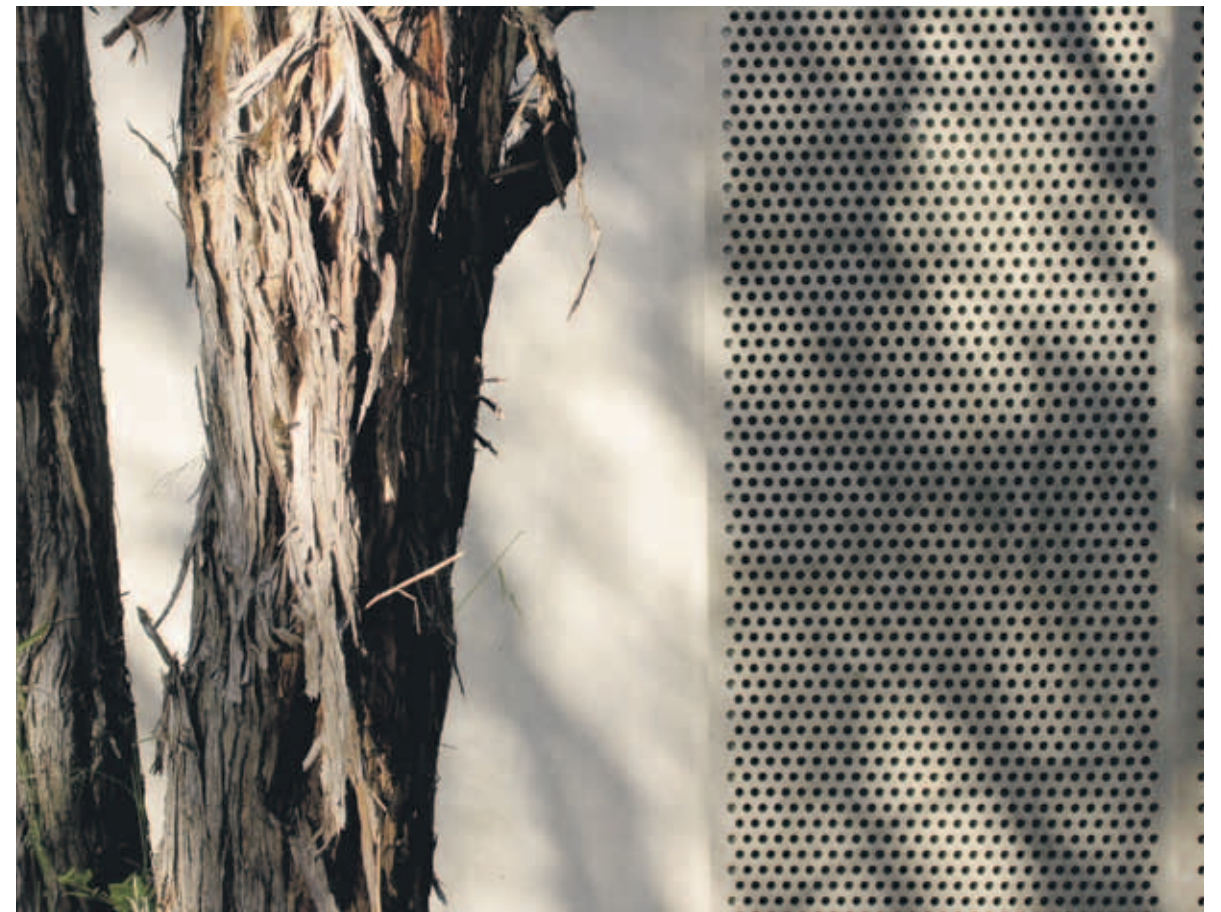
In really simple terms, I believe that ultimately, we make buildings to hold life. That's what they are for...

well, that's what I think they are for, and I think we can lose sight of that so easily. So in that regard, that is the driver. Making the thing that can hold people, their things or events – the building should be gently playing its role and is not the main attraction.

I have since thought that a mistake people can make is in thinking that a building can provide them with a life that they don't actually have. The fact of the matter is that it can't. And I think sometimes architecture is expected to provide a kind of liveliness through visual articulation or a form of distraction. It's quite a hard thing to get around, but I do sense there's a pressure for buildings to perform, to be visually expressive or active as a way to fill in what might not be there through living. So we try to strive for the opposite of that. Simplicity or synthesis is what we seek throughout all of our projects. It's a hard thing to explain and achieve, especially in a culture that it so visual.

But essentially, architecture is about living, whether it's a police station, or a house.

As we move towards greater urbanisation, Australia is now one of the world's most urbanised nations. What is the place for the Aussie beach shack in all this?



BLAIRGOWRIE HOUSE. PHOTO BY TREVOR MEIN.

The difficulty comes when the pressures of a more urban way of living are expected by the sea. The building can then become really bloated, establishing boundaries, formal rooms etc. and all of a sudden you are right up next to your neighbours and you enact things that you were essentially trying to escape from. So I think the shack has its place, but we need to be mindful about what's distinctive about it and not lose that sense.

I wanted to bring it back to a Boyd quote that you reference in your essay:

"The object of a design, in architecture as in anything else, is to say or do the essential thing as simply and directly and purely as possible"
(page 133, 'Living in Australia').

How important do you think this notion of 'simplicity' is to design?

Well, putting myself in a more reductivist camp, I do think that simplicity is important. It's about an economy of means, which I think is entirely worthwhile

pursuing. Building is by nature an extravagant and violent act. It will always be a better thing to not build, so when architects say that they are building in a sustainable way, it's never sustainable on one level...

If you are going to build, then aim to do it in a way that is careful with its use of things. Consider: 'have I got the most out of this element? instead of adding ten things. Can I make this one detail fit a number of purposes? I think that's something that we are interested in and that's partly for aesthetic purposes, but there's also a bit of pragmatism and economy in that. It's all of those things together that I think give it value of a different kind.

KERSTIN THOMPSON ARCHITECTS (KTA) WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1994 BY KERSTIN THOMPSON. BASED IN MELBOURNE, THE WORK OF THE PRACTICE SPANS ARCHITECTURE, INTERIORS, LANDSCAPE AND URBAN DESIGN. PROJECTS RANGE FROM THE INTIMATE AND SMALL-SCALE THROUGH TO MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE, AND ARE LOCATED ACROSS URBAN, COASTAL, SUBURBAN AND RURAL LANDSCAPES. RECENT PROJECTS INCLUDE MARYSVILLE AND CARRUM DOWNS POLICE STATIONS, THE VISITORS CENTRE FOR THE AUSTRALIAN GARDEN AT RBG CRANBOURNE, MONASH UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF ART AND IAN POTTER SCULPTURE FORECOURT. RECENT RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS INCLUDE HOUSE AT BIG HILL AND NAPIER STREET HOUSING IN FITZROY. TO VIEW MORE WORK BY KTA, VISIT: KERSTINTHOMPSON.COM

Things revisited: Henry Wilson

TEXT BY EUGENIA LIM
IMAGES BY SUSANNAH WIMBERLEY

Henry Wilson is an old soul. His utilitarian objects riff on the familiar, long-lasting language of inter-war design. What fuels his environmentally conscious ethos is not flashy, biodegradable processes or what he calls 'beating the green drum.' Rather, it's to design only that which is completely necessary; to use his head, hands and heart to craft pieces that will outlive him by many, many lifetimes.





In the fairly fickle and trend-conscious world of design, Sydney-based Henry Wilson has managed to forge a reputation for sturdy, no-nonsense craftsmanship. Timelessness and pared-back resolve – an elegance borne out of design for necessity and longevity, not planned obsolescence. His pieces are revisited, remixed and re-designed takes on existing, but perhaps previously outmoded objects. In Henry's work, authorship is blurred, but not the integrity of his design. His *things revisited* series includes reworkings of 'classic' pieces such as the Anglepoise lamp, a vegetable-tan leather cover for the TOLIX chair, and a 'hacked' update of the Wassily chair. According to Henry's less-is-more philosophy, he begins each new project only after it's passed his own strict 'design ethic' checklist, which includes these questions: *will it last or outlive its owner? Is it honestly resolved and therefore beautiful? Does the world actually need this object, or does something already exist that better serves this function?*

Scouring hard rubbish, tips and junkyards is where Henry gleans the most inspiration and the blueprints for his designs.

"Inspiration with the lost analogue world. Things that have been made redundant or cast aside for whatever reason... yet they may hold answers to modern day problems. Industrial connections, industry and military... here design needs to function, absolutely. It's a design process that has to exist. There's no authorship to it... it's just the way it has to be. I find that very interesting."

His approach to sustainability is to look at what can be salvaged and repaired from what is already in existence; to look to 'classic' objects (such as those in *things revisited*) as models of design that have stood the test of time. To Henry, the designs he adapts are already open, straightforward and simple.

"There's no trickery, which is often through design via engineers. It's about design through need, not just form-giving. These are all things I try to inject into my own work. Openness and adaptation. The only reason I can adapt the Anglepoise lamp or Wassily chair is because they are sort of 'nuts and bolts' pieces. And you can repair this kind of design. Which is another big component of my work. Either you make it so well it never breaks or you make it so it's easily repaired."



In 2011, Henry won the Bombay Sapphire Design Discovery Award (a prestigious mantle and the most sought-after design-nod in Australia) with the A-joint, a sand-cast joinery system made from reclaimed metals, “almost indestructable” (says Wilson) that can be used in countless configurations and forms, from tables to workstands, stools to temporary shelters.

“The A-joint in particular I’m confident to say has a lifetime warrantee. You couldn’t break it and believe me, I’ve tried! Also, in my work, I try to keep stylistic embellishments out of it. The fact that each piece has got a utility component to it, it’s hard to attribute it to a specific time. Each object is boiled down to what it is... there’s nothing that can date the object. I try to do that with my pieces.”



In 2012, Henry secured the top spot in the inaugural SOYA Craft and Object Design award category, which includes a mentorship with Australian expat superstar designer Marc Newson. Newson is world-renown for his fluid, futuristic and luxurious pieces – think the bulbous Lockheed Lounge or the curvy Ford 021C Concept Car. A doyen of the international design world, Newson’s products, interiors and transport designs appear to strive for new, ever-more shapes and typologies rather than simplify, improve or refine existing ones. Henry’s recent trip to London was in part to meet the man himself; a meeting that hasn’t yet eventuated as Newson’s office cancelled at the last minute. At the time of writing, a meeting was ‘booked in’ for December 2013, when Newson planned to visit his extended family in Sydney for Christmas. There appear to be glaring differences between Newson’s bravura and Wilson’s quiet, ‘tread lightly’ ethos. It makes one curious to see how the mentorship will work out – which way the knowledge might flow if given the chance.



In 2002–05, Henry studied under craftsman, author and curator Dr. Rodney Hayward (who continues to be a mentor and collaborator) at the ANU's School of Art,

“probably one of the last schools in the world that has a focus on ‘the making’ aspect. I studied woodwork and essentially, it was all about putting wood pieces together. Something designing itself – I was first introduced to this idea with Rodney. One of our first projects was to design sawhorses. A seemingly simple task, but what goes into making them is myriad. Each step is tantalisingly close to the next step. Once you start, you can see the end in sight and you are burning to get back to it, like a really good book.”

After graduating, Henry journeyed to the Design Academy Eindhoven, Netherlands, to study a Man + Humanity Masters in Design.

“In the 90s and early 2000s, there was a big rush or trend towards a kind of ‘jokey’ design, a la Droog. In a way, this course was a counter to that, to see what design can *do*.”



On the morning we spoke by phone, Henry was in one of his self-styled shipping containers at his studio and workshop in Rozelle, surrounded by neighbouring boat builders and resourceful types. While he has gained sought-after distribution through reputable local and international distributors such as Matter in New York, Australia's Corporate Culture and the international design community Svpply; and exposure through his industry awards, he has managed to buck the usual emphasis on commercialisation, marketing and ‘brand’.

“There’s this typical format: make an object and then somehow, somewhere, it gets seen by the creative director of a major label. And then you’re taken up. You’re given this kind of nod. You get wrapped up in this thing. It’s a cycle... you only get time to reflect if and when you’re big enough. You see that in really established designers like Jasper Morrison. Also, there’s a lot of independents out there making a lot of stuff... you can either have a ‘this is incredible’, or ‘this is terrifying, how am I going to make it in this world?’ attitude.”



Upon returning to Sydney and setting up his studio in 2010, Henry continues to navigate the “rat race” system of the contemporary design world without losing his standards or his head. Key champions of Henry’s straightforward, rational approach to sustainability are Liane Rossler and Sarah King of supercyclers who early on recognised the integrated nature of recycling, reuse and care in Henry’s design. While supercyclers is not a formal alliance, its members share a common approach to environmental sensibility and sensitivity in their varied design work across food, publishing, product design and ways of living.

A current project of Henry’s is the *vide-poche* (“empty pockets” in French) coin dish, sand-cast out of bronze and aluminium. The idea for *vide-poche* grew out of a conversation Henry had with a lawyer friend who was working on pro-bono human rights cases, about how professional skills can be used for greater good. After some pondering, Henry came up with the idea of the coin dish, a receptacle that can be placed on a desk or hallway table, for the contents of pockets:

keys, coins, cash. Thirty percent of the profits from the sale of *vide-poche* will go to Amnesty International – a reminder of what you possess, what you might be able to part with, or be lucky enough to share.

On what he would like his legacy to be, Henry hopes his objects will serve their function

“well past my lifetime. That they’ll continue to adapt and create and give people a bit of enjoyment. I’m not trying to save the world at all with my design, it’s just about engaging people, creating awareness about how things are made and made to last.”

TO VIEW MORE OF HENRY’S WORK, VISIT HENRYWILSON.COM



EYES

LAURENT LAFOLIE

Photography by James Geer
Text by Assemble Papers

JAMES GEER IS A MUCH SOUGHT-AFTER PHOTOGRAPHER WHOSE LOVE OF SUNSHINE AND BEAUTY HAS SEEN HIM TRAVEL THE WORLD, SHOOTING PICTURES FOR PUBLICATIONS AND BRANDS SUCH AS MONOCLE, HABITUS, GOURMET TRAVELLER, LEVIS AND HERMÈS (JUST TO NAME A FEW!). HE HAS A REAL EYE FOR PORTRAITURE AND SOME OF HIS MORE FAMOUS SITTERS HAVE INCLUDED GEOFFREY RUSH, KIMBRA, JULIA DEVILLE AND ROSE BYRNE.

AFTER A STINT IN GRAPHIC DESIGN, MELBOURNE-BORN AND RAISED JAMES GEER LEFT FOR THE BRIGHT LIGHTS OF NEW YORK, CUTTING HIS TEETH AS A PHOTOGRAPHER WHILE ASSISTING AND SHOOTING FASHION AND EDITORIAL CAMPAIGNS. SINCE THEN, HIS TRUE PASSION HAS BEEN CAPTURING THE EVER-EVOLVING "AUSTRALIAN LIFESTYLE", ALTHOUGH MOST RECENTLY, JAMES' WORK HAS SEEN HIM LEAD A SOMEWHAT NOMADIC EXISTENCE. IN 2012, JAMES PACKED UP HIS YOUNG FAMILY AND A FEW CAMERAS, BOUND FOR ITALY, FRANCE AND SPAIN. ON ASSIGNMENT FOR BOTH EUROPEAN AND AUSTRALIAN MAGAZINES, HE SPENT THE YEAR SCOUTING FOR INSPIRATION – PERSONAL NARRATIVES AND CHARACTERS HE COULD CAPTURE WITH HIS SHARP, GRAPHIC STYLE. LAURENT LAFOLIE IS ONE SUCH CHARACTER, A FRENCH PHOTOGRAPHER BASED IN THE SMALL TOWN OF SALIES-DE-BEARN. THERE'S A REAL "OUT-OF-TIMENESS" ABOUT LAURENT'S PROCESS, CROSSING ERAS AND ANALOGUE/DIGITAL TECHNIQUES, AS JAMES DISCOVERED WHEN HE SPENT A NUMBER OF DAYS PHOTOGRAPHING LAURENT. JAMES WAS LIVING IN THE TOWNSHIP AT THE TIME AND ONE DAY HE KNOCKED ON LAURENT'S DOOR AND ASKED IF HE COULD TAKE HIS PICTURE. AS JAMES RECALLS,

"I RECENTLY HAD THE PLEASURE OF HANGING OUT WITH A TRULY INSPIRING PHOTOGRAPHER. LAURENT LAFOLIE IS A MASTER PRINTER USING ONE OF THE FIRST PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTING TECHNIQUES INVENTED KNOWN AS PLATINUM-PALLADIUM PRINTING. I HAVE SHOT FILM FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AGES SINCE HANGING OUT WITH LAURENT. MEETING HIM REKINDLED A SPARK FOR ME, HE REMINDED ME OF THE MAGIC OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC PROCESS. HE WAS EXTREMELY GENEROUS (NOT TO MENTION TRUSTING) IN SHOWING ME HIS PROCESS. LAFOLIE COMBINES THESE AGE-OLD PRINTING TECHNIQUES WITH HI-RESOLUTION SCANS, INKJET NEGATIVE PRINTERS AND PHOTOSHOP. WHICH KIND OF SUITS HIS 17TH CENTURY STUDIO THAT IS COVERED IN 1960S WALLPAPER."







LESS IS MORE

LAW STREET HOUSE

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY PETER BENNETTS

TEXT
BY EUGENIA LIM

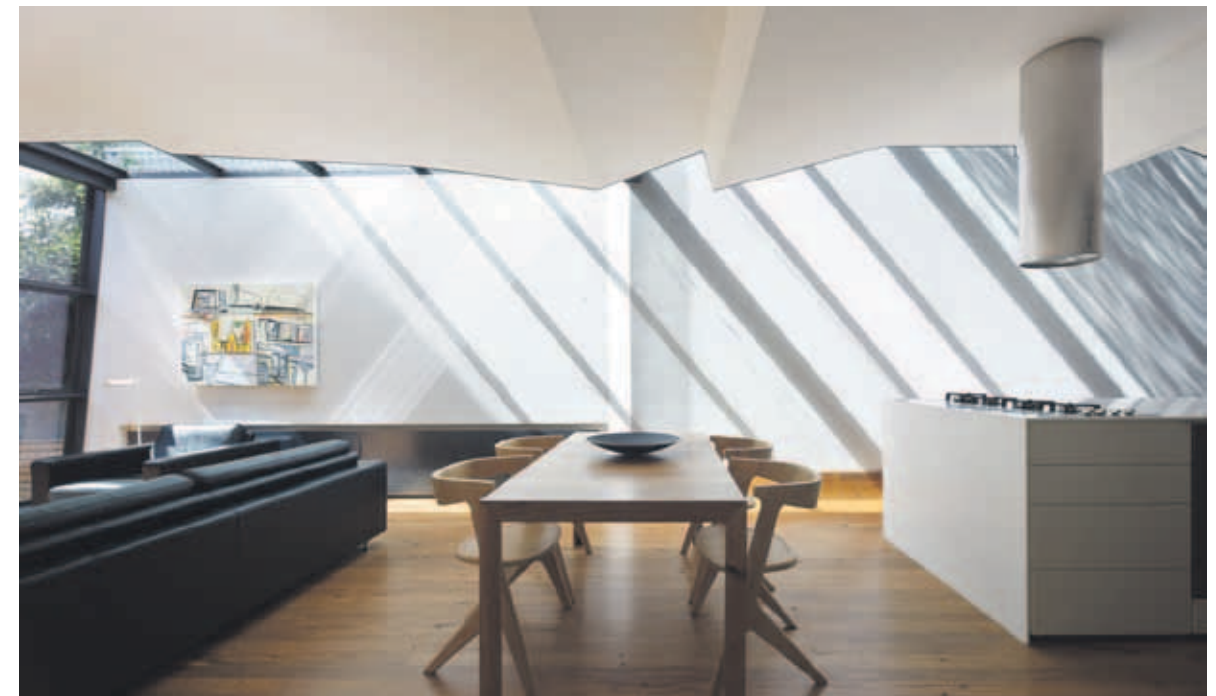


One of our favourite small footprint residential projects in Melbourne is the Law Street House, lovingly built by the hands of owner-architects Bruno Mendes and Amy Muir of Muir Mendes. A poker-faced plate steel façade conceals the second storey within a cleverly angled roof pitch. Overall the effect is clean and contemporary while retaining the quintessential ‘houseness’ of the site’s former Victorian worker’s cottage.



As a fundamentally collaborative profession, balancing the interests and desires of so many cooks (clients, builders, planners, financiers and neighbours, just to mention a few), architects can often feel a sense of detachment or loss of control once the construction phase begins (arguably earlier in some cases). The desire to construct using “one’s own hands” was the guiding principle behind Law Street for Bruno and Amy. Reflecting on the process, Amy says, “the house was always regarded as a project that would accelerate our education as architects. It provided a platform for experimentation and more importantly, the outcome was only to be compromised by our own limitations. Getting our hands dirty was very important. The immediate connection behind hand and mind is fundamental to creating and this is what we sought in setting about building the house.”

Working with Bruno’s father, Mendes senior, was also an integral part of the Law Street story. Joe Mendes manages steel fabrication for a large construction company. As the third link in the project team, Joe brought a wealth of experience and attention to detail to the build, offsetting the slower work of the novice builders. “Bruno and his father are very close and it was wonderful to watch them work together. Joe would constantly amaze us. His lateral, problem-solving brain never failed. He is a perfectionist and effectively mentored us through the build. There were times when Bruno and I would spend an entire 12-hour day trying to erect some scaffolding and would leave exhausted but proud that we had done a good job. The next morning, we would return to site only to discover that Joe, the perfectionist guardian angel, had made an early morning visit to adjust our handy work. We were constantly trying and then undoing and then finally getting it right.”



Given Joe’s line of work, steel was the obvious choice for the build, one that would allow for informed experimentation, built on an intimate understanding of steel’s responsiveness and materiality. “The site is also prone to severe termite damage and therefore it became an obvious choice of material to overcome this issue. The plate steel façade is very much in response to what we refer to as a condition of blankness. We were keen for the house to be recessive within the street. Mimicking the form of the site’s former cottage became a mechanism for simplification and to address the nuisances of the typical workman’s cottage.”

Set in a narrow South Melbourne street, flanked on three sides by a rear property, a two-storey ivy-clad modernist red brick house and an ornamented timber cottage, Law Street became a “fourth little pig” – access to natural light and views became paramount in the new design. The house was built on a 93m² site (over two levels its total footprint is 115m²) over three and a half years on weekends while Bruno and Amy worked full time as architects (prior to establishing Muir Mendes). This limitation formed the construction program and associated cash flow for the project.

When asked about the level of morale over this extended period, Amy recalls swinging between “two extremes”. On the one hand, the couple were energised, spending two days of the week outdoors, “getting our hands dirty, which is very liberating.” On the flipside, morale understandably dropped when there were setbacks or when an entire weekend was spent progressing a small component of the build, only to step back and see it had “barely made a dent”. “About half way through the process we felt like we couldn’t go on and that we might need to engage a builder. However, this passed after about a month and we became even more resolute about the fact that we wanted to be responsible for the construction and the finishing of the project.”

A ‘draw bridge’ to the front window provides privacy while directing light to the front bedroom, a subtle hint at the lives lived behind the steely façade. Entering the house, walking down the double height corridor, one’s gaze is directed through the full-length skylight to a framed view of an existing palm tree. The sky is invited in – here, the traditionally poky workers’ cottage corridor is inverted, encouraging maximum natural light indoors while offering a sense of space and expansiveness in an otherwise compact site. The crisp white interior displays shifting light patternations from dawn to dusk. A memory of the original lean-to roof lines ripple across the underside of the first floor, defining the ‘section’ of the house.

After three years so far living at Law Street, how does Amy and Bruno’s daily experience of the home compare to their architectural intentions? “The house was very much designed for Bruno and I and we still really enjoy the spatial qualities. We still get very excited when there is a full moon and the walls are patterned with camouflage netting shadows. However, we have realised that we are desperate to live in a more robust space! No more plasterboard for us!”

MANY THANKS TO AMY MUIR. TO VIEW MORE WORK BY MUIR MENDES, VISIT: MUIRMENDES.COM



LESS IS MORE

CARRER, AVINYÓ

TEXT BY
RACHEL
ELLIOT-JONES



PHOTOGRAPHY BY
JOSÉ HEVIA BLACH

Carrer Avinyó is a 'piano nobile' apartment in Barcelona's Barrio Gotico neighbourhood, designed by London-based practice David Kohn Architects. It is a true homage to its surrounds, referencing the triangular forms of the building and the nearby public Plaça, and at only 90m² it demonstrates exactly how to beautifully and intelligently rise to the challenge of a small space. In short, we are smitten, and we will be pulling out all the stops to earn a holiday invitation from the two brothers who own it.



The apartment is housed in a Flat Iron-like building, situated between diagonally intersecting laneways in Barcelona's historic Gothic Quarter. The shape of the building makes for an interesting triangular floor plan which DKA sought to highlight and celebrate. Project architect Saya Hakamata explains, "the apartment's shape takes the pattern of adjacent streets. This corner of the room was hidden in the existing layout and we tried to reveal it by removing all partition walls." Striking a balance between the features they set about to retain and the contemporary elements introduced was about "carefully selecting what is important and what is not" – in essence employing a "less is more" approach. As a result, Carrer Avinyó neatly combines old and new.



A key feature of the apartment is an exquisite geometrically tiled floor that matches the triangular shape of the space, and draws upon the tessellated pattern of the nearby Plaça George Orwell. From one side of the apartment to the other, the tiles gradually change in colour from red to green – loosely sectioning off the quarters of each brother, and inviting occupants to gather in the centre where colours blend.

In order to produce the tiles, DKA collaborated with local tile-makers Mosaics Marti who were Gaudi's tile suppliers and have a century-long association with traditional hydraulic tile paving. The gradient, says Hakamata, was just "one little addition to [the] traditional tile-making process... whether we add gradient or not, in the process of making hydraulic tiles, one person pours all different colours anyway." Describing how the design was devised, Hakamata says, "a large triangle tile consists of 25 little triangles. We started with all green (light green and dark green). We replaced one light green with light red until [the tile] become[s] all light greens and light reds. Then we replaced dark green with dark red. This gives us 26 colour variations. Within each colour variation each colour is randomly poured to achieve maximum variation."



Creating a sense of magic was fundamental to the brief. The apartment is the holiday home of two brothers, originally from Barcelona but now living and working overseas. The previous layout stifled entertainment with a series of small rooms that were antithetical to social gathering. DKA re-established the apartment as a space of leisure, a meeting point, a place for entertainment – creating an open-plan living space which is unusual to apartments in the area, centring upon a large custom-designed dining table.

The apartment's gloriously high ceiling and huge windows enabled a mezzanine level, where custom book cases turned into balconies on both ends. In order to release the central space for shared living, the bedrooms are stacked at the perimeter. These rooms are housed within large pieces of furniture, which evoke the forms of the city beyond the apartment. Hakamata says, "Because the apartment was located at the corner of the Gothic Quarter, also because of its proportion and size, it resembled a city and felt natural to introduce a small building within."



There is a synergy between this project and DKA's A Room for London installation for Living Architecture, created in collaboration with artist Fiona Banner – a boat that appeared to be precariously beached atop Queen Elizabeth Hall at Southbank Centre, looking out over the Thames. Similarly, Carrer Avinyó's bedrooms and balconies have a nautical quality to them, suggesting cabins and prows respectively. Hakamata says "it is quite natural that [our] projects influence each other."

CARRER AVINYÓ WON WORLD INTERIOR OF THE YEAR 2013 AT THE INSIDE AWARDS. MANY THANKS TO SAYA HAKAMATA.
TO VIEW MORE WORK BY DAVID KOHN ARCHITECTS VISIT: DAVIDKOHNS.CO.UK

LESS IS MORE

TEXT BY GEORGIA NOWAK

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE LONG STUDIO
BY BENT RENE SYNNEVÅG AND OF
ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE LUCY LAWLAK
BY STEFFEN JAGENBURG.

FOGO ISLAND



STUDIOS

This is the first in four instalments in a bumper Less is More feature on Saunders Architecture's striking Fogo Island artist studios. Georgia Nowak profiles this unique project, nestled in the windswept and jagged landscape of the remote Newfoundland region of Canada. The four studios blend Saunders' strong contemporary design nous with a highly localised sensitivity and respect for the land. After all, Todd Saunders is a born and bred Newfoundlander.

LONG STUDIO

INSIDE AREA: 130.8 M²
TOTAL FOOTPRINT: 211.2 M²
COMPLETED: 2010

THE LONG STUDIO IS THE FIRST AND LARGEST
OF THE STUDIOS IN THE COLLECTION.

“I took the Long Studio and used it as a test run. We didn’t know how good the engineers were; we didn’t know how the builders were. When we started building, it was like... Bang! It went so well. I knew after this one was up and going, the rest would be good.” – Todd Saunders



Now based in Norway, Todd Saunders founded Saunders Architecture in Bergen in 1998. With a focus on experimentation with building methods and materials, as well as an emphasis on traditional craftsmanship, Saunders Architecture works on small and larger-scale projects across Norway, England, Denmark, Italy, Sweden and Canada. The studio methodology is based on the notion that architecture must play a central role in creating place and connection to the local context, using form, materials and texture to evoke and inspire memory and human interaction.



Todd got the call to action and initial design brief from Zita Cobb (the wealthy philanthropist behind Shorefast Foundation) while he was paddling his kayak on one of Bergen's many famous fjords. According to Todd, Zita was drawn to investing in the culture and future of Fogo Island – the place where she grew up – after witnessing the collapse of the traditional cod fishery and the simultaneous flight of the community's young people who were leaving to seek opportunities elsewhere. Cobb believed that money disappeared, whereas culture stayed. Instead of investing in an industrial-scale profit-turning venture, she devised plans for a foundation that would both draw visitors to the island while giving locals a reason to stay. Todd recalls, "[Zita] wanted to find a local architect for the project and when she read an article about me in a Canadian newspaper – that I grew up in Newfoundland – she knew it was me!"

Cobb established the charitable Shorefast Foundation to foster cultural and economic resilience for Fogo Island and neighbouring Change Island. A key Shorefast project is Fogo Island Arts, a residency-based contemporary art foundation that attracts global artists, designers, filmmakers, writers, musicians, curators and thinkers to a tiny island off the coast of Newfoundland, Canada. Artists are selected through a rigorous selection process for self-directed residencies, exhibitions and publication opportunities with international imprints such as Sternberg Press (Germany) and public institutions. The residencies and artistic programs through Fogo Island Arts are part of a larger social-enterprise model aimed at supporting the Fogo Island Inn, local tourism and the continued practices of local crafts and cultural traditions.



A residency in the Fogo Island art studios is a coveted placement. Artists gain the opportunity to live and work in contemporary architecture in a remote and dramatic landscape. Established by the Shorefast Foundation in 2010, not only have the studios brought world-renowned artists to the island, they have also attracted tourists and architectural enthusiasts who flock to see an island transformed through one woman's foresight for change and an architect's vision to design "ever so softly" on the landscape.

Canadian-born, Norway-based architect Todd Saunders worked on a master plan for the island where a series of art studios (currently, four have been completed) and an inn would connect with the existing small community of 2500 people, reigniting their traditional craft history. The community was involved in selecting sites, as well as providing local skilled labour for the construction of the new buildings. Saunders describes the design of the studios as "strange yet familiar". There was no existing precedent for his studio designs to draw from. Yet, Fogo Island already boasted a strong commonality of building techniques and materials and Saunders was eager to retain this language. His studios are "strange, bird-like forms, but at the same time, they use very familiar building materials. The same wood, nails, joins, scale, paint."

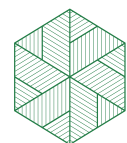


Three of the studios are oriented towards the sea and one overlooks an inland pond. All are elevated above the ground, not only to provide superior views but also to allow the forceful winds to move underneath the building rather than hitting the walls straight on.

The Long Studio's three different spaces each reflect the seasons when artists occupy the space (all bar winter). An open but covered area is the entry point that marks the arrival of spring; the central space is open and exposed, offering spectacular views during long summer days, while the far end and main body of the studio is fully enclosed and protected. This main space offers large framed views, maximising daylight, yet providing an opportunity to connect with nature when and if the weather forces one indoors.

The spine of the studio houses all amenities, including mechanical equipment, storage areas, water tank, compost toilet, shower, kitchenette, wood burning stove and a ladder that leads to the elevated sleeping loft. All artists-in-residence live in traditional housing in the communities adjacent to the studios; this allows for a greater connection to the local residents.

MANY THANKS TO TODD SAUNDERS AND TO JACK STANLEY AT FOGO ISLAND ARTS. TO VIEW MORE OF SAUNDERS ARCHITECTURE'S WORK, VISIT: SAUNDERS.NO AND TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT FOGO ISLAND ARTS (INCLUDING HOW TO APPLY FOR ONE OF THESE PHENOMENAL ARTIST RESIDENCIES!) VISIT: FOGOISLANDARTS.CA



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in the series.*



EYES

THE MOVEMENT OF THE CROWD

Photography by Rafaela Pandolfini
Text by Assemble Papers

PHOTOGRAPHER RAFAELA PANDOLFINI NATURALLY LOOKS TO THE MOVEMENT OF THE CROWD IN PLACES WHERE PEOPLE ARE PREOCCUPIED WITH CARRYING OUT CONTEMPORARY RITUALS. ART OPENINGS, PARTIES, CLUBS, THE BEACH AND THE PARK. HER INTEREST IS IN THE WAY PEOPLE MOVE TOGETHER OR ALONE, THEIR SHAPES AND PATTERNS AGAINST VAST OR MODEST BACKGROUNDS. THEIR OBJECTS, THEIR DRESS, AND WHAT THEY USE AND DISCARD.

IN JULY 2013, RAFAELA AND HER YOUNG FAMILY MADE THE PILGRIMAGE TO VENICE TO EXPERIENCE THE OLDEST EVENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEMPORARY VISUAL ART CALENDAR, THE 55TH VENICE BIENNALE. HERE SHE SHARES HER IMAGES FROM VENICE: FOCUSING ON THE BIENNALE THROUGH ITS AUDIENCE AND PHOTOGRAPHING THE MOVEMENT OF THE CROWD.

"WHAT I LOVE IS THE MOMENT WHEN THE VIEWER IS SO ENGROSSED BY WHAT THEY ARE SEEING AND EXPERIENCING THAT THEY BECOME PHYSICALLY IMMERSED, BODIES LEANING IN OR AWAY, PERHAPS FIDGETING OR STANDING COMPLETELY STILL. LOST IN AN IDEA OR IMAGE, OBLIVIOUS TO ANYONE ELSE AROUND. THIS IS OFTEN FLEETING IN A BUSY EXHIBITION SPACE – SOMEONE USUALLY BRUSHES PAST, INTERRUPTING THEIR CONNECTION WITH THE WORK. WITNESSING THESE (MOST LIKELY) UNINTENTIONAL EMOTIONAL REACTIONS GAVE ME AN INSIGHT INTO THE MEANING AND READING OF CERTAIN WORKS."

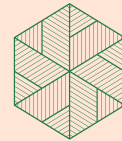




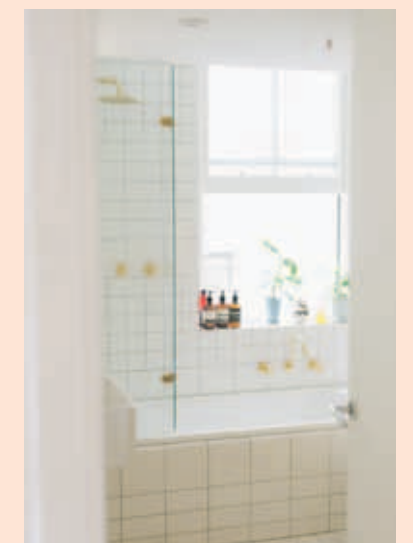


Dan, Paul, Eike: Mid-city mountain cabin

DAN HONEY AND PAUL FUOG ARE MELBOURNE DESIGN LUMINARIES. DAN IS ONE THIRD OF OFFICE FOR GOOD DESIGN, CURATING AND PRODUCING SOME OF THE MOST INTERESTING DESIGN PROGRAMMING IN AUSTRALIA, WHILE PAUL CO-HELMS DESIGN STUDIO U-P. LAST YEAR THEY CONDUCTED FIELD EXPERIMENTS, AN ONGOING CROSS-CULTURAL PROJECT THAT EXPLORES TRADITIONAL CRAFTS AROUND THE WORLD BY ENGAGING IN COLLABORATIVE MAKING WITH LOCAL CRAFTSPEOPLE. TOGETHER WITH THEIR YOUNG DAUGHTER EIKE, THEY LIVE IN A CLARE COUSINS-DESIGNED APARTMENT IN MELBOURNE'S ICONIC BIBLE HOUSE BUILDING. OLGA BENNETT VISITS THEM AT HOME.

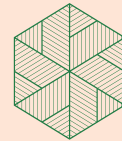


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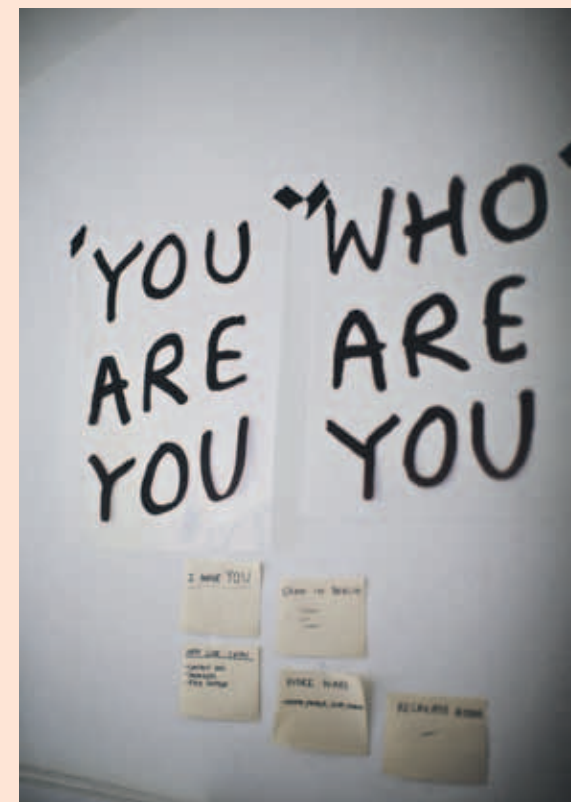


Shantell: go home, come home

SHANTELL MARTIN WAS ONCE AN ITINERANT ARTIST – NOW YOU COULD SAY THE WORLD IS HER HOME. AFTER FIVE YEARS IN JAPAN, THE LONDONER NOW LIVES IN AN ILLUSTRATED BEDROOM OASIS; ITS WALLS ADORNED WITH HER OWN DRAWINGS, IN BROOKLYN'S BEDFORD-STUYVESANT. FROM PERFORMING IN UNDERGROUND CLUBS IN TOKYO TO BEING FEATURED IN THE NEW YORK TIMES, THE NEW YORKER AND TED, SHANTELL IS IN DEMAND – AN INTERNATIONAL STAR ON THE RISE. FELLOW SEASONED TRAVELLER PAUL BARBERA MAKES A HOME VISIT.



visit assemblepapers.com.au to read the full article.



The barometry of bees: Melbourne City Rooftop Honey

THE STORY OF BEES IS ALSO THE STORY OF FOOD SECURITY AND ULTIMATELY, OUR FUTURE. TWO PEOPLE WHO'VE RECOGNISED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HUMBLE HONEY BEE ARE VANESSA KWIATKOWSKI AND MAT LUMALASI OF MELBOURNE CITY ROOFTOP HONEY, A BEEKEEPING PROJECT THAT SITES HIVES ON ROOFTOPS AND GARDENS ACROSS THE CITY. HERE, THE DUO SPEAK BEE HEALTH AND PROACTIVE SUSTAINABILITY WITH EUGENIA.



As you enjoy your daily grub, consider that every third mouthful is brought to you by the hardworking honey bee. *Apis Mellifera* (the European honey bee) is the world's best pollinator (in part, because she is so wonderfully hairy) and directly contributes to around 65% of our food production nationally, worth over 2 billion dollars annually to Australian agriculture. Without her, you'd have to wave goodbye to apples, almonds, pumpkins and other commercially produced foods that are 100% dependent on honey bee pollination. For everyone (except my little nephew who 'doesn't do' fruit or veggies as a rule), going bee-less is a terrifying concept. Yet, with the triple

threat of Varroa mite, colony collapse disorder and the by-products of modern industrial agriculture (pesticides, 'monocultural' planting and genetically modified crops), we are much too close for comfort to a world without honey bees. A world without bees would lead to significant food shortages, which could spell the end for us homo sapiens.

Vanessa Kwiatkowski and Mat Lumalasi are the founders of Melbourne City Rooftop Honey, an urban beekeeping project. At first, Vanessa and Mat kept bees as a hobby. Mat recalls that it was almost chickens, but "then we brought bees into the equation. We thought they'd be a little neater and quieter. So we

did a course and got a bee hive and just fell in love with bees... it becomes really quite mesmerising and meditative." A few bee facts: worker bees are all female – ladies bring home the bacon (in this case, the pollen) and build, clean and maintain the hives; male bees are called drones – to put it bluntly, they live to service a queen – once the deed is done, they die; at peak season, queen bees can lay around 2000–2500 eggs per day.

Vanessa and Mat have cared for millions upon millions of bees. Currently 'parenting' around 50 hives across Melbourne, and with a bee count of around 60,000 per hive, there's "a lot of kids to look after", says Mat. Vanessa agrees that bees "are like pets. You can't just leave them, you have to actually manage them, work them. Studies have shown that they recognize faces. They're driven on pheromones, so they can smell you. They can see you – it's a different kind of vision than what we have, but it all helps with familiarity. There's an old beekeeping thing that says if you don't talk to your bees, it's bad luck." Each hive has its own distinctive 'personality'. On the afternoon I spent following Mat and Vanessa, we visited two hives in Northcote. One, at the Northcote Community Gardens, was home to a blonde, "chilled out" colony ("we call them the Swedish bees", said Vanessa); the other, at the kitchen garden of the Aylesbury chef Jesse Gerner, had a more feisty temperament – hive

maintenance had to be speedier so as not to risk a quick sting.

Vanessa and Mat care for their bees using natural methods, eschewing commercial practices for a free-range and localised approach. As Mat explains, "we need to look after our bees and realise how important they are, rather than viewing them as just a tool for making honey. We need to show them the respect they deserve and start to change the way in which we look after them." Unlike most commercial operations, Vanessa and Mat do not feed their bees sugar syrup as a general rule, making sure not to 'over-rob' honey stores, ensuring their bees are self-sufficient throughout winter and all seasons. As Vanessa explains, "imagine you've collected all this nectar and pollen and stuff and then you get robbed and you're stuck all winter drinking sugar syrup." Both agree that too much sugar syrup is "like fast food for bees. Like having McDonald's all winter."

Raising bees is not all milk and honey – there's a sobering importance to the work of Melbourne City Rooftop Honey. As Mat surmises, "without bees, humans would cease to exist after some time." Australia remains the last country in the world with 'clean bees' – bees not yet infected by the deadly *Varroa Destructor* mite (a vampiric parasite that lives on infected honey bees and reproduces in bee larvae within bee colonies). Dr. Denis Anderson is a CSIRO entomologist and world bee specialist who first identified the *Varroa Destructor* mite. Only highly toxic chemicals can treat *Varroa* infestation, but because of its tenacity, *Varroa* is now immune to a growing list of chemical treatments. As an island, Australia has been somewhat protected from the spread of *Varroa*. However, being girt by sea has not saved New Zealand from *Varroa*, which spread to its shores last decade, continuing to decimate its honey bee colonies. More recently, *Varroa Jacobsoni* (a different strain to

Destructor that lives benignly on Asian bees) was identified by Dr. Anderson in Papua New Guinea in 2008. Like *Varroa Destructor*, *Varroa Jacobsoni* has also mutated and adapted to 'jump species' from the Asian to the European honey bee. Dr. Anderson believes it's only a matter of time before *Varroa* hits our shores, despite our strict quarantine laws. As Vanessa notes, "Australia is a huge mass – it's hard to control every single point of entry into the country. Realistically, if we get *Varroa* mite it will come via a shipping container of some sort." The recent Asian bee incursion in Cairns began with a rogue hive in the mast of a ship.



Through the Rooftop Honey project, the duo hope to place beehives on rooftops or gardens throughout the city and every suburb of Melbourne, raising awareness in the wider community about food security, food miles and provenance as well as the protection of biodiversity in the environment. According to Mat and Vanessa, healthy, well-managed hives will give us the best chance to combat and repopulate depleted honey bees, should *Varroa* hit our shores.

Once Vanessa and Mat site a hive in its new home (through their 'Sponsor a Hive' or 'Adopt a Hive' initiative), it stays put. Instead of blending honeys, "each hive stays separate," says Vanessa, "which involves a little bit more work, but I think in the long run, it's better – people get to be able to have their own local honey and each site gets excited at the fact that their honey is different from, you know, another suburb away." It turns out that Heidelberg is quite "minty", with

lots of eucalypts and red gums while Alphington is big on yellow box. In the city itself, there is a "strong heaviness" to the honey, while South Melbourne, in contrast, tastes light, grassy and "really green". St Kilda is "sweet", Prahran is "citrusy" and Ascot Vale tastes like Turkish delight. Urban bees have a richer and more biodiverse diet than their country counterparts (who, due to industrial agriculture, are more likely to have a monocultural diet) and this is reflected in the wide palette of flavours in Vanessa and Mat's various honeys.

Urban beekeeping culture is thriving in cities like New York, Paris and throughout the UK and Mat and Vanessa are keen to travel to 'talk bees'. "We always want to be proactive", says Vanessa, "rather than make up for something later on", agrees Mat. While travel may be a while off yet – the project is still run on love rather than money – Vanessa and Mat will continue to focus on awareness and education. "Half of our hives didn't make any honey this year and that's fine – it's not about that, it's about maintaining healthy bees. Having honey is a by-product of healthy bees." Since they first developed an interest in bees, they have found an ally and mentor in (a fantastically named) apiarist, Helmut Huber, "an Austrian fellow" Not a week goes by without a meeting with Helmut and the pair consider him to be their own personal font of bee knowledge. I tell them his role with the Victorian Beekeepers Club – Swarm Coordinator – is the best job title I've ever heard. Beekeepers have a reputation for being an eccentric bunch and the duo want to keep building their knowledge from those around them. "There's a lot of wisdom in beekeepers, and there's an old saying – if you ask three beekeepers the same question, you'll get four answers, and all of them are right."

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MELBOURNE CITY ROOFTOP HONEY VISIT: ROOFTOP-HONEY.MYSHOPIFY.COM

Sonsa of Smith Street

FEW BUSINESSES ON SMITH STREET (IN MELBOURNE'S INNER CITY COLLINGWOOD) CAN BOAST THIRTY YEARS OF TRADING, AND EVEN FEWER THE STATUS OF A LEGEND. AS THE NEIGHBOURHOOD TRADES IN MUCH OF ITS GRIT AND SOME OF ITS CHARM, FAMILY-OWNED SONSA FOODS CONTINUES TO PROSPER AND PROVIDE FOR LOCALS. HENRIETTA ZEFFERT VISITS BEFORE AND AFTER THE SHOP'S RELOCATION TO FIND OUT WHAT CHANGES AND WHAT REMAINS THE SAME.



Sonsa Foods first opened their Turkish supermarket in 1983 – the year of my birth. Quite fortuitous, considering how much of their amazing hummus I would go on to consume. Sonsa is known and loved not only by locals but also, as I discovered, by people who return to shop there long after they've moved from the area. Last year, Sonsa relocated to bigger and shinier premises almost directly opposite commercial giant Woolworths. Sonsa seems more buoyant than ever: a local business thriving in quiet defiance of the gentrification and high priced real estate that now defines much of Collingwood and Fitzroy. I sat down with Salih, the scion of the family business, on the street outside the shop one Sunday morning to capture this moment in Smith Street's history, and to hear

about the making of a legend.
Tell me how Sonsa Foods began.

First we were on the other side of the street, underneath what is now the Copacabana. In the early 1990s we moved to Stanley Street, Collingwood, and operated an importing/exporting business for Turkish foods. In 2000, we opened a Turkish supermarket at 152 Smith Street. In 2012 we relocated here, 216-18 Smith Street. This shop is bigger and we have expanded our range.

Who works here?

It's a family business, but we have others who work for us too. There is me, my brother and his son, and sometimes my daughter works in the juice bar.

What do you sell?

Everything! Fruit, vegetables, Turkish bread, sweets, nuts, cheeses, yoghurt, dips, coffee, dry goods, spices, meat, honey, beans, pickles, dried fruit...

Who shops here?

Our customers are mainly locals. The migrants from the commission flats come for foods they can't get anywhere else. Then there are the professionals who live nearby in the apartments and houses. We also supply local restaurants.

What is the best part of your job?

Going to the market at 4am and buying nice fruit and vegetables. Selling things cheaper than Woolworths makes me happy – bananas for 99 cents rather than \$2.99. I like chatting with my customers and giving lollies to kids.

Is there anything you don't like about your job?

When people steal from the fruit and vegetable stand out the front. I catch them and tell them, next time, ask me and I will give it to you. Then when they ask for one banana, I give them two. Then they are okay. It is the best way to deal with them.

You've been on Smith Street a long time. Do you think it is changing?

Yes. Smith Street is better now. But in 1983, this was the best time. At 11am every day, all of the migrant families would be out on the streets, walking, shopping. But then there were drugs. Now, the migrant families have left. There are lots of single professionals. Most just want to go to coffee shops.



Why do people come to your supermarket rather than go elsewhere?

People like us. Our prices are good. We care about our customers. We are like family to them. When they don't have enough change, we say no worries, you can pay me back next time. Woolworths doesn't treat people like that. Local families tell their children to wait at Sonsa until 5pm when they get picked up. We look after the children. Recently I was queuing to get into a club and when I got to the top of the queue, the woman said to me, you don't need to pay, you have looked after me in your shop for many years. When I tried to buy a drink at the bar, they said, you don't need to pay, you have looked after us.

The first thing I noticed when I visited the family in their new shop was how brightly lit the place is, spacious and professional. The shop is stocked with a colourful abundance of packages and boxes and tins. The fruit and vegetables somehow look more chipper, the juice bar has a dedicated space, and now there are proper checkouts. There is a jovial mood, and a real sense of community – when I was there, Salih's nephew Mustafa started handing out bottles of juice and water to shoppers to beat the February heat. Salih seems more magisterial these days, even when he's smoking out the front. And yet, many things stay comfortingly the same. The smiling staff, the specials scrawled on butcher's paper, the old panel van parked out the front, the drums of oil lining the walls, and that hummus.

Last year, Sonsa advertised their relocation with a message to customers that I think expresses what makes this place a legend of Smith Street:

"Sonsa Foods – ordinary people doing an extraordinary job."

String Garden by Pop Plant

ANDY (MAXI) WALKER & GABRIELA HOLLAND ARE THE GREEN THUMBS BEHIND POP PLANT, SPECIALISTS IN PRACTICAL INDOOR PLANTS FOR CITY DWELLERS. IN 2012, THE PAIR SETTLED IN MELBOURNE AND HAVE SINCE BUILT A NAME FOR THEIR PLAYFUL, SAVVY APPROACH TO URBAN GARDENING. NO BACKYARD, NO DRAMAS! FOLLOW THEIR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO CREATE A SERENE STRING GARDEN FOR YOUR OWN HOME.

Maxi Walker and Gabriela Holland discovered a passion for plants and greenery while cultivating a garden paradise in the wilderness of Ollantaytambo, Peru. After a year, they found themselves back in Melbourne, living in a small inner

city apartment. Craving foliage and undeterred by the lack of outdoor space, the couple began filling their apartment with a forest of indoor plants. Bit by bit, they became “plant-a-holics”. As they realised the positive effect of living with all

this greenery, Gaby and Maxi decided to share the happiness effect with other city dwellers. And so, Pop Plant was born.

After experimenting with different materials and researching the hardiest, most practical and easy-to-care-for succulents and plants, Pop Plant now has a range of concrete pots and polyfelt balcony planters, pot covers and string gardens (made from 100% recycled plastic bottles), which they carefully handcraft themselves.

String gardens are originally from Japan where they are known as *kokedama*. Pop Plant have adapted this concept by wrapping the moss ball in polyfelt (commonly used in vertical gardens). This makes for a sharper, more industrial aesthetic, and emphasises the lushness and greenery of the foliage as it emerges from the dark grey material.



MATERIALS

10 METRES (APPROX)
FISHERMEN'S NYLON
1 POLYFELT SQUARE
(APPROX 30CM x 30CM)
4 HANDFULS SPAGNUM MOSS
1/3 TEASPOON DRY WATER CRYSTALS
1 TEASPOON SLOW RELEASE FERTILISER
PLANT OF CHOICE



STEP 1: SOAK THE SPAGNUM MOSS IN WATER AND PUT TO ONE SIDE.

STEP 2: PLACE WATER CRYSTALS IN A RECEPTACLE AND ADD 150MLS OF WATER. LEAVE THESE FOR HALF AN HOUR UNTIL THEY EXPAND, ABSORB ALL THE WATER AND BECOME JELLY-LIKE.



STEP 3: USE A REGULAR SOUP BOWL, CUT TWO PIECES OF THE FISHERMEN'S TWINE, EACH APPROX 35CM IN LENGTH, AND PLACE IN THE BOWL IN A CROSS. NEXT, ROUND OFF THE CORNERS OF THE POLYFELT SQUARE AND PLACE ON TOP OF THE TWINE. THEN LINE THE POLYFELT SQUARE WITH A GENEROUS LAYER OF SPAGNUM MOSS. SET ASIDE FOR LATER.



STEP 4: NOW IT'S TIME TO PREPARE THE ROOT BALL. REMOVE THE CHOSEN PLANT (IN THIS CASE, DEVIL'S IVY OR *EPIDREMNUM AUREUM*) FROM ITS POT OVER ANOTHER BOWL, ALLOWING THE EXCESS SOIL TO FALL INTO THE BOWL. HOLD THE PLANT BY ITS ROOT BALL IN ONE HAND AND WITH THE OTHER ADD THE REMAINING SPAGNUM MOSS, WATER CRYSTALS AND THE FERTILISER TO THE EXCESS SOIL AND MIX WELL. BIT BY BIT, MOULD THIS MIXTURE ONTO THE ROOT BALL, ALWAYS MAINTAINING A SPHERICAL SHAPE.



STEP 5: BIND THE BALL BY WINDING FISHERMEN'S TWINE AROUND IT VARIOUS TIMES, ENSURING YOU SCULPT AS PERFECT A SPHERE AS POSSIBLE.



STEP 6: PLACE THE ROOT BALL IN THE BOWL PREPARED IN STEP 3. COLLECT THE POLYFELT SQUARE AT THE EDGES AND BRING TOGETHER TOWARDS THE MIDDLE LIKE A CHRISTMAS PUDDING BAG.



STEP 7: TIGHTLY TIE THE TWO PIECES OF CROSSED TWINE THROUGH THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOT BALL TO SECURE THE POLYFELT. USE THE REMAINING TWINE TO REPEATEDLY WIND AROUND THE POLYFELT BALL IN ALTERNATING DIRECTIONS (APPROX 20 TIMES) UNTIL YOU ARE HAPPY WITH THE SHAPE AND TAUTNESS OF THE BALL AND TIE SECURELY.

STEP 8: TIE ANOTHER PIECE OF TWINE (AT THE LENGTH YOU DESIRE) TO THE STRING GARDEN AND HANG IN AN APPROPRIATE NOOK.



CARE TIPS

TO WATER THE STRING GARDEN, TAKE IT DOWN FROM ITS HANGING SPOT, THEN PLACE ITS POLYFELT BASE IN A BOWL OF WATER FOR APPROX. 10 MINS. REMOVE FROM WATER AND ALLOW FOR EXCESS WATER TO DRAIN AWAY BEFORE RE-HANGING. DEPENDING ON YOUR PLANT OF CHOICE, WATER AROUND ONCE WEEKLY, WHEN THE POLYFELT BASE FEELS LIGHT AND DRY.

Cities for people: Jan Gehl

JAN GEHL, RENOWNED DANISH ARCHITECT, URBAN DESIGN CONSULTANT AND CHAMPION OF THE HUMAN SCALE, IS A GREAT BELIEVER IN WALKING. “THERE IS MORE TO WALKING THAN WALKING”, HE SAYS, A POINT WHICH MITRA ANDERSON-OLIVER HAS CAUSE TO REFLECT ON OVER THE TWO DAYS SPENT PURSUING JAN ON FOOT DURING HIS TRIP TO MELBOURNE FOR AN INTERNATIONAL STUDY TOUR, DURING THE HOTTEST AUTUMN WEEK IN VICTORIA’S HISTORY.



THE MAN IN BLACK. JAN GEHL SNAPS A MELBOURNE LANEWAY VIEW. PHOTO BY EUGENIA LIM – ASSEMBLE PAPERS.

Dressed in signature black, with his trusty, wide-brimmed parking inspector’s hat at the ready (“I have the Perth one, I have the Adelaide one, I have the Sydney one, the Wellington one and actually, I have the Hobart too. They are all wide brimmed and very good for holidays”), Jan Gehl and City of Melbourne Manager of Urban Design, Rob Moore, guided us through the history of Melbourne’s now celebrated streetscapes and reflected on their vision of the elements of a liveable city. Much of what we Melburnians now take for granted – laneway culture, outdoor dining, Copenhagen-style cycle lanes, the gradual erosion of the

pre-eminence of the car in favour of the pedestrian and cyclist – are revealed as a consequence of Gehl’s influence – and the perseverance of local collaborators Rob Adams (architect and Director of City Design at the City of Melbourne) and Rob Moore.

Back in the 1970s, when Gehl was in Melbourne as a visiting professor, the value of street culture was not widely recognised. Robin Boyd’s *The Australian Ugliness* had been published over a decade earlier; in addition to being deemed ‘unpatriotic’, its critique on ‘featurism’ in Australian aesthetics and architecture was yet to make a broader impact. At this time, Gehl

recalls walking down the deserted streets of inner Melbourne of a weekend: “It was neutron-bombed, not a soul – not even a cat. Now, internationally, Melbourne is ranking sky high, one of the best cities in the world. Everybody who has been down here has been raving about the quality of the streetscapes, and the care that’s been taken.”

Working with the City of Melbourne in 1993 (Gehl was invited by the council to conduct a *Public Spaces* and *Public Life* survey – and again for a 2004 update), a key recommendation was to create opportunities for outdoor dining, mimicking the success of the grand boulevards of Paris and the communal squares of Rome. The suggestion was ridiculed in a city famous for its icy southerlies and four-seasons-in-one-day climate. Yet, twenty years later, Melbourne boasts the highest ratio of street furniture per person in the world; outdoor cafes have increased from less than 50 in 1990 to over 600 today; the number of pedestrians in the city on weekday evenings has doubled; and Swanston Street has more pedestrians per day than Regent Street in London.

Jan Gehl has made it his life’s work to provide convincing evidence for this investment in public life. His published titles speak to his enduring commitment to and singular focus on the human subject, beginning with *Life Between Buildings* in 1987 and continuing on with variations on the theme: *Public Spaces*, *Public Life* (1996), *New City Spaces* (2000), *New City Life* (2006) and most recently, *Cities for People*



BEFORE: BROADWAY AND TIMES SQUARE, NEW YORK CITY, PRE-2007. CONGESTION, CABS AND CAR CULTURE DOMINATE. PHOTO COURTESY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT (DOT).



AFTER: THE SAME LOCATION, BROADWAY AT TIMES SQUARE IN 2009, AFTER GEHL ARCHITECTS WORKED WITH THE CITY OF NEW YORK AND THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT ON A MAJOR URBAN REALM AND BICYCLE STRATEGY IN NEW YORK. PHOTO COURTESY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT (DOT).

(2010) (in which Melbourne features prominently). For his part, Gehl credits the “grandmother” of humanistic planning, Jane Jacobs for drawing attention to the importance of human scale. “Fifty years ago she said – go out there and see what works and what doesn’t work, and learn from reality. Look out of your windows, spend time in the streets and squares and see how people actually use spaces, learn from that, and use it.”

Gehl has taken this approach literally, spending countless hours walking the streets of cities around the world, studying life beneath, between and around buildings. “Man was made to walk”, Gehl reminds us. “All our senses are made for being a walking animal – for that speed, for that horizontal perception – and when we are in that natural environment that we are meant for, then we can watch and talk and kiss as we were meant to as human beings.” Forty years of this close observation of human behavior (rather than a more theoretical engagement with urban studies: “I am not much into reading”, he confesses) lies behind Gehl’s core beliefs of treating pedestrians and cyclists “sweetly” and the need for the city to be an “invitation” to spend time, a welcoming and sustaining place for people to live. “A good city is like a good party”, he says. “You know it’s working when people stay for much longer than really necessary, because they are enjoying themselves.”

Jan’s generous nature is tested on the subject of “starchitecture”. He has no time for what he terms “bird-shit” architecture, the legacy of modernists – “architects travelling all over the world to drop their towers”. Or, what he sees as the increasing obsession with form in contemporary city building and skyscrapers, which he compares to his wife’s perfume bottles that decorate the bathroom shelf. Each new building reaches higher, in more complex formations than the

last. This is, he says, the “Brasilia syndrome” – the creation of cities and spaces which look magnificent from a plane, or in the architect’s render, but do nothing for the people that need to live in them.

Unsurprisingly, he is not entirely at home with the “New Wave” or “New Pragmatism” of Danish architecture currently sweeping the globe (think urban infill developments and think BIG). However, he confesses that starchitect Bjarke Ingels has now, in fact, become one of his “very special friends”. “I started by criticising his stuff as senseless and unfeeling and with no concern for people. But now, he comes to me with his design and he says to me, look at this group floor, look at this project, it is much better than the previous ones, isn’t it? And I was over at his place the other day, and he had a new book and I grabbed one. And he wrote in it: *Bjarke loves Jan*. And now I have that at home.”

While making cities for people is a battle that Gehl continues to fight, he feels the winds of change are behind him. “It is the third time that the architecture profession has given me their highest honour – and that is very nice. This is a sign that the kind of work that I do has been accepted, not only by the architecture profession worldwide but my own people in Denmark, the fatherland, which for many years has treated this area disdainfully, overlooked it, pretended it was not there.” Gehl Architects now works in thirty countries, with a core team of over forty staff, consulting on public life and guidelines for city development, increasingly in developing countries. With satisfaction, Gehl reflects that “it took a long time for Jane Jacobs to be heard, but now she has been heard, and I am her humble grandson.”

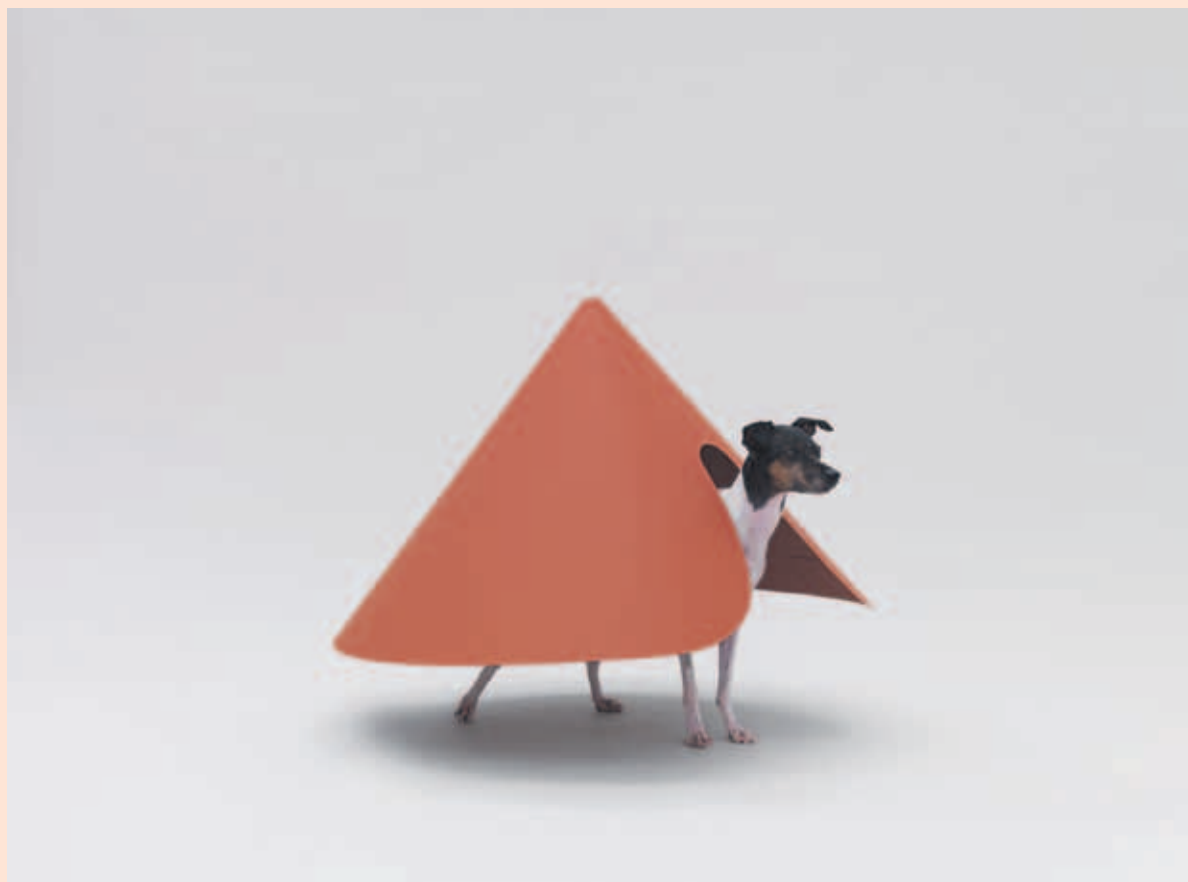
And, in city planning itself, from the United States to rapidly urbanising China and India, “one city after the other is converting, wanting to ‘do a Melbourne’”. Gehl sees a “new paradigm” of urban development emerging, driven by a fundamental concern for life, rather

than the efficient flow of traffic. “In what I call the ‘reconquered cities’, we have won back the right to be in the city from the car, and we can now enjoy the age-old joy of people meeting people, which is why people came to cities in the first place.” Melbourne, he says, has been transformed from a city where we once rushed to the office and back home again, (“like ants to their various places and when they are finished they go down like ants down in the hole again”), to “a city which really is very inviting for promenading, and for lingering and sitting and enjoying, and looking at the girls or whatever you do.”

As Gehl takes his leave, donning his parking inspector hat, he leaves me with a parting caution: “You go down and see the Docklands, and they are 30 years behind what the city can do. They think that if they just have enough architects it must be a good city – but it is just another assembly of these perfume bottles.” You will not, Gehl stresses, maintain a liveable city by thinking of the beauty of the buildings first, or from privileging the happiness of the motor car over the interests of people. Rather, it is how the buildings land, how they are connected, and how the public spaces around them are organised that will define the success of the cities of the future.

Many thanks to Anna Esbjørn, Senior Project Manager and Mette Løth Rasmussen, Researcher at The Danish Architecture Centre (DAC) who organised the study tour for The International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP) for inviting Assemble Papers to attend part of the tour and for assistance with this article. Big thanks to Jan Gehl for his patience and candour while we pursued him across the streets and rivers of Melbourne for this interview.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE WORK OF GEHL ARCHITECTS VISIT: GEHLARCHITECTS.COM



UTILITARIAN YOU TEXT BY EUGENIA LIM | PHOTOGRAPHY BY HIROSHI YODA

Canine contemporary: Architecture for Dogs

KENYA HARA DOESN'T DESIGN 'THINGS.' HIS CEREBRAL YET ELEGANT WORK IN OBJECT AND EXPERIENCE DESIGN AS THE DIRECTOR OF HARA DESIGN INSTITUTE AND THE CREATIVE DIRECTOR AT MUJI, SEEKS TO INFUSE A SENSE OF IDENTITY AND MEMORY INTO DESIGN. RATHER THAN DESIGNING PRODUCTS, HARA DESIGNS HAPPENINGS OR "MENTAL EVENTS" – THE CREATION OF A LASTING IMPRINT ON THE MIND OF THE VIEWER OR AUDIENCE. ONE OF HARA'S CURRENT PROJECTS IS ARCHITECTURE FOR DOGS, A TRAVELLING EXHIBITION AND ONLINE RESOURCE DEDICATED TO THE PROLIFERATION OF NOVEL, DIY CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE FOR MAN AND WOMAN'S BEST FRIEND.

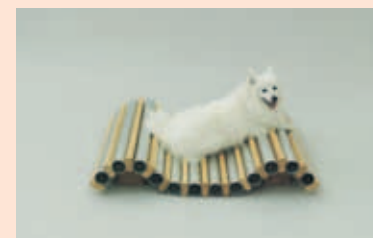
Hara commissioned leading designers to create thirteen bespoke pieces of architecture for their chosen breed of canine (Chips, our resident greyhound is patiently awaiting her own design), including MVRDV for the Beagle, Sou Fujimoto for the

Boston Terrier, Atelier Bow-Wow for the Dachshund, TORAFU Architects for the Jack Russell Terrier, Shigeru Ban for the Papillon and Toyo Ito for the Shiba.

The results are playful and whimsical yet sleek. And with

blueprints for each of the individual designs available for download through the project website, Architecture for Dogs is an invitation to dog lovers everywhere to get out their hammer, saw and nails and build, remix or hack these open source designs.

In his D-tunnel design for the Tea Cup Poodle, Kenya Hara has created a timber staircase and viewing platform – an installation that seeks to elevate dogs to the height of their owner, a fanciful design with egalitarian underpinnings. Hara



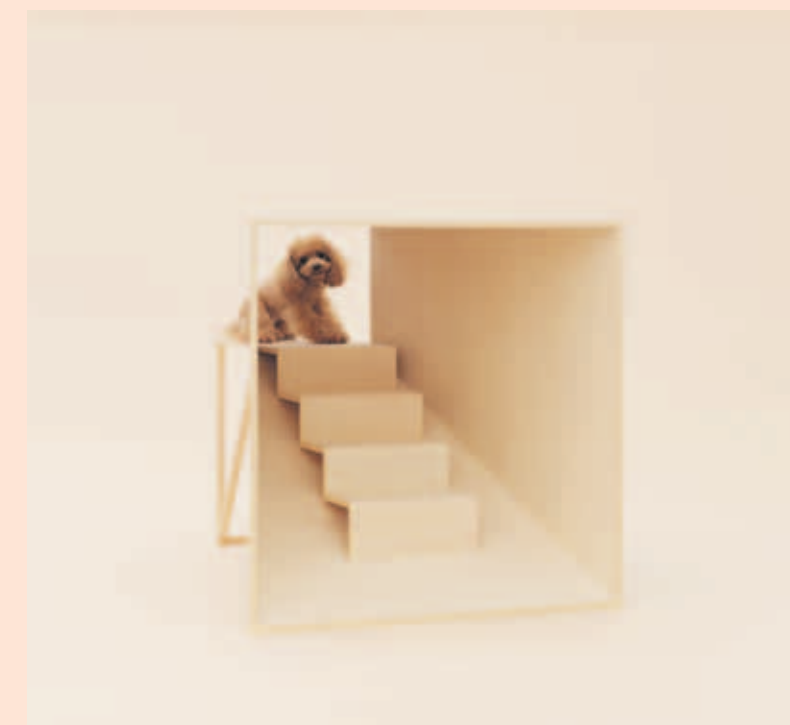
notes: "dogs, who spend their lives at the side of humans, must accept human scale. This architecture is an apparatus for the purpose of naturally bringing dogs and humans eye to eye." Since the domestication of the Grey Wolf several tens of thousands of years ago, humans have 'done a Darwin', breeding and selecting dogs' physical attributes, traits and temperaments according to their own design. "When the dog runs up the stairs, he ends up at just the right height to be face-to-face with a person. I thought up a device/ installation that equalises human scale and dog scale."

As the curator and initiator of the Architecture for Dogs project, Hara acknowledges and pays tribute to the quiet and often under-represented symbiosis between dog and owner. "Dogs are people's partners, living right beside them, but they are also animals that humans, through crossbreeding, have created in multitudes of breeds. Re-examining these close partners with fresh eyes may be a chance to re-examine both human beings themselves and the natural environment."

So far, Architecture for Dogs has presented exhibitions in the US, including installations and dog-ins at Design Miami and at Long Beach Museum of Art, and in Japan at Tokyo's Toto Gallery.

In coming years, Kenya Hara will curate more projects exploring the underlying structural and experiential design of daily life. "Emptiness is the backbone of my aesthetic sensibility", says Hara. "The concept of emptiness is the implicit foundation of every aspect of Japanese culture, architecture, design, communication... the ancient Japanese did not see nature as wild. They saw its abundance and believed that nature teaches us how to lead rich lives accordingly." Stay tuned for "Architecture for Swimming" and "Architecture for Sleeping".

WANT TO TREAT FIDO TO HIS OR HER OWN PIECE OF HOMEMADE CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE? DOWNLOAD BLUEPRINT DESIGNS, WATCH HOW-TO VIDEOS AND FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE ARCHITECTURE FOR DOGS PROJECT HERE: ARCHITECTUREFORDOGS.COM. TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT KENYA HARA, VISIT THE HARA DESIGN INSTITUTE NDC.CO.JP/HARA/EN





THIS VERTICAL LIFE TEXT BY JAMES STEPHENS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY EUGENIA LIM

The Cairo: romance and the minimum flat

A LEAFY ART DECO GEM BUILT BY AUSTRALIAN MODERNIST ARCHITECT BEST OVEREND, CAIRO FLATS WAS COMPLETED IN 1936. THIS POST-DATED OVEREND'S SEPTEMBER 1933 ARTICLE 'A MINIMUM FLAT WITH MAXIMUM COMFORT' IN THE PUBLICATION 'AUSTRALIAN HOME BEAUTIFUL'. WRITER JAMES STEPHENS TALKS TO FORMER RESIDENT KATE RHODES ABOUT THE ROMANCE AND QUIRKS OF HER CAIRO DAYS.



Welcome to this column about the culture of apartments. While this section is called This Vertical Life, Cairo Flats isn't very tall. If anything, it's U-shaped. Cairo Flats is a horseshoe of brick and reinforced concrete from the 1930s that faces from Fitzroy onto the Carlton Gardens over Nicholson Street. It consists of 20 studios and eight one-bedroom apartments, is bordered by greenery and embraces a garden on its own site that each flat opens onto or overlooks. Apart from balconies and stairs, the perimeter of the building is even, with bedrooms and bathrooms interlocking internally in the floor plans. The roof is flat, and was intended as a social – even sporting – space for residents and

guests, accessible by curved, cantilevered concrete stairs. The main building was originally accompanied by a shop and communal dining room, eight car garages and two communal laundries.

Access to each flat is from external pathways on the west and south. The entry hall of each flat has a telephone, and all front doors are green with a round port-hole window. Each hallway opens onto an open timber-floored living space, which includes seating space for two over a meal. Despite the shop and communal dining room, each flat has a small kitchenette that sits next to the entry hall on the south or west, featuring a gas cooker, sink and storage space. The walls and

ceiling of the living space meld in a curve with no cornices. Opposite the entry and kitchenette, the living space links to the outdoors through a large window and door onto a cement-finished sun balcony with curved corners at ground level or cantilevered from the first floor, facing north or east.

Built by Best Overend, Cairo Flats was completed in 1936. In *Australian Home Beautiful*, Overend described the desire for 'minimum flats' in London, where he had recently been living and working. Among other things, it included a floor plan of a 'minimum flat' that was not dissimilar to floor plans used in Cairo Flats. The 'minimum flat' allowed Overend to recalibrate the elements of a home. An economical layout and affordability met fashionability and comfort not normally associated with a bachelor pad, studio or bedsit. While slimming down the private living space and kitchen area, the designer magnified the shared spaces, both functional and social, through the gardens, the laundries and even the roof. There were flourishes in the use of finishes, including importing the design of curved aluminium door handles from London. The seemingly unsupported stairs were exotic, even unique, at the time of their design.

Cairo Flats has since been renovated, and the roof is no longer considered structurally safe for people to access. Until a recent residential conversion, the shop still operated as a milk bar on Hanover Street. The dining room is gone and The Cairo Flats are now simply residential. Yet what was meaningful



then is still meaningful now, despite the changes. People are still drawn to Cairo Flats because of its history, its lean, spatial economy and its connection to Melbourne's inner city gardens, and proximity to bars, the CBD, universities, museums and galleries.

Daniel Palmer (lecturer in the faculty of Art, Design and Architecture at Monash University) and Kate Rhodes (curator at the Design Hub, RMIT University) are now married, but made their first step towards living together when they moved into two adjacent studio apartments at Cairo Flats over ten years ago as students. They'd been attracted by an ad stating 'Garden Setting, Nicholson Street'. The pair knew that Cairo Flats was architecturally significant, and so studied its history and layout before Dan applied to move in. Two months later Kate moved into the studio next door, and bingo, the couple of just a few months were living together.

For a long time the Cairo flats have attracted residents who are art, design and architecture makers or thinkers. As Kate said, "At first, we didn't know anyone there, but soon found that we did." Two work colleagues were neighbours, and soon, another friend moved into the building. "I remember getting to know a lovely woman who would always lose her keys, and have cups of tea with us waiting for the locksmith to arrive."

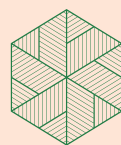
"Our two studios seemed like a bigger space. We'd run between each other's rooms when working for last minute deadlines on articles. The doors were always open, and we'd spill out of rooms. Unless there was bad weather, we always had breakfast on the balcony, in our two butterfly chairs. But it wasn't spacious, and if your blinds were open, you were on show. It was lucky that we didn't own a lot of furniture and things. The bed was a couch when entertaining guests. Dan had a kidney-shaped coffee table that served as a dining

table, and we always ate sitting on the floor. We spent a lot of time planted in front of our desks too. Dan has a huge library. Somehow it managed to fit. Things were always piled up – there were books in the bathroom cupboard." Sadly, the polish of the place had faded, and become a little harsh. The kitchenettes were decrepit. Repairs had not always been done with care; a lot were not in keeping with the history of the design. They had been let go. "The rooftop was not safe anymore, so you weren't allowed up, but we went up to look anyway."

"There was a milkbar when we were there. It sold only one newspaper and one type of milk. That's all they had. They would close for the day when they sold out. It was beautiful living there though. The shared garden felt like your own garden... an incredible sense of green. We were conscious of living somewhere that was special, and we felt we were experiencing part of Melbourne's history."



Best in Park: interview with Christina Teresinski



visit assemblepapers.com.au
to read the full article.

CHRISTINA TERESINSKI BELIEVES IN DIGNITY AND DAPPERNESS FOR HUMANS AND DOGS ALIKE. AS FOUNDER AND DESIGNER AT BEST IN PARK, CHRISTINA AND HER TEAM OF CRAFTSPEOPLE DESIGN FOR CANINES. IN AN INDUSTRY THAT PRIVILEGES GIMMICKS AND EXPENDABILITY, BEST IN PARK STANDS OUT BY PRODUCING “OLD FASHIONED” PRODUCTS BASED ON QUALITY MATERIALS, CHAMPION WORKMANSHIP AND CLASSIC DESIGN.

In 2011 we adopted Chips the rescue greyhound and she is now a permanent fixture at the office – we are officially “dog people” here at Assemble HQ. Which is not to say we don’t find cats cuddly; we just happen to be hound tragics. And we’re not alone – at 66% of all households, Australia has the highest rate of pet ownership in the world. And, it seems that dogs are

more than just a pretty face or a waggy tail – they contribute to a calmer workplace and, according to Martin Mulcahy of *The Atlantic*, health studies in the UK, Australia, China and Germany have found that dog owners “enjoy longer lifespans on average” with health attributes for young and old including “weight maintenance, reduced blood pressure, and

improved cardiovascular fitness.” Canine companionship also appears to boost self-esteem and in some cases, even ease the frequency or impact of depression. In fact, in 2009, Japanese researchers found that the reason why the reciprocity between humans and dogs is so strong is that it’s controlled by oxytocin – the same “love” hormone that connects mothers and newborns, reduces anxiety and depression, and builds trust and intimacy. No wonder Chips reckons she’s boss.

Christina Teresinski is the founder and designer at Best in Park, an “old fashioned” outfitter for man’s best friend. Doing her personal best to reciprocate the high-regard and esteem of our canines, Christina runs a small yet expanding empire, selling her classic leads, collars and jaunty accessories online and at a hand-picked selection of lifestyle stores across Australia, Hong Kong, South Korea and the states. Overall, the pet care industry continues to grow globally. In 2006, Australians were already spending AU\$4.62billion on their pets, while in 2012, the US will spend over US\$52billion on theirs. Japan too is becoming a “pet superpower” – as the human birth rate declines and the population ages, the pet population is steadily growing. A recent article in *The Guardian* by Ruth Evans and Roland Buerk explores the current obsession with pet care in Japan. Official estimates



IN DOG WE TRUST INDEED... BESPOKE “DISTINGUISHED” COLLARS. PHOTO BY NICK BLAIR, COURTESY BEST IN PARK.



BILLIE AND CHRISTIAN. COLLAR BY BEST IN PARK. PHOTO BY KELLY THOMPSON.

put the pet population at 22 million or more (by comparison, there are only 16.6 million children under 15). Pet yoga, pet *onsens* (hot springs) and canine couture by luxury brands such as Chanel, Dior, Hermès and Gucci are now de rigeur as Japanese families choose pet pampering over actual parenthood.

Back at Best in Park HQ, the emphasis is not on bling or excess but rather, on designs for life. To Christina, “timelessness is what it’s about. The brand is an extension of what I like. After all, what you dress your dog in is an extension of your own style – you are accessorising them after all.” This approach sets Best in Park apart in an industry that privileges gimmicky, throwaway products or luxury extravagance over simplicity, longevity and quality. Eugenia sat down with Christina during a typically busy Best in Park day, while Walter (Christina’s muse, a black poodle) watched on.

When did you first come up with the idea for Best in Park – was there an “ah-ha” moment?

I’ve always loved dogs, I grew up with a loyal companion. I was looking for collars and leads when I got Walter. The moment of truth came when I was at an upmarket pet emporium, surrounded by pink and diamantes, that I thought in exasperation “what to do?” After two years spent working up the confidence, I launched at the end of 2009. Critical to production is local craftspeople – building long term relationships and mutual respect and making sure they feel like it’s their business too, that they are happy with their work and the end product. It’s a niche business with a local focus.

What inspires the Best in Park brand and why?

Dapper events like The Tweed Run, vintage men’s accouterments,

bespoke luggage. Why? They capture the essence of true craftsmanship and quality. Also Tumblr sites like Convoy from Sweden, which curates a global urban life in pictures.

Best pooch walk locations in Melbourne?

“Nojo” (north of Johnston street) and Edinburgh Gardens. My local is the park next to the Fitzroy Pool. “Sojo” (south of Johnston street), down George, Gertrude and Smith streets. Not every walk culminates in the park as I like walking around the streets, getting inspiration. I get inspiration from the street – it can be anything: yellow stitching on a brown loafer and the detail in simple things, men’s clothing, leather patches, my late grandfather’s tweed cap.

BESTINPARK.COM

TORAFU Architects × Mr Kitly

AT THE CORE OF POLLINATE IS THE NOTION THAT THE MEETING OF MINDS CAN GENERATE “CROSS-POLLINATED” IDEAS WHILE ALSO PROVIDING INSIGHT INTO DIVERSE CREATIVE PROCESSES. WHEN WE HEARD THAT TORAFU ARCHITECTS WOULD BE EXHIBITING AT MR KITLY, WE GOT A BIT SWOONY. HERE WAS OUR FIRST PAIRING, A CHANCE FOR A SIGNIFICANT JAPANESE PRACTICE AND A JAPAN-OBSSESSED DESIGN PURVEYOR TO CONVERSE.



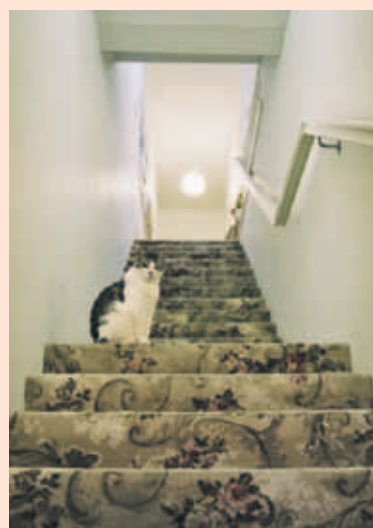
TORAFU ARCHITECTS IDEA + PROCESS 2004-2011 BOOK AT MR KITLY. PHOTO BY EUGENIA LIM.

TORAFU is an architectural studio that balances design constraints with curiosity and playfulness, as evident across its projects small and large. From the whimsical yet practical design of everyday objects to commercial interiors or residential projects, TORAFU is unique (we’ve previously featured their remarkable concrete House in Kohoku on our website). Based in Tokyo, TORAFU is headed up by directors Koichi Suzuno and Shinya Kamuro whose partnership formed organically through project work, including Claska Hotel’s Template room, the paper-light Airvase, and interior architecture and design for companies such as Freitag and Aesop.

Koichi Suzuno was in Melbourne last year as the TORAFU representative, for an exhibition at Mr Kitly, a shop and gallery of design, homewares and books that collects the delicate sensibility and aesthetic of owner Bree Claffey. As Bree notes, Mr Kitly is “my life on sale in many ways and it’s a bit uncompromising in that regard. It’s the stuff that I love rather than stuff that’s going to sell like hotcakes. I have this because I love it.” Having lived in the Kansai region of Japan, Bree’s beautifully edited range of objects look outwards – referencing her time there – but also inwards towards the personal and intimate. Mr Kitly is the three dimensional

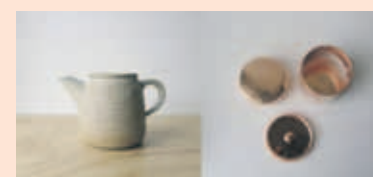
extension of Bree’s cult blog ii-ne-kore and represents a kind of homely creative hub where retail objects and exhibitions sit together in dialogue.

The TORAFU exhibition at Mr Kitly came about through a chance visit to the store by Koichi’s wife Melinda. Koichi was no stranger to the antipodes however, having spent a year working with Kerstin Thompson architects in Melbourne, and also regularly visiting Australia due to family and project work. Our discussion took place during a break in exhibition install. Present were Bree Claffey (owner, Mr Kitly), Koichi Suzuno (co-director, TORAFU architects), his wife Melinda and two daughters, and Eugenia Lim (editor, Assemble Papers). What follows is an edited version of the wide-ranging, Japanese-English conversation.



THE EPONYMOUS MR KITLY SITS ON THE STAIRS OF “HIS SHOP”. PHOTO COURTESY JULIAN PATTERSON AND BREE CLAFFEY.

Context and cultural difference



“SHIKO TEAPOT” AND “COPPER CANISTER” PRODUCTS STOCKED AT MR KITLY. PHOTO COURTESY MR KITLY.

Bree: (To Koichi) You were talking about how, when in a new country, you love to look at domestic living spaces. That for me is something that I do when visiting Japan. It’s about going down back streets to see small domestic arrangements that are very inspiring, very different...

Koichi: My feeling about Australia is it’s a bit like ‘the opposite’: for example, the seasons are reversed; summer is winter, autumn is spring. When I came to Australia, I noticed that lots of Japanese and Australians were mixing, lots of other nationalities. There’s also a real interest in Japanese culture. I had always wanted to be more free thinking... I grew up with Japanese customs and through a Japanese education system and I can easily put my thoughts into action, but from an Australian point of view, this can be seen as such a strange way of thinking. I also lived in Australia for one year, working with Kerstin Thompson architects and so wasn’t just a traveller here. Luckily, I can speak a little bit of English so I don’t experience that ‘outsider feeling’, however my wife Melinda, even though she can speak Japanese, in Japan she can be still viewed as a foreigner – like a *gaigoku-jin*.

B: That’s something I can understand. I think it probably applies to anyone leaving their home, going somewhere different and looking back. Maybe there’s something special about Japan because it does have quite a few rules and quite a tight culture. I think it is a bit different as an Australian. You don’t tend to reflect on your own culture as much, or

there’s not as many surprises maybe... if you know what I mean? But it is interesting the *gaigoku-jin* feeling in Japan never goes.

Eugenia: (to Bree) Did you ever feel like Japan was home when you lived there?

B: Absolutely. The day-to-day life felt like home. Getting on my bike and riding through the back streets of Kyoto and knowing the neighbourhoods was home and it was just so beautiful and perfect for that time in my life. And because I was young... Koichi I’m not sure how old you were when you lived in Melbourne?

K: About 28.

B: Yeah I was quite young, 20-21 in Japan, and reflecting back I think in that time I was a bit like a sponge. Just collecting the precious moments. It had a big impact on my sensibility and my aesthetics at that time. It really just crystalised what I find beautiful. That was very special. The kind of non-design object in Japan is just so beautiful and available.

Koloro at Mr Kitly and the start of TORAFU



KOICHI SHOWS US THE TORAFU TEMPLATE PROJECT. PHOTO BY EUGENIA LIM.

K: When I came to Melbourne one holiday in 2011, I would always make my way to Mr Kitly. So the initial thinking behind the exhibition started about one year ago.

B: It was interesting from our point of view because you were so busy in Paris at the time. How involved is

your partner Shinya Kamuro with the ideas and design for this show, or was it more driven by you?

K: It was my hope to have an exhibiton at Mr Kitly.

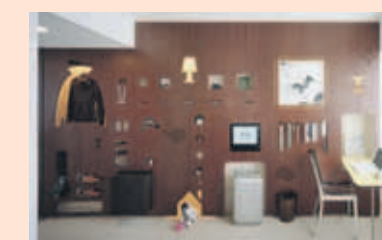
E: When did you decide to become TORAFU as a team together?

K: In 2004, I was asked to design a room for the hotel Claska. I then asked Kamuro who was my friend to help me with the project. From there we began working together and formed TORAFU. In the Claska hotel room we had to accommodate the Sony robot pet AIBO, and we had three days to name our office. TO-RA-FU is just a sound. Architectural offices can be so serious and have a ‘difficult’ feeling, so TO-RA-FU is just a soft sound. I also didn’t want something with a meaning because sometimes meanings are not soft – I just wanted a group of sounds – soft sounds...

B: It is a very soft sound...

K: Like tofu... so soft

Inverted approach and starting with the ‘site’



TORAFU’S FIRST PROJECT, THE TEMPLATE ROOM FOR CLASKA HOTEL. PHOTO BY DAICI ANO COURTESY TORAFU.

TORAFU’s first project was for Claska, a design hotel in Meguro, Tokyo.

K: Our Template room in Claska was really our first project and luckily it appeared in many magazines and online. So we just started working... and after Template, we got to work on the design of the hotel rooftop

and step by step we started. This was also our first interior project. Because I was a graduate architect and I previously worked in a large architectural office, I had to shift my thinking to interior design. I don't see a difference between architecture and interiors however, and I think of everything as a 'site', a starting point. Template was such a small room, so my initial thinking was from a product perspective... thinking about the little objects, and items like a TV, freezer, dryer, all needed for a hotel room.

Normally my approach would be different, architecture first, interiors and then product with people last. In this case it was the reverse because it was such a small room and the products in my mind were so important for the concept. Architecture not always being on top – it is more equal this way and maybe more flexible...

B: Do you still think that way?

K: Architecture, interiors and product work together and in my mind are all a graduation from the same thinking. Normally, with Japanese 'famous architecture', once the work is finished, the architect removes all products and signs of life and then takes photos of the project – whereas I like to see all the products, the way of living...

B: This is a very different approach isn't it?

K: This is my usual way of thinking, which I find more interesting. You know with architectural projects, the architect needs to design everything and sometimes even placing the furniture into a space, but I like different layers.

B: Architecture and products are so far apart – a house is about large ideas isn't it? Beginning with the space and to bring it back down, beginning at that domestic level is a big difference...

K: When designing furniture I also want to give 'the site', for example the Skydeck product has a 'site' – a balcony is the only place where you can use it. I place these conditions onto each product because sometimes, the end product can be too open. Sometimes however one concept, one idea can solve and work perfectly with imposed condition.

B: One big long table which starts off as furniture and becomes almost architecture with space underneath that people can use... This crossover between furniture and architecture is very interesting, the synthesis is nice. I love TORAFU products, but the ones that are so simple with a direct use really inspire.

From inspiration to documentation



STARTING WITH 'THE SITE' IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF TORAFU. SKYDECK PHOTO BY FUMINARI YOSHITSUGU COURTESY TORAFU.

From soft-textured studio names to portable balcony bars, the conversation flows to inspirations.

K: I try to read lots of comics. I love Yokoyama Yuichi, who's a graphic artist and I even used his comic character for a shop. It was a Japanese shop in San Francisco called New People Centre – which is very connected to manga so I used his characters for the furniture.

B: Did you get to meet him?

K: Oh yes, by chance I got to meet him. He then told me about his Japanese manga exhibition and I was lucky enough to design the exhibition space for him.

K: I went to his house and he records all the conversations with his friends... always.

M: All the time on tapes...

B: What does he do with it?

K: When he is drawing and painting he listens to it like a radio to relive the interesting feelings again and again. I love his work, it's so good!

B: Are documents important for your work? Like our gallery, we have lots of shows and we try to document them but sometimes can't... there's one continual presence and then we move onto the next show... I wish that I documented more because there's been so much amazing work shown.

K: For me architecture projects have such a long span... even buildings in Tokyo have been demolished and rebuilt so many times even I can't remember what kind of building was there previously... for me people and memories are important.

So I use my camera to document all my projects, placing photos on our website... photos and also our book are important to show I think. I cannot show architecture that I'm designing because a house project can be yearlong. For these projects I need to ask the client if I can enter because I'm still largely a stranger. I think this is important because architecture I cannot carry... products like my Airvase I can carry.

E: You can't carry a building.

K: Yeah, I cannot carry a building (laughter).

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VISIT: TORAFU.COM AND MRKITLY.COM.AU



INNER CREATIVE WORLDS UNFOLD IN THE KOLORO DESK BY TORAFU. PHOTO BY LAUREN BAMFORD.



A TIMBER CAMERA CONSTRUCTED FROM TORAFU'S "DOWEL-BLOCKS." PHOTO BY EUGENIA LIM.



THE LIGHTWEIGHT "AIRVASE" BY TORAFU, EASIER TO CARRY THAN A BUILDING. PHOTO BY FUMINARI YOSHITSUGU COURTESY TORAFU.

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Henrietta Zeffert
rightnow.org.au

Jana Perkovic
guerrillasemiotics.com

Meg Phillips
megphillips.com

Kareen Clark
kareenclark.com

FEATURED CONTRIBUTORS



RACHEL ELLIOT-JONES
ASSEMBLEPAPERS.COM.AU
MANY-MANY.COM.AU

RACHEL IS THE INCOMING EDITOR OF ASSEMBLE PAPERS, HELMING THE SHIP WHILE EUGY LIM IS ON BABY LEAVE. IN ADDITION TO WORKING ON AP, SHE IS THE CO-FOUNDER OF MANY MANY AND THE OCCASIONAL PUBLICATION HOUSE WEAR, WHICH EXPLORES NOMADIC CULTURE ACROSS ART, DESIGN, ARCHITECTURE AND WRITING. REJ LOVES JAPAN, BREAD PRODUCTS, AND DANCING.



EUGENIA LIM
EUGENIALIM.COM

EUGENIA IS AN ARTIST. SHE HAS A WEAKNESS FOR THE FILM 'WAYNE'S WORLD' AND CONTEMPORARY ART THAT MIXES THE HIGH AND LOW BROW. A CO-DIRECTOR OF CHANNELS FESTIVAL, EUGENIA IS ALSO THE FOUNDING EDITOR OF ASSEMBLE PAPERS. CURRENTLY ON MATERNITY LEAVE, EUGENIA LIVES IN MELBOURNE WITH HER HUSBAND, THEIR YOUNG DAUGHTER AND CHIPS THE GREYHOUND.



GIUSEPPE (PINO) DEMAIO
ASSEMBLEPROJECTS.COM.AU
LOCALPEOPLES.COM
NDCFREE.ORG

GIUSEPPE IS CREATIVE DIRECTOR OF ASSEMBLE PAPERS AND A DIRECTOR OF ASSEMBLE. WHILE KNOWN FOR THE CREATIVITY HE OFFERS HIGH-PROFILE CLIENTS THROUGH HIS CREATIVE SERVICES AGENCY LOCAL PEOPLES AND AS A FOUNDER OF NDCFREE, HE IS ALSO FAMOUS FOR HIS BEARD — ONE OF THE MOST COVETED FACE-WARMERS IN MELBOURNE.



MARC MARTIN
MARCMARTIN.COM.AU

MARC MARTIN IS AN ILLUSTRATOR BASED IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA. WORKING WITH WATERCOLOURS, FELT-TIP PENS, INK, PENCIL, SCANNED TEXTURES AND COMPUTER, MARC'S WORK IS A WORLD OF DENSE COLOUR, RICH TEXTURES, AND THE ODD SCRIBBLE. HAVING FORMALLY TRAINED AS A GRAPHIC DESIGNER, HE SPLITS HIS TIME BETWEEN HIS DESIGN STUDIO LANZ+MARTIN, AND COMMISSIONED ILLUSTRATIONS FOR VARIOUS CLIENTS.



QUINO HOLLAND
ASSEMBLEPROJECTS.COM.AU
FIELDWORKPROJECTS.COM.AU

QUINO HOLLAND IS AN ARCHITECT AND CO-DIRECTOR OF ASSEMBLE. HE IS ALSO A CO-DIRECTOR OF FIELDWORK, AN ARCHITECTURE PRACTICE. QUINO IS A KEEN GARDENER AND CYCLIST WHO IS MOST HAPPY IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS OR CONTEMPLATING BRUTALIST ARCHITECTURE (WHAT A NERD! — ED.). ISAMBARD KINGDOM BRUNEL IS AN ENDURING HERO.



BEN KECK
ASSEMBLEPROJECTS.COM.AU
FIELDWORKPROJECTS.COM.AU

BEN IS A CO-DIRECTOR OF ASSEMBLE AND A CO-DIRECTOR OF FIELDWORK, AN ARCHITECTURE PRACTICE. HIS BACKGROUND IS IN FINANCE, PROPERTY AND LAW. BEN PROVIDES EDITORIAL SUPPORT ON THE PRACTICAL MATTERS SECTION AND IS A METICULOUS PROOF READER. HE IS A KEEN SOCCER PLAYER AND AN ADVOCATE OF THE SIESTA.



MITRA ANDERSON-OLIVER
SCHOOLHOUSESTUDIOS.COM.AU

MITRA ANDERSON-OLIVER IS AN URBAN PLANNER AND POLICY ANALYST AT SGS ECONOMICS AND PLANNING. ALSO A BOARD MEMBER OF SCHOOLHOUSE STUDIOS, MITRA IS INTERESTED IN THE POLITICS OF CITY BUILDING AND THE CREATIVE FORCES THAT DRIVE IT. SHE HAS A BACKGROUND IN LAW AND IS CURRENTLY WRITING A MASTERS THESIS ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY IN MELBOURNE.



LEON GOH
LEONGOH.COM

LEON GOH IS A FREELANCE WRITER BASED IN MELBOURNE. HE HAS CONTRIBUTED TO EYELINE, UNMAGAZINE, ARTLINK, ART & AUSTRALIA, ALA CHAMPFEST AND RUNWAY MAGAZINE AND IS A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO BROADSHEET AND JAPAN-BASED SHIFT. LEON HAS A PREDILECTION FOR CYCLING, RUNNING SPORTS TECHNOLOGY AND IS ALWAYS OPEN TO THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING SWEEPED UP INTO AN INTERNET RESEARCH SHOE SPIRAL.



SUSANNAH WIMBERLEY
SUSANNAHWIMBERLEY.COM

ZAN IS A FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHER WORKING IN MELBOURNE & SYDNEY. HAVING DABBLED IN SCIENCE PHOTOGRAPHY & MOTION PICTURES, SHE FINALLY FOUND HER CALLING IN PORTRAITURE, PERFORMANCE & DOCUMENTATION WITHIN THE CREATIVE & CONTEMPORARY ARTS. HER PHOTOGRAPHS ARE OFTEN PUBLISHED IN AUSTRALIAN ART COLLECTOR, ART MONTHLY AUSTRALIA AND REALTIME. SHE IS CURRENTLY COMPLETING A MASTERS AT THE SCA.



JAMES GEER
JAMESGEER.COM

BORN AND RAISED IN MELBOURNE, JAMES GEER BEGAN HIS PHOTOGRAPHIC CAREER IN 1999 AND LAID THE FOUNDATIONS FOR HIS PLACE IN THE FASHION AND LIFESTYLE CATEGORIES IN NEW YORK CITY. SINCE THEN, HE HAS BEEN COMMISSIONED BY DISTINGUISHED PUBLICATIONS, ADVERTISING AGENCIES, ENTERTAINMENT AND CORPORATE COMPANIES WORLDWIDE. NOTED FOR HIS PORTRAITURE, JAMES HAS BEEN PRIVILEGED TO PHOTOGRAPH NOT ONLY CELEBRITIES BUT ALSO SOME OF MOST IMPORTANT AND INFLUENTIAL FIGURES OF OUR TIME.



GEORGIA NOWAK
ROOM11.COM.AU

GEORGIA NOWAK IS AN ARCHITECT WHO HAS STUDIED BOTH ARCHITECTURE AND SCULPTURE, AND WHOSE WORK REPRESENTS A MERGING OF THE TWO. GEORGIA HAS WORKED IN MELBOURNE AND STOCKHOLM, RESULTING IN HER STRONG AFFINITY WITH THE SCANDINAVIAN WAY OF LIVING.



RAFAELA PANDOLFINI
RAFAELAPANDOLFINI.COM

RAFAELA PANDOLFINI IS A SYDNEY-BASED PHOTOGRAPHER AND VIDEO ARTIST. THROUGH INTRICATE STUDIES OF PERFORMANCE, DANCE AND THE DECORATIVE, RAFAELA EXPLORES CONTEMPORARY RITUAL. RAFAELA'S IMAGES OF NIGHTLIFE ARE OFTEN PUBLISHED ONLINE IN THE THOUSANDS, GOODGOD SMALL CLUB AND OYSTER. HER WORK IS HELD PRIVATELY IN COLLECTIONS THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA, THE UK & USA.



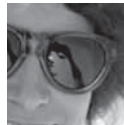
OLGA BENNETT
OLGABENNETTPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

OLGA BENNETT IS A FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHER AND A VISUAL ARTIST BASED IN MELBOURNE. HER PHOTOGRAPHS ARE REGULARLY PUBLISHED IN FRANKIE MAGAZINE, SMITH JOURNAL, FEAST AND A FEW OTHER PUBLICATIONS. SHE IS CURRENTLY STUDYING FOR HER FINE ART DEGREE AT VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS AND IT IS TOO EARLY TO SAY WITH CERTAINTY WHERE THAT IS GOING TO LEAD HER.



PAUL BARBERA
PAULBARBERA.COM
WHERE THEY CREATE.COM

PAUL BARBERA IS A ROVING EYE WITH A GLOBAL REPUTATION AS AN INTERIORS AND LIFESTYLE PHOTOGRAPHER WHO WORKS WITH THE LIKES OF VOGUE LIVING, ELLE DECOR, FRAME, VIEW ON COLOR, BLOOM, GRAZIA, BLACK BOOK & AD CHINA. BASED IN NYC, PAUL COMPLETED A BFA AT THE VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS IN 1994. HIS BLOG WHERE THEY CREATE (DOCUMENTING THE CREATIVE SPACES OF ARTISTS & DESIGNERS) WAS PUBLISHED BY FRAME IN 2011.



HEN ZEFFERT
RIGHTNOW.ORG.AU

HENRIETTA IS A WRITER BASED IN MELBOURNE AND LONDON, AND A DOCTORAL STUDENT AT THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE.



GABRIELA HOLLAND
POPPLANT.COM.AU

GABRIELA'S SERIOUS CASE OF ITCHY FEET HAS LED HER TO DABBLE IN EVERYTHING FROM FILM PRODUCTION, MANAGING AN NGO AND TRAVEL WRITING IN CUSCO, TO WRITING AND EDITING FOR ONLINE PUBLICATION LECOOL IN BARCELONA. SHE IS NOW BASED IN MELBOURNE, WHERE SHE RUNS POP PLANT AND FREELANCES AS AN EDITOR AND PROOFREADER.



JAMES STEPHENS
VGSO.VIC.GOV.AU

JAMES STEPHENS IS A LAWYER PRACTICING IN COMMERCIAL, CONSTITUTIONAL AND NATIVE TITLE LAW. HIS QUALIFICATIONS ALSO INCLUDE: LIVING IN AN APARTMENT, A BUILDING AND DESIGN DEGREE AND WRITING AND EDITING ARCHITECTURAL PUBLICATIONS.

ONLINE CONTRIBUTORS

RYAN ALEXANDER
ASSEMBLEPAPERS.COM.AU

ASHA BEE ABRAHAM
ASHABEEABRAHAM.COM

JEN BEREAN
PATFOSTERANDJENBEREAN.COM

JESS BRENT
FURRYTREES.TUMBLR.COM

ALESSANDRO DEMAIO
SANDRODEMAIO.COM

NUSHA GURUSINGHE
PERFECTCURSIVE.COM.AU

ANNA HICKEY
ASSEMBLEPAPERS.COM.AU

ARTHUR HOLLAND MICHEL
DRONECENTER.BARD.EDU

OLIVIA HOWITT
WHATSIYOURBEDROOM.BLOGSPOT.COM

GILLIAN HUTCHISON
NOTWITHOUTMYDORAG.BLOGSPOT.COM

JOANNA KAWECKI
ALACHAMPFEST.COM

ELIZABETH KULAS
ASSEMBLEPAPERS.COM.AU

HEATHER LIGHTON
HEATHERLIGHTONDIARY.TUMBLR.COM

GRACE MCQUILTEN
THESOCIALSTUDIO.ORG

RACHEL MICHEL
TAMBOFOUNDATION.ORG

GENEVIEVE MURRAY
FUTUREMETHOD.COM.AU

SAM NATHAN
CHARTERKC.COM.AU

JON MARK OLDMEADOW
JMO-MI.COM

ROB PAPALEO
CHARTERKC.COM.AU

TIM RILEY
PROPERTYCOLLECTIVES.COM.AU

SATSUKI SHIBUYA
SATSUKISHIBUYA.COM

EMMA WHIFFEN
ASSEMBLEPAPERS.COM.AU

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IMAGE BY SHANTELL MARTIN

