Editorial

Twentieth century architecture in Australia has been celebrated only recently by Donald Leslie Johnson's *Australian Architecture, 1901-51* and that publication is already thirty years out of date.

It does provide an admirable contribution but highlights also the dearth of serious works which deal with what man has made in Australia since 1900.

By contrast, low-boys everywhere lurch and groan with the weight of empty works of prose, in large type and format, which deal wholly with the nineteenth century and skid to a stop at the precipice of 1900. Some murmur the ill-defined but popular terms, Art Deco and Art Nouveau.

Exceptions include small wonders such as *444 Sydney Buildings* which rashly catalogues all things built prior to its birthdate (1971); *Guide to Victorian Architecture* (1956) which was published as fodder for the foreigner during the XVIth Olympiad; and the late Robin Boyd's twin triumphs, *Victorian Modern* (1947) and *Australia's Home* (1952).

Only the latter two works examine their subject in depth and only the latter one evolves a stylistic typology, albeit concerning domestic buildings. *Victorian Modern* attempted to encompass more building-types but, like Johnson's book, it stops at 1950, and is unfortunately out of print.

Young movements, such as those examining historic gardens and interiors also, perhaps from practicality, have started at the beginning but are a long way from important figures such as Edna Walling or intact interiors like the Manchester Unity Building (*Historic Environment* Vol.1, No.2).

Critiques on modern architecture have mushroomed recently with the publication of the national monthly, *Transition*. However the architecture examined there tends to be either of North American ouvre or influence.

Architects' biographies can be a means to span centuries and one such work is reviewed below. The Australian Dictionary of Biography is almost outstripping academic investigation of important twentieth century architects, in the preparation of Volume 8 (1891-1939), whilst J.M. Freeland's *The Life and Times of John Horbury Hunt* has already bridged a gap.

This issue of *Historic Environment* pursues aspects of the twentieth century whilst our next is planned as a panegyric on Conservation Planning. Contributors should respond by the end of August.

Bibliography


Review


Probably almost without exception, the first thing most architectural historians will do with this book is check the table of contents to see if their favourite architect has been included. Many will be disappointed.

In his introduction, Howard Tanner suggests that through this book there has been an endeavour to outline the 'broad panorama' of Australian architecture.
To do this within the scope of fifteen essays on eighteen architects is an exceptionally difficult task, if not impossible and I am yet to be convinced that it is possible. The decided Sydney bias is no doubt a product of circumstance as well as convenience. However, as a result, the publication is notable for its failure to identify key practitioners in virtually every other State and city.

What this publication does do is approach Australian architectural history from a different perspective. J.M. Freeland had previously led the way with his comprehensive chronological discussion Architecture in Australia, his study of the profession of architecture as a whole (The Making of a Profession) and his contributions to the limited biographical works available on Australian architects, notably his work on J.H. Hunt.

Architects of Australia is more than a series of single biographies, for while it may demonstrate geographical bias, it provides a reasonable chronological cover. In doing so, it attempts to provide links between the different personalities such that we can see our architectural heritage as a continuum of ideas rather than a collection of styles and individual architectural practices.

However, I was personally disappointed to see the last fifty years of Australian architecture given such cursory coverage.

Also significantly, it points to the substantial role played by Governments in the creation of our important buildings. No less than five of the eighteen architects discussed, worked as government officers or under the patronage of the administrative power of the day (Francis Greenway, Sir George Strickland Kingston, Richard Roach Jewell, William Wardell and James Burnet) and I am sure that each State could name others who have made equally significant contributions.

The articles are all well written and, despite the differences inherent in using different authors, the book is drawn together remarkably well. The temptation to get involved in personal details has been avoided and the subjects' architectural output has been given priority.

The most remarkable photograph in the book is the early illustration of James Burnet's Darlinghurst Gaol. It is a dramatic illustration of a dramatic building which sums up the force of that man's architecture.

This biographical approach to architectural history can be a particularly fruitful area of investigation and there is no doubt that there is plenty of room for more exercises like this. For example, what has happened to the Power Institute's dictionary of Australian artists and architects?

As a conclusion I can only say that it is a shame that this book isn't at least twice as long so that the 'broad panorama' of Australian Architecture is a little more discernible. However, congratulations must go to Howard Tanner for producing yet another significant contribution to the understanding of our man-made heritage.

RAY TONKIN